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Introduction

Proactive support of sexual and reproductive health (SRH), including family planning, is an essential element in the work of Family Planning Associations (FPAs), IPPF and other NGOs throughout the world. Over the years advocacy efforts have made a difference - locally, nationally and internationally. We have made people aware of issues they did not know about and had not thought about; we have helped change people’s minds when they had seemed intransigent; we have accessed funds to better serve our clients. We need to do more of it – we need to make sure that the importance of ensuring men and women, young and not so young, rich and poor, mainstream and marginalised have access to excellent, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services is understood and supported everywhere. How we do this, how much we can spend on it both in terms of cash and people effort, how big or small our specific purpose is, will vary greatly. You may decide on a small scale campaign over a period of six months to reach legislators, or you may decide on a three, or even a ten, year programme which aims to raise awareness nation wide and change attitudes. Whatever you decide it will be hard work but it should also be fun! Campaigning and advocacy have a very serious purpose but they can also involve new and imaginative ideas - tap your colleagues enthusiasm and creativity, reach out to new partners who share your vision – where you can be bold and experiment.

This guide offers a framework to help you. There are no set formulae which bring guaranteed success – and, of course, some ideas will work in some situations but not others. The IPPF Regional Offices and Central Office have people and materials you can tap into for help and advice – please do so.

And remember, an effective advocacy campaign can open peoples hearts, minds, wallets and legislative books!
Getting ready

- Before initiating an advocacy campaign and developing advocacy programmes, it is important to ensure the commitment of volunteers and staff as it is likely to involve everybody associated with the organisation and may have policy implications.

- Consider carefully your organisation's strengths and weaknesses – if there are aspects which may make you vulnerable to criticism try to solve the problem. If you cannot then devise a robust defence and have it to hand.

- Revisit the status of the current links your organisation has with others and consider their likely response to your plans and how you might involve them.

- Consider and research the possibilities for raising funds to support your campaign.

- Advocacy is not, and cannot be, compartmentalised just in campaigns and projects. Everything that we as SRH organisations do, every day, impacts on advocacy.
Launching an advocacy campaign

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is the act or the process of supporting a cause or issue. An advocacy campaign is not an information, education and communication (IEC) programme. IEC educates individuals and the community about the existence and benefits of reproductive health services. An advocacy campaign is rather a set of targeted actions in support of a cause or issue. We advocate a cause or issue because we want to:

- build support for that cause or issue
- influence others to support it and/or
- try to influence or change legislation that affects it.

To begin an advocacy campaign you need to:

- Pinpoint the cause or issue you’re advocating for – and define it precisely
- Decide who you want to support your cause or issue – who are you trying to influence or change so that they support you?
- Decide what you want to be the outcome of your advocacy efforts – what concrete result do you want to achieve?

An advocacy campaign cannot be left to a few individuals. It needs the commitment and support of everyone working in an organisation and many outside too.
Example I:
An NGO, in a country with very limited SRH and family planning services, sees the issue it wants to work for as being:

- Provision of SRH and family planning information and services as an integral part of all maternal and child health care.
- Therefore it needs to convince (among others) doctors, nurses and the medical bureaucracy; other influential groups; community leaders and politicians of the contribution of SRH and family planning to improved maternal and child health.
- It hopes to achieve service provision by the government throughout the country.

Example II:
In a country which restricts family planning services to married couples only, an organisation decides:

- We are working to support the basic and internationally-recognised right of all women and men to the knowledge and means to make reproductive choices.
- We want to gain the support of influential community groups (religious bodies; doctors; women’s organisations; youth groups; teachers; the media) as well as the general public, especially parents, in our efforts to influence our political leaders to make services available to young people.
- We want to achieve changes in the law or regulations to enable everybody to use SRH and family planning clinics and obtain contraceptive supplies. We also want to be able to introduce sex education for young people in and out of school.

Example III:
Another grassroots organisation considers that although information and contraceptive services are widely available they are of poor quality and not designed to best, or even adequately, meet the needs of the client. They decide that:

- They want to ensure the establishment of quality reproductive health services, including abortion, and that the services are designed and implemented primarily to be acceptable to their users.
- They will need the support of the clients themselves, and of community organisations such as women’s groups. However they will also need the support of the medical profession, bureaucrats and politicians, and the media in demanding and monitoring changes.
- They hope to achieve both access to safe and legal abortion services, and more consistent and confident use of the full range of contraceptive choices.
Writing Mission Statements

To begin an advocacy campaign, your mission needs to be defined. (This is different and separate from a mission statement of an organisation.) An advocacy mission statement identifies the ultimate goal or goals of the advocacy campaign and answers the most important question:...

What is the purpose of this campaign?

A mission statement is extremely important because it guides all of your activities. It clarifies for staff, volunteers and the public, what you hope to achieve. It will usually appear on every publication, newsletter, press release or other public document you produce during your campaign.

When working on a mission statement take your time and choose your words very carefully. Describe your effort as accurately as possible.

Identifying the goal

This is an integral part of the strategic planning process. For example, IPPF’s Strategic Plan Vision 2000 provides a framework within which FPAs develop their own strategies and programmes. The same group of volunteers and staff who develop the Strategic Plan could be asked to identify the key advocacy goals that will be required to support each programme. For example, under the goals in Vision 2000, several of the objectives and activities relate to advocating the cause: “Advancing the knowledge of sexual and reproductive health, including family planning, as a basic human right”.

- Divide the group into small teams, and ask each team to draft a mission statement. Bring the teams together and consider all the statements.

- Identify the common ideas and language and turn them into a single draft. Circulate that draft to other volunteers and staff at different levels of the organisation for further suggestions and endorsement.

- Incorporating as many ideas as you can without diluting the message, finalise it and distribute.

Through this process, you will end up with a version which all volunteers and staff understand and are committed to – they have been part of the process and can share ownership of it with you.
When writing mission statements:

- Clearly convey who you are and what you are doing. Stress larger, long-term goals. Don’t get mired in detailing specific projects or activities. What is the desired end result of your campaign?

- Try to be as descriptive as possible and as concise as possible. Mission statements should be no longer than three or four sentences.

- Make sure the words you choose can only be interpreted in the way you mean them. Have someone look at the statement from an opposing point of view to make sure there is nothing in it that can be interpreted in a way that reflects badly on you and your campaign.

Examples of mission statements:

**ORGANISATION I:** to protect the health and welfare of women and children by ensuring the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.

**ORGANISATION II:** to enable all individuals and couples to understand responsible sexual and reproductive choices and to have access to the methods to achieve their choices.

**ORGANISATION III:** to meet the needs of clients by the achievement of universal quality sexual and reproductive health services.
Establishing goals, objectives and activities

Your mission statement has identified your overall aim, or ultimate goal. You will also probably have some more immediate or short-term goals, which are stages in achieving the mission statement. These goals are what you hope to accomplish on the way. Your efforts have a greater chance of success if you define these goals too at the beginning of the campaign. You will also need to define your objectives. Objectives are the specific activities you do to meet these goals.

**Goals**

- Start by listing the goals of your campaign. Be specific and precise. This will help you to see where you have had success, where you have not, and where you need to go next.

**Questions to help you set goals**

- What is the campaign’s ultimate goal, as described in the mission statement?
- What specific landmarks (goals) do you hope to achieve on the way to that ultimate goal?
- What are the short-term and long-term objectives needed to meet what we define as our ultimate goal?
- How can these be stated so that they are clearly understood?
- What will constitute “success” or victory? How will it be measured?

**Make sure that when you set goals, they are realistic. Ask yourself:**

- Who will participate in helping us to achieve our goals? Who are our constituents and allies in this campaign and can/will they help?
- What are the resources we bring as a group to meeting these goals? For example, do we have the staff, facilities, finances, reputation, etc?
- Are our goals achievable, given our resources?
- What kind of budget do we need to achieve these goals?
- Who are our opponents, and what resources do they have?
- What are the problems that might arise in achieving these goals? Can they be overcome?
Examples

**ORGANISATION I** had the ultimate goal of ensuring the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. As steps towards that aim, it might choose other goals such as:

- establishing a network of model clinics to demonstrate the demand for services and the health benefits of those services
- educating the public and opinion-leaders about the health benefits of those services
- persuading the government of the importance of supporting and extending the services in additional areas and to other population groups.

**ORGANISATION II** wished to extend information and service provision to all individuals and couples, including young people. Its more immediate goals might be:

- to ensure all adults have access to contraception, regardless of marital status
- to ensure sexual and reproductive health education for young people
- reducing legal constraints to access to services.

**ORGANISATION III** had the goal of ensuring quality sexual and reproductive health services, including abortion, nationwide. It might consider its short-term goals as:

- informing the public about the levels of unsafe abortion and the need for safe legal provision of services
- identifying and publicising appropriate standards for reproductive health services
- creation of widespread public demand for all services to be of a similar quality
- education of service providers and health bureaucrats in the benefits of quality services and how they could be achieved.
Objectives

Objectives are the descriptions of quantifiable activities you will undertake to meet your goals. Objectives should be as specific and as measurable as possible, so that you can see when you have been successful. Vague or non-specific objectives are likely to result in confusion and a lack of direction in a campaign. You should also set yourself and the team a realistic timeframe for the achievement of each objective. This does not mean if you fail to meet the deadline set you have failed, it simply ensures you can more easily monitor your progress and make adjustments accordingly.

Examples

**ORGANISATION I**’s objectives might include:

- establishing 10 model clinics in selected areas of the country
- training of specified numbers of medical and non-medical personnel for those clinics
- development, testing and production of core information materials for clients and potential clients (leaflets, posters etc)
- comparing client and non-client health profiles through the establishment and use of a sound database, if resources allow
- gaining the support and endorsement of specified groups of opinion-leaders (e.g. community leaders, the media, the medical establishment)
- formation of a parliamentary group of supportive politicians.

**ORGANISATION II** might set its objectives as:

- developing a database on the behaviour and sexual health needs of those not currently married
- publicising the costs, to the individual and community, of lack of access to family planning
- development, trial and evaluation of curriculum models for population/sexuality education in schools
- gaining the support and endorsement of specified groups of opinion-leaders (e.g. teachers, women’s groups, youth groups)
- removal or alteration of specific legal/customary barriers to universal access to family planning information and services.

**ORGANISATION III** might have the objectives of:

- establishing client needs and preferences through surveys, meetings etc.
- development of a database on the levels and health impact of unsafe abortion procedures
- development of a database designed to measure client satisfaction as well as to meet administrative or demographic requirements
- ensuring community support by liaison with at least six specified local groups (e.g. women’s groups, youth groups etc.)
- developing an education programme for parliamentarians and key bureaucrats.
Activities

For each objective, you should have associated activities. Activities further specify and quantify objectives. They are measuring sticks for determining the success of your campaign. Each activity should also be timed so you can track your progress.

Examples

ORGANISATION I, whose goal was to see comprehensive reproductive health services established in its country, had as one of its objectives the establishment of 10 model clinics. Some of the activities to meet that objective would be:

- to raise the necessary funds for each clinic
- to develop specific fundraising materials for potential donors: individuals, businesses, charities, international organisations etc. within three months
- to identify appropriate experimental areas to site the clinics, based upon listed criteria, within four months
- to train precise numbers of staff and volunteers for each clinic – timing decided clinic by clinic
- to produce specified numbers and types of publicity and information materials – posters, leaflets and fact sheets – for potential clients two months before the first clinic opens.

ORGANISATION III had the goal of ensuring quality services for all. One of its objectives was to generate community support through liaison with various community groups. Activities under that objective might include:

- identifying key community groups with broad-based support at the local or national level
- inviting individual members or representatives of those groups to participate in appropriate FPA committees
- identifying opportunities for FPA volunteers and staff to participate on committees or in other activities of those organisations
- monitoring the activities of those organisations to find common ground for joint activities, publicity etc
- inviting those organisations to test or comment on new publications or other activities of yours.
Building a constituency for support

So far, you have:
- defined your mission
- decided on your goals and objectives
- outlined the activities you will undertake to meet your goals.

Now you are ready to recruit others to support your advocacy campaign.

Making friends and influencing people

The hallmark of a successful advocacy campaign is its ability to recruit people who:
- think like you think, and
- support and advocate for your cause

Obviously, the more people you have on your side, the better it is for the cause. Successful advocacy campaigns are never the result of just a few people. They are usually collaborative efforts that bring together the resources, time, energy and talents of many different people and organisations.

These people and organisations reach out to others who are in agreement with their goals and, in so doing, build a constituency for support. By demonstrating that your campaign has wide support, constituencies provide momentum for growth and help deter opposition to your efforts.

Your constituency

Your constituency starts with you and the people you are working with on your campaign. Successful campaigns begin with an understanding that everyone involved is committed to the campaign and its goals. While there might be some disagreement over what you will actually do to meet those goals, everyone involved in the campaign must agree on what it is you eventually want to achieve, and must be able to ‘buy in’ to the mission statement.

This consensus on what your goals are will strengthen your campaign and lead others to see you and your campaign as solid, determined, credible, and committed. This perception will help attract new supporters of your cause.
Decide who you will need to recruit as supporters to reach your goals

- Who is already on your side? Who are your existing supporters? Re-establish your links with them before trying to attract additional friends. Make sure that they know you value them and their support.

- Are there other logical partners for you on this particular issue e.g. women's groups, youth groups?

- Are there other groups or individuals whose support you might get on this specific issue, even if they don’t support you on other issues?

- Are there groups in different specialised areas who might support you on this particular issue e.g. human rights organisations, trade unions etc.

Think about how you will reach each of these potential supporters or constituency groups. For example, you will need to use a different approach to reach policy makers than to reach the media. Your appeal to people who are already familiar with sexual and reproductive health issues will not be the same as your efforts with those who know little about them.

You also need to identify who the opposition is

Do they have a more powerful constituency of support? How hard will they work to defeat you? Consider their strengths and weaknesses and take them into account when working to widen your constituency base.

Each and every activity you undertake should attract new supporters to your campaign and your goals. Building a constituency for support takes time and patience. Whether you attract one or one hundred new constituents to your campaign is not important. What is important is that you are gaining active support. And do not forget to allow yourself and your colleagues the odd pat on the back! Take time occasionally to celebrate your successes – you, and they, need to feel valued for the efforts being made.
Expanding your base of support

Networking and undertaking activities in coalition with other organisations who focus on similar issues, or are supportive of them, will help you to:

- amass public support, and
- increase the power of your advocacy efforts.

Networking

Networking is simply initiating and maintaining contact with other individuals and organisations who share or support your goals and who can help you to achieve them.

Identify potential supporters

To be a successful "networker", you need to know who these individuals and organisations are. Make lists of:

- Local and/or national groups who are working on similar issues, i.e. women’s groups, social justice organisations, etc.
- Individuals who work or volunteer for these groups
- Organisations that are working on different issues, but who have a commitment to sexual and reproductive health, including family planning. For example, groups working for gender equality and in HIV/AIDS will most probably support you. So may environmental groups
- Make lists of other groups or individuals who you want to support your work and who share your goals.

These might include:

- Policy makers and legislators
- Social workers, health professionals and teachers
- Celebrities and public figures who can add credibility to your efforts and publicise them
- Community leaders and volunteers
- Wealthy individuals who can contribute funds to your campaign
- Religious leaders
- Recipients of SRH and family planning services
- Journalists who write, or have written, about gender, youth, social and health issues etc.
- Youth groups.
To identify possible supporters, think of the people and individuals who are working on similar issues or share your commitment to SRH and family planning as the hub of a wheel. The people and organisations they know or are affiliated with are the spokes. This process will help you to identify groups or individuals who may be potential supporters.

**Decide how you will reach potential supporters**

To reach groups that have an obvious affiliation to your campaign:

- Create a mailing list and put them on this list to receive your materials
- Go and see as many as possible – it’s much easier to ask someone for help who knows you
- Invite representatives from differing groups to participate in your events and activities
- Share the names of people they can contact for help in their own efforts
- Ask them to put your name on their mailing lists so you can receive their materials
- Keep up-to-date on what other groups are doing so that you can participate, if possible, in conferences, events, and other activities where your help might be appreciated.

To reach groups and individuals who are sympathetic but are only indirectly involved with SRH and family planning issues:

- Put them on your mailing list to receive selected materials
- Invite them to your events and conferences
- Consider inviting them to become a member of a special committee or working group
- Send them an introductory letter and materials about your campaign
- Go and visit them and ask them to become involved
- Ask people who know the potential supporter to lobby him or her to encourage their participation.
**Other ways to network:**

- Speak at local clubs and organisations
- Distribute information at local events
- Attend the annual meetings of partner and sympathetic organisations, colleagues and other professionals
- Post information about your campaign in public places and inform people about ways they can help and how to contact you
- Show films, videos or slides about SRH issues and family planning in your community
- Send materials to selected media and invite them to attend your events. When they come make sure you talk to them and that they know how to contact you.

**Partners**

Remember the partners you already work with. Tell them in advance of your new programme and keep them informed regularly. Make sure they know you value your relationship with them and that their participation in your new venture is important to you.

**Examples:**

One FPA made lists of potential supporters and of those organisations which were likely to be sympathetic. Then it sent out a questionnaire to all volunteers and staff, asking

- which professional and community organisations they belong to

Checking the questionnaires against its lists, the Association could see where it already had a potential influence. It also showed where staff and volunteers could make or strengthen direct contact with another organisation.

The Association asked those people to act as its formal ‘link’ with the organisation they belonged to. It provided them with appropriate information materials. It also encouraged them to initiate or tell the Association about forthcoming activities where the FPA might co-operate.

Then the Association checked its lists of supporters and potential sympathisers to identify those organisations which were not already covered by its own staff and volunteers. It sorted these according to priority, and began a systematic campaign of reaching a certain number each year through the kinds of methods listed above. Each year, too, it reported its networking activities fully in its annual report. The report showed what had been achieved. More importantly, it helped reinforce the networks by giving credit to the organisations the Association worked with.

Do not forget to make yourself a good contacts list, with brief notes about the people/organisations you have made contact with. And, as time goes on and the more people you are in touch with, the more important this is! Cross file in such a way you can find names, organisations and their position on issues, easily.
**Coalition building**

One of the most effective ways you can network is by participating in a coalition. A coalition is a group of several like-minded organisations working together to achieve common goals. Coalitions can be permanent or temporary, single or multi-issue, limited to certain constituencies or geographically defined. Coalitions can help you:
- build on a continuing base of support
- increase the influence of your campaign’s efforts
- develop new leaders for your campaign
- broaden the scope of your campaign
- increase your financial and programmatic resources.

**Forming or joining a coalition**

Before setting up/joining a coalition, decide what the benefits may be:
- will it help you to achieve your goals
- raise money
- strengthen activities
- add credibility to your efforts.

It is not always appropriate to form or join a coalition unless you are sure that it will help you to achieve your goals and you are entirely comfortable with the coalition’s goals. If your campaign is a new effort, you may want to wait to form or join a coalition until you have established your own identity. Instead, work on issues you can win on your own. This will build your resources, strength and capacity to make a meaningful contribution to a coalition in the future.

**Participating in a coalition**

Coalition efforts can be hard work. Make sure that you have the resources you need to be a participating member of a coalition in terms of:
- staff
- administrative resources
- time

Your campaign and your coalition’s aims will benefit if you can:
- Have even just one part-time staff person to oversee its activities. Alternatively, designate a small sub-committee of the coalition to co-ordinate efforts.
- Choose a small number of unifying issues that bring members together to work for a common cause, rather than each group’s separate agendas.
- Design activities in a way that uses the strengths of each participating group within the coalition. For example, if some organisations are more experienced and skilled at fundraising, let them take on that part of the activity.
- Ensure each organisation benefits and that each group feels like a valued member of the coalition and remains interested in participating. Give full credit where credit is due.
- With the group, clearly define your goals. Also clearly define the tasks and responsibilities of each group.
- It is probably sensible to find a new name for the coalition – one centred on the issues you have combined to work on together.
Example:

An attempt by anti-choice groups to introduce restrictive abortion laws was met by a coalition of pro-choice groups. The pro-choice groups included those campaigning for abortion on demand, as well as those who believed contraception was an important way of reducing the demand for abortion.

- By agreeing on a limited goal of opposing restrictions to the existing law, the coalition was able to function with a single voice.
- The coalition was given its own name so that it was seen to be a separate body composed of different and equal organisations.
- One designated person from each organisation attended coalition meetings and took decisions on behalf of that organisation.
- Each organisation took responsibility for specific activities - the FPA provided the secretariat support and undertook mailings to parliamentarians and the administration of the fundraising appeal.

Dealing with differences in coalitions

When two or more groups come together, there are bound to be some differences of opinion. Before joining a coalition, you should decide how flexible you can be – and how far you may be prepared to compromise. It is probably best to be clear about:

- How much are you willing to modify ideas in order to accomplish a ‘common goal’?
- How far you are happy to share the credit and the limelight?
- How will you address disagreement/conflict among members if it occurs?

You will need to understand and respect other’s institutional self-interest. Your organisation and campaign, like all the other participating organisations, brings its own history, culture, values, agendas, and leadership to the coalition. It is important for all members to understand this and respect differences when they occur. When conflict does occur, use it as an opportunity to clarify different points of view or positions. Stress the positive aspects of working together and;

- Keep the coalition’s efforts focused on its common goal – make sure they know that’s what is important to you.
- Discuss the problem among members and perhaps agree to disagree because some conflict is probably unavoidable in most coalition efforts.
Example:

A coalition with the goal of providing high quality community based family planning education and services in a disadvantaged neighbourhood was developed by one organisation. It worked with a local university, which provided the time of doctors from its graduate school, and with a feminist organisation which offered the clinic setting and its existing network of community contacts.

Structural and organisational difficulties between the feminist organisation and the FPA generated some conflict. However, by concentrating on their common goal, and discussing their differences so that communication between the two improved, the coalition was able to continue. The lessons both had learned made it possible for them to agree to undertake a second similar project.

Shaping your message

So far, you have:

• defined your mission

• decided on your goals and objectives

• outlined what activities you will undertake to meet your goals

• identified potential supporters and detractors

• created lists and other systems to maintain contact with your supporters and potential supporters

• examined the pros and cons of forming or participating in a coalition.

The next thing is to decide what your message will be and how you will frame your issues.
Target audiences and goals

Before you take your issue and campaign to the public, you need to decide:

- who you want to reach with your message
- how that message might be shaped to appeal to these groups.

Different audiences require different strategies. For example, to reach policy makers, direct lobbying is effective. To reach the general public, you will probably use the media, public events and printed materials to convey your message.

Within each group are sub-groups such as women, men, young people, refugees, low-income people, and others that you should take into consideration when shaping your message. Determine who your audience is and shape your efforts accordingly. The more you can focus on your intended audience/s, the more effective your message is going to be in reaching them.

Once you have decided who you are trying to reach, decide what your goals are in targeting this constituency. For example is your goal:

- to change the attitudes of young people toward contraception

  or

- to persuade adults that the provision of SRH services to young people does not promote promiscuity

Knowing why you are targeting a particular audience is just as important as knowing who you want to reach.

For example

You may decide that young people are your target audience, and you may know that certain radio stations with a young audience are the best way to reach them. But why do you want to reach them? Is it;

- to promote contraception and encourage young people to come to youth-friendly clinics?

  or

- primarily to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in this age group?

If you are trying to promote contraception and youth clinics you may wish to stress the role of, for example, the FPA – its discretion, the privacy it offers and its understanding of young people and their issues – as well as the importance for a young person’s future of avoiding an unwanted pregnancy.

If HIV/AIDS and STIs are your main concern, the message might never mention the Association. Instead, it would stress that condoms are available from many outlets, and promote condom use as “cool” and “street-wise”.

Framing issues and shaping messages

Not everyone understands why sexual and reproductive health care and rights are so important to the well-being of women, men and young people. To build public support for your cause, you must find a way to reach people that will capture their attention. That means communicating your issues and messages in a way that is easily understandable and appeals to the people you wish to reach.

You also want to try to present your issue in a way with which people will personally identify. For example, if you know that you want to reach parents with adolescents, you might want to shape your message around the number of young people in their community who contract HIV/AIDS every year by not using condoms. This message demonstrates how the issue directly affects them rather than simply stating that condoms can help prevent HIV/AIDS. In other words, it reaches people on a personal level.

The next step is deciding on how your message will be conveyed. Think carefully about your campaign’s image and how you would like it presented. Do you want to appear outspoken or dependable, old or young, aggressive or compassionate - or all of these at different points in your campaign, for different goals or constituencies. The way you present yourself will affect the way people perceive you and your issue.

When you design your message:

- Think about who you want to reach and shape your message and language to that constituency. If you want to reach young people, use language that would be appealing. If you want to reach parents, use a message that talks about the impact of SRH and/or family planning on their children.

- Use personal stories whenever possible. People identify with and remember stories better than dry facts. Use these stories to illustrate why your issue is important. Collect examples or personal stories that illustrate your message or issue. For example, the personal stories of women who survived (or did not survive) life-threatening abortions, and the impact on their families, are extremely powerful in persuading people that abortion should be legal and safe.

- Gather facts and back-up information to substantiate your message.

- Collect quotes and statements from well-known individuals and experts associated with your issue and/or campaign and ask permission to use them publicly. The right messages from people appropriate to different target groups can add credibility to your efforts and get more people to take notice.

- Maximise the positive values and minimise the negative. Some positive values generally associated with SRH and family planning are choice, health, and rights. “Negative” terms sometimes associated with family planning, for example, which you will want to avoid, are population control and coercion. Remember that words can mean different things to different people. Family planning may sound fine to a couple who hope to do just that: to plan their family. To a single person the term contraception is much more relevant.
• Use values that are culturally acceptable to your target audience. And consult representatives of it to check your message is appropriate. Just because we were all young once does not mean we know what works for young people now.

• Respond to individual differences within a particular culture whenever possible. Certain sub-values tend to be more powerful with some groups than others. If you can find a supporter in a successful advertising/marketing agency consult them.

• For every good thing you advocate, be sure to remember what your opponents may say and be ready to respond. Do not remind people of their rationale but if you can find messages which undercut their position and statements, this will help.

• Develop clear and simple messages. Use the everyday language we speak and simple images which focus on the issue you are addressing. Repeat this message in all of your materials. The more it is repeated, the more likely it is to be heard, read and remembered.

• Make your most important point first. Background information, such as demographic data, can be covered elsewhere.

**Example:**

Overcoming people’s fear about contraception was identified by one FPA as critical in encouraging better use of the available services in a particular region. With high levels of illiteracy, there were also high levels of misunderstanding, myths and taboos relating to family planning. While local people wanted only those children they could provide for, they feared the rumoured side effects of contraception. The Association developed an education campaign around the message that contraceptive choices could be made safely.

Radio programmes, training and counselling, mass distribution of education materials and outreach work by service promotion teams were part of the strategy. In addition the Association developed a series of talks about reproductive health and STIs, especially designed for particular community groups such as community leaders, teachers, parents and students.
Designated spokespersons

Once you have identified your issues and the messages to go with them, the next step is to designate your spokespersons. Not everyone involved in your advocacy campaign should speak for your effort. Choose people who:

- are articulate and personable
- know your issue thoroughly
- can communicate your message as succinctly and clearly as possible.

Well-known people, those with public credibility, and/or people who are energetic and enthusiastic about your cause and can "reach" others through their personality or stature are usually the best spokespersons.

**Example I:**
One FPA makes a point of involving as volunteer spokespersons well-known people – actors, doctors, writers and so on – to go around the country promoting its messages. It finds that local people pay more attention to someone perceived as an independent outsider than to an SRH professional or government spokesperson, whose views may be seen as just part of their job.

**Example II:**
An international advocacy campaign for women’s sexual and reproductive rights – Face to Face – works with national and international celebrities to increase global awareness that women’s rights are human rights. With IPPF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as the two global partners, spokespeople for the campaign include television presenters, actresses, authors, sportspersons, as well as pop stars. Such sponsors of a campaign bring increased coverage and profile, and can break through potential public and media indifference to your issues.
Data gathering

The most effective messages emerge from a solid foundation of facts about your issue and your group. Collecting substantive data about specific sexual and reproductive health issues, including family planning, can be critical to any public education or media effort you pursue. But substantial, reliable data collection is expensive and time-consuming so try first to tap into all the existing relevant research because the more facts you have to substantiate your case, the more informed and trustworthy you will appear to the public, to policy makers, and to others you are trying to reach.

Research

• Review your own service statistics and other activities, to ensure you make good use of them in support of your cause. Visit libraries or universities to see if there are up-to-date statistics on your issue and see what research and information are available on the Internet.

For example, information about the birth rates of women under 20 in your country or community, together with studies of the higher risks to mother and child of pregnancy in young women can be used to show why you want to encourage young people to avoid early pregnancies. Data on the rates of HIV/AIDS and other STIs can be used in your message about the need for wider use of condoms.

• You might also go to meet experts in the field who conduct their own research on these issues to find out what they know.

• Do they have data or statistics that can help your case?

• Can you quote them when you talk about your issues? (This is especially effective if the researcher or their organisation is well-known.)

• Contact other organisations to see if they have relevant data that you can use. Don’t forget to credit them if you use it.

• Be careful to always use the data accurately. Don’t try to make it sound more dramatic than it is. If your use of statistics is reliable people will come to trust your message. If you distort the facts people will tend to distrust everything you say and you lay yourself open to attack.
Surveys

Surveys are one way to find out information about a particular issue but be careful how you use the results. Again, do not overstate the results you gather – be honest about the sample who take part, how they were selected and the numbers of responses you receive. And seek advice from a professional on how to frame the questions. Opinion polls and market research surveys are very useful tools but, carried out on the sophisticated scale people are now used to, they are also very expensive. Sometimes market research organisations, working on a survey for a big commercial company, are prepared to add a couple of questions for other organisations, so it’s worth asking.

For example

If you are advocating for increased condom use among young people, you might ask your local family planning educators to record the number of young people they see who do not use condoms. Or, you might randomly survey teenagers in high schools in your community (by using anonymous questionnaires) to see if they use condoms on a regular basis.

In order to develop effective youth programmes in a country where there were no national studies of young people’s perceptions of marriage and sexual behaviour, one FPA undertook its own research. Following a pre-test, it produced a final questionnaire covering:

- marriage (including partner selection and the practice of dowry)
- sex roles in marriage
- parenthood
- sexual behaviour

The questionnaire was distributed to a randomly-selected sample of young people. Analysis of the results provided the Association with greater understanding of the ways in which effective family life and sex education programmes for young people could be developed.
Going public

You have now:

• defined your mission
• decided on your goals and objectives
• outlined what activities you will undertake to meet your goals
• identified potential supporters
• created lists and other systems to maintain contact with your supporters and potential supporters
• examined the pros and cons of forming or participating in a coalition

You have also:

• decided who your target audience/s are and what your goals are in reaching that audience
• decided what your message will be and how you will frame your issue.

So now to attract public support.
Reaching the general public

The media and making the most of it

‘Media’ refers to channels of communication, whether printed or broadcast, including the Internet, newspapers, journals and magazines, radio and television. All these are useful in order to convey your message to the public. You should use the media wherever possible to:

• inform the public about your issues
• help change public attitudes
• influence government policy and legislation
• raise money for your cause
• recruit members or supporters to your cause.

Each of these media is different and needs a different kind of approach. Before embarking on any media effort, however, you must decide what you really want to achieve and who you are trying to reach with your message. And find out which outlets might be interested in what. Then;

• Who are the reporters/journalists who might cover SRH issues in a wide range of contexts?
• Don’t only try for health/women’s issues outlets – SRH is ‘news’ or should be if we ‘sell’ our issues well because it impacts on every aspect of people’s lives.
• Avoid newspapers or broadcast stations which have a strong bias against your issues unless they agree to allow you fair space and they undertake not to edit what you have said after you have finished an interview or left the studio/office.
• Do you and/or your campaign have something to contribute to debates that are different or new – if they do make sure the media know. Journalists are always looking for new stories – don’t be shy in approaching them.
Planning media strategies

If you want to get coverage, you must plan for it. Knowing when to “make news” or respond to news is critical to obtaining coverage.

- Keep up-to-date of current developments in the field so you can decide what is newsworthy and whether it is of interest to people. Track public opinion on SRH and family planning issues. How do people feel about them? About contraception? Has something recently happened that will make people feel more positive/negative toward your issue?

- Chart past media coverage of SRH and family planning issues. Find out how the major media seems to views your issues and how they cover it. Who is quoted? How are the issues described? What are the key points stressed?

- Apart from keeping press clippings, make a record of every inquiry from the media, which includes the subject of the inquiry. Go over these records every three or six months and see what topics were most popular and which new ones have emerged.

- Find out what events are coming up that you can respond to through a media campaign, for example the anniversary of an important event, upcoming elections, upcoming legislative votes, etc.

Examples:

IPPF’s International Medical Advisory Panel (IMAP) is a good example of how you can keep up with developments in contraception. Composed of world experts, the panel meets regularly to discuss new scientific findings and to reassess current contraceptives. It also works through telephone hook-ups if there is urgent need (e.g. a new oral contraceptive ‘scare’ story).

IMAP’s findings are reported in clear simple language so they can be understood by journalists and other non-technical people. With a file of IMAP reports and statements (and if necessary a quick check with IPPF for the latest information) you should be able to give the media up-to-date and reliable contraception stories. Once journalists learn you have accurate and useful material for them, they will frequently ask for your help in preparing a story.

Don’t forget major international events too: journalists are sometimes anxious for items around an International Year or International flag days. Whether it is the Year of the Family, of Children – or anything else – you should be able to bring the theme into your story. A range of International flag days, including World Population Day, International Women’s Day, World AIDS Day, Human Rights Day, provide annual opportunities to focus media work on.
Making contacts

The media often contacts the same people again and again because they know that these people are available, reliable and have developed a personal relationship with them. Therefore, if you want to gain media exposure, it is very important that you build a relationship with media representatives. It may take you a while to do this, but the end result is worth the effort.

To develop contacts:

• Monitor reporters/journalists who cover your issues and note their names, organisations and contact details.

• If you can, list all the media outlets in your community and country. Organise the information according to the type of media it is, e.g. radio, newspapers, television, magazines, an Internet news site etc. Include the name of the organisation, telephone number, e-mail, office hours, and key personnel.

• Put all this information, along with the name and telephone number of any contact person you have, on cards or in a database. Update this periodically. One way to do this is to send a postcard with your next press release to reporters asking if they want to continue receiving your materials. Include space for them to fill in telephone/fax numbers and address changes.

• Invite contacts or potential contacts to your conferences or special events and make sure you have time to greet and meet them.

• Put these contacts on your mailing list so that they will receive your newsletters, publications, and other materials you regularly send to your constituency.

• Remember that contact is a two way process. Journalists have to work in a hurry. If they call you they need the material now. A media spokesperson must be immediately available and so must the information the media is seeking.
Media tools

The final step is to select the specific ways you will get publicity. Among the most common tools are:

- events the media will want to cover – e.g. conferences or ‘fun’ events
- press releases
- press conferences
- television and radio appearances
- television, radio or printed interviews
- taking part in phone-ins or audience participation programmes
- media websites
- letters to the editor
- editorials
- articles in newspapers and magazines

Press releases

Press releases are concise and attention-getting “news stories” describing an event or issue of significance. Usually they are the first and easiest way to get in touch with the media. Once you know the media scene well, target your releases – don’t send everything to everyone unless the story is genuinely ‘big’ and of universal interest. For example, if you have reached the part of your campaign aimed at educators and schools, send your press release to the education journalists/editors. This way too you quickly raise their expectation of your material – it’s properly relevant to them.

Write press releases when something newsworthy happens to your campaign or involves your issue or a spokesperson. If your releases are not newsworthy, journalists will soon begin to ignore them, and your media efforts will suffer.

You may want to issue a press release to:

- announce the results of a research effort or campaign
- announce the formation of a new project or organisation
- publicise your reactions to a new ruling or law
- celebrate important anniversaries and/or historical events

To write a press release:

- Use newspaper style. Start with an eye-catching snappy headline. Don’t be reluctant to borrow techniques from the tabloids – they sell a lot of newspapers! Use short, fact-filled sentences and paragraphs. Make the first sentence the ‘news’ – if someone’s said something interesting start with a quote. If there is a startling new fact make that your first sentence. Journalists can receive many press releases in a day – unless your first sentence catches their attention they are likely not to bother reading any further. If you have time post the release, if not fax or send by e-mail.
• Include the five "Ws" in your first sentence or paragraph: What? Why? Who? When? Where? Which order they come in will depend on what the ‘news’ is.

• Introduce essential information in the first paragraph and use the following paragraphs for more in-depth information. Paragraphs should appear in order of priority of information.

• Only use direct quotations in the lead paragraph if that quote is the news. After that, judicious use of quotations can brighten the physical appearance of the story and lend weight to its main points. Always attribute your quotes to a named person.

• Be concise. Press releases should not be longer than one page.

• Print your release on your letterhead. Eye-catching paper or logos help your group’s release to stand out among the many others that journalists receive.

• Type on only one side of the paper. Staple additional sheets together if you have to go to a second page.

• Don’t be afraid to stress the controversial aspects of a campaign. These will help you to get good coverage and make your case.

• Include a contact name and details on the release. Make sure that person is available and knowledgeable enough about your issue to talk to a journalist.

• Use facts and figures, where appropriate. These make your news sound more solid and help journalists to write their stories.

**Press information releases**

Sometimes you may want to alert the media to something which will only become a news story later on. For example, you may want to:

• publicise upcoming conferences
• let people know about upcoming meetings you are holding
• announce a new appointment

If the story is not immediately newsworthy, do not call it a press release. Head it with the slogan press information release or press advisory release so that the journalists know it is designed for their planning diaries or for their files. Otherwise the guidelines for writing a press information release are the same as for press releases.
**Press conferences**

You should hold press conferences when you have a “key” news item or must respond quickly to a fast-breaking news story. Call a press conference if:

- you are releasing a major report
- a national news-maker or celebrity comes to town in support of your campaign and has something new to say
- you are making a truly major announcement.

**To organise a press conference for a planned event:**

- Issue a media information release listing the “who, what, when, and where” of the upcoming event. This should be sent to reporters five to seven days previous to the event.

- You also can send a copy of your press release, quotes from your spokespersons and/or details of the report you are releasing before the conference but remember to put an embargo date on it.

- Two or three days before the event, call reporters who you think might attend, offer to send them any additional materials they may need and to provide an interviewee on the day.

**To organise a press conference for a fast-breaking news story:**

- Prepare a brief information release listing the “what, who, when and where” of the event and get a team of people to phone, e-mail or fax this invitation to all the key media outlets.

- Stage the press conference in a location and at a time convenient for journalists - not you and your colleagues! Or one that relates to the subject matter of the conference. For example, hold a press conference about contraception at a family planning clinic, rather than the boardroom.

- Have visual material (e.g. your educational publications) available during the press conference at the sign-in table, which should be staffed at all times.

- Also provide a press kit that includes information about the issue and your organisation. Have copies of each spokesperson’s written statement to hand out to reporters.

- Note who attended and their affiliation so that you can check them against or add them to your press list.

- Limit the number of speakers at the conference to two or three people, one of whom should be the main spokesperson. If you have a large coalition, invite members to stand behind the podium, bring written statements, and respond to questions when appropriate.
• Ensure there is a table at an appropriate height in front of your main speakers for journalists’ microphones, and that there is room for TV camera people to film.

• Opening statements should be two to three minutes long, with combined statements not more than 10-15 minutes.

• Allow plenty of time for questions.

• Make sure your spokespeople are available for one-to-one interviews after the conference.

• Try to ensure all journalists are spoken to personally by one of your team and offers of further information, contacts etc. are made.

• After the press conference, find out who did not attend and send them a press kit.

**Opinion features**

Opinion features, often called “op-eds”, are opinion editorials, or longer pieces written by someone in your organisation on a particular issue that appears on a newspaper’s editorial page or in the features section. When writing an opinion feature:

• write as you speak not as you would for formal reports or statements

• open with a strong fact/idea which will grab people’s attention

• tell some anecdotes to explain your viewpoint

• explain the intellectual position for your viewpoint, and give any further examples, facts, statistics or anecdotes you can provide to substantiate your argument

• include your function within the organisation in the by-line.

**Letters to the Editor**

Policy makers, public officials, and the public frequently take notice when constituents’ letters are published in newspapers and magazines. Letters to the editor can be written in response to a recent article or feature published by the newspaper. State your agreement or disagreement with the piece, as well as providing supporting or substantiating information.

Letters to the editor have the greatest chance of being published if they are well-written, clear and short. They also need to be sent quickly if you are responding to a particular article/feature. There is little chance of a letter being printed if it arrives a week after the article you are addressing. Many newspapers and magazines tell you the maximum length they will accept in a letter. Where they do not, check the average length of the letters they use and keep yours to that length. Always include your organisation’s name and your position within it, as well as your own name.

Alternatively, you may be able to persuade a newspaper to take up an issue itself, with its own journalist writing articles based on information provided by you.
Example:
Using market research which identified a particular newspaper as influential and concerned with social issues, one FPA persuaded that paper to run a publicity campaign for family planning. The benefit to the daily newspaper was that it could be seen as being in the vanguard of national education on a major social issue. Over a four-week period the paper carried ‘exclusive’ articles offering readers reliable information and education on family and sexual life, prepared with the technical and scientific help of the Association. The paper also carried cut-out coupons entitling readers to free medical attention for IUD insertion.

Radio and television

Appearing on radio and television programmes is one of the most effective ways to get your message across. But you must select spokespersons who will come across well. Some people, no matter how knowledgeable, will always appear inhibited or unnatural, while others will appear overconfident and strident. Try to use spokespersons who are both knowledgeable and articulate.

Before you agree to any interviews, make sure you know;

• what the programme is and who is the audience
• what information they have, the reasons they want the interview, and whether or not they have your press release or other relevant materials
• what you are likely to be asked and how long you will be given to talk
• whether it is a live or pre-recorded show. If pre-recorded, are they going to come to your office?
• who is going to do the interview.

Preparing for the interview

Before actually doing the interview:

• If possible, listen to or watch the programme you are going to appear on so that you are aware of the presenter’s style, and the kinds of questions that are asked. If you know who the programme’s audience is you can tailor your answers to appeal to them.
• Check with the producer or reporter to find out what information they have about you or your campaign. You might suggest that they look over your materials (which you can offer to send) to help in designing questions for the interview. Also, find out why they are doing the interview. Is it because of your own group’s efforts or is it to comment on an event that relates to your campaign?
• Try to talk to the producer or interviewer before the interview. It's highly unlikely they will tell you precisely what questions will be asked but they can tell you the areas they intend to cover. Do your homework so you are confident in these areas but don't try to second guess the questions or practice your answers. If the questions are quite different to those you have rehearsed you will be thrown and find it much harder to concentrate on and 'hear' what has actually been asked.

• Listen carefully to the questions – and if you are not sure what the interviewer is getting at don't be afraid to ask for clarification.

• If doing a radio interview, keep a list of vital points you want to make, or facts and figures, in front of you. But don't read from a text – you will not sound natural and it's very unlikely anything you have written will answer the question you have been asked.

• Record your media appearances and listen to the results so that you can improve your interview techniques for the next time.

**Doing the interview**

• Don't try to get too many facts and figures into an interview. Listeners can't take them all in and tend to recall only one thing that you said - the overall impression counts for more. Decide which two or three points are the key ones and concentrate on those.

• Make the points you want to make. You can try responding to questions you don't like with, "That's an interesting issue but the important point is really..." but don't be thrown if the interviewer comes back and repeats the same question.

• Reiteration is essential. Repeat your main points as often as possible in as many ways as you can without sounding monotonous.

• Use your everyday speech and words such as "the Pill", "choice", etc. If the interviewer uses words you are unhappy about (e.g. "the population bomb") don't use them yourself. Explain – preferably before the interview begins – why they are inaccurate or inappropriate.

• If you are asked something you don't know, reply with something you do know. For example, if you are asked what percentage of women nationally are using a particular contraceptive and you don't know, say "I don't have the exact figure with me but I do know that the numbers asking for it at our clinics have doubled in the past eighteen months"...etc.
The Internet

Internet technology is a tool that can be used to strategically enhance organisational outreach efforts. It is most effective as a complement and supplement to traditional advocacy efforts – rather than a substitute.

The Internet can be used as part of your advocacy work when you need an immediate response, want to contact a lot of people as quickly as possible and do not have a lot of money to spend on printing and postage. You can effectively create a “virtual community” of like-minded groups across great distances and networks on-line.

The Internet is seen as a key medium for NGOs to get their message out because it is:
- fast
- easy to update
- relatively low cost
- worldwide
- two-way
- flexible and adaptable.

The Internet offers distinct advantages over other communications medium. It has the potential to reach literally millions of people from every corner of the globe. On-line publishing of information is a fraction of the cost of print, radio or television equivalents – in effect putting small NGOs and large donors on an equal footing. On-line, an organisation is as big as it portrays itself to be! And an organisations on-line presence “never tires or sleeps”. Visits to the website occur long after the office is closed and the advocacy and communications process continues uninterrupted.

Tools of the Internet

There are a variety of tools associated with the Internet, the key ones being e-mail, listserves and the world-wide-web (www). And there are a wide variety of strategies for using them to advocate and build support.

Email

Email is the most common use of the Internet and is an efficient way to share information with one or a group of individuals. It is an effective on-line advocacy tool because it is active, immediate and widely used, as well as relatively inexpensive and low-tech compared to other Internet tools such as websites.

With great speed, emails can for example:
- send an alert to a select group of advocates/partners
- share plans for a campaign with key collaborators
- contact a legislative staff member with information on recent developments
- provide tailored information to media.
When you send e-mail - whether a private message to one individual or an electronic newsletter to a list with hundreds of subscribers - you are “pushing” information to other Internet users. Messages are literally delivered to their desk (although you can’t guarantee everyone who receives an e-mail will read it).

**Getting started and using e-mail**

- Collect e-mail addresses from your members, supporters and volunteers, the media, your contacts in legislative offices, your funders and anyone else you communicate with regularly. Include a space for e-mail addresses in your membership sign-up forms, newsletters, and fundraising reply materials.

- If your organization publishes a newsletter, offer your members the option of receiving it electronically – and you can encourage them by reminding them that your organisation will save money.

- Ensure your staff, board and volunteers regularly collect e-mail addresses from colleagues, friends and supporters and feed those in to e-mail listings.

- If you have a website where visitors can subscribe to a newsletter or action alert, donate money or sign up to volunteer, ask for an e-mail address as well as other contact information (as they are already clearly Internet users and will have e-mail).

**Listserves**

Listserves are essentially bulk e-mail – lists of e-mail addresses maintained on a computer that distributes messages among a group of recipients. People can subscribe to the list, although the owner of the listserv may restrict the participants or the messages. This is especially important in the SRH arena. With the opposition that we often face we need to ensure there are mechanisms to have some control on the flow of information and exchanges.

Listserves share the advantages of e-mails as a lower-tech alternative to the web. However, the mechanics of subscribing to a listserv and posting messages are more complex and require greater technical capacity.

Listserves are most effective for advocacy when communicating with a large group of individuals or organisations who share an advocacy goal or topic. Unlike e-mail, you do not necessarily need to know interested parties beforehand as supporters can subscribe themselves.

Cross-posting – when you send an e-mail alert to several discussion listserves or news groups – can be an effective way to expand your audience. But be careful to target only appropriate lists. People only want information they will be interested in, rather than unsolicited or junk information – known as “spam” on the Internet.

You can use listserves to:

- Encourage networking among individuals working on different aspects of the same issue
- Share information on legislative developments, new research, strategies or press coverage
- Identify a community of like minded people who can be mobilized for further action
- Send an alert to a network to encourage action, such as contacting legislators or attending an event.
Some tips for effective use of email discussion lists include:

- Start small and expand if and as necessary. Large lists can result in volumes of e-mail messages that can cause information overload. Small and focused is the best way to start, and grow as your capacity to handle information grows.

- Stay focused. The most effective e-mail discussion lists are those created around highly focused issue areas. If the topic of your list is too broad, then many messages will not be of interest to most of the list participants. Start several lists if you need to create forums for multiple issues or for different aspects of a bigger issue.

- Keep messages short. As with most e-mail communication, brief messages are much more effective than length transmissions. Shorter e-mails mean less on-line reading time to get to the information your audience needs.

- And remember, e-mail discussion lists are not a substitute for in-person or other communication, but can help building on the communication you do now (usually for less money and in less time).

**Websites**

Websites provide a unique and expanding opportunity to deliver, gather and exchange information to an unprecedented audience, both in terms of size and scope. Currently the world wide web (www) is the most sophisticated Internet tool. Its strength as a tool for advocacy lies in its powerful ways of presenting, collecting, sharing and coordinating information.

**Using www technology**

While e-mails and listserves are largely text based, the web allows an organisation to present information using graphics, sound and animation. Websites can be established with relatively simple technology, but the biggest drawback is expense – creating a sophisticated website may require substantial costs for design, equipment and staff to update and maintain it. However, a simple site can be created inexpensively with computer equipment your organisation may already possess.

For websites of smaller organisations often "less is more" – the high graphics and technological wizardry is often best left to others (and extensive use of graphics could make your website difficult to reach for those with less sophisticated technology). Instead focus on informational content and usefulness.

When planning a website you need to clearly define your audiences, objectives and the costs for achieving those objectives:

- consider that some of the target audiences you want to reach will not have easy access to the world wide web because of the cost of modern, graphic-capable computers.

- identify your organisation’s core competency and build your web site around that so visitors will have fewer things to choose from.

- consider which staff will be responsible for responding to e-mails generated by the website, who will keep the content up-to-date, etc.
• Provide value for time. The general public, as a large part of the target audience of websites (and those often hardest to reach and win over) have millions of sites at their fingertips. When surfing the Internet what they require from your website is **value for their time** and ease of finding the information they are interested in.

• Set up mechanisms for feedback on your website which are monitored and, most importantly, acted upon. Fortunately it is very cheap to tweak the text and the contents of web pages until you get the response you want.

• Work with other websites to help publicise your on-line advocacy efforts. Surfing the web can be useful to find other sites likely to work with and link to.

There are a whole range of features you can include on websites to promote your issue or cause including:

• Compile a page of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) (this also reduces the need to respond to common questions from visitors to your site)
• Set up an on-line petition
• Allow for e-mail postcards to be sent by visitors to your website – these could include key messages, images or information regarding your advocacy activities
• Set up a web forum where people can post and respond to messages, allowing for an interactive approach. Again because of potential opposition, such postings would have to be monitored and edited before being put on the site live.

If your organisation already has its own website, talk to its designer and content editor to decide how your campaign will be featured. When you begin it could perhaps be the first headline and story on the home page. Then after a time, as your activities grow, you will probably need your own pages with a well directed link from the home page. You will need to decide whether your campaign pages should have the same or different design to the rest of the organisations. Good web page design is not easy so try to find an expert to help.

Once you have your own web pages;

• be sure to keep them up to date. Increasingly the media and the general public will go to your site to find out the latest news – a page that hasn’t been updated for six months will put them off and look unprofessional. If you are not going to have the resources available to ensure the pages can be regularly updated it is probably better to have a generic campaign site with contact details where people can find out more by e-mail, phone, fax or post.

• make sure the text on the site is clear, unambiguous, simple and easy to read. Have a look at a number of websites that you like/are highly regarded and analyse their strengths.

• easy to use sites are usually more popular than very ‘clever’ sites which can take a long time to access.

• research other organisations’ sites to which people could link from yours and from which you would like a link – the more links you have the better. Surveys reveal that links from other websites are a key way in which people frequently find out about other organisations.
**Example I:**
When the Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada (PPFC) learned that they would no longer receive core funding from the Federal Government in 2000 they launched an on-line petition on their website asking for supporters to sign up. They used the rising national statistics of unintended pregnancy and that the Government did not have a national health strategy on sexual and reproductive health as compelling arguments to persuade visitors to the site to support their campaign. (www.ppfc.ca)

**Example II:**
Following the announcement by President Bush in 2001 of the reinstatement of the Mexico City Policy – known as the “global gag rule” which denies US international family planning funds to any NGO engaged directly or indirectly in abortion related activities, even if they were using non-US funding for these activities - IPPF’s website was mobilized to raise awareness on the issue. A special section was designed on the site with policy details, examples of the impact the Gag Rule would have on FPAs at the local level, requests for support such as signing a petition addressed to Bush, as well as comments and facilities provided to make donations. (www.ippf.org)

**Media work On-line**

- Your media efforts can be supplemented by use of the Internet. For example, if you are sending out press releases, start sending them by e-mail instead of faxing and always make sure copies are posted on your website, if you have one. Keep in mind that the subject line is the first thing journalists will see when they receive your release and make it catchy. Also use any relevant or useful hyperlinks (links within your e-mail message that will take the receiver directly to another site for further information)

- Post your organisations media contact information on the homepage of your website, and keep this information up-to-date.

- Set up an on-line archive on your website of your media communications and materials – press releases, online publications, etc.

- And remember to treat e-mail media inquiries the same as phone inquiries – respond as promptly to e-mail media inquiries as you would to phone calls.
Recruiting volunteers and members through websites

With many NGOs relying on volunteers and members to support their work, websites can be a useful place to recruit and encourage visitors to either become a volunteer or join your organisation. For example, both the Irish Family Planning Association (IFAP) and Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa (PPASA) include sections on their website on “How to become involved”. Make it easy for people to get involved.

And remember, websites have the capacity to reach people you have not, nor would not, usually reach. Using the Internet for constituency building and advocacy you can construct a virtual place where anyone who cares about your issue can get involved in a real way.

Privacy and data responsibility

The protection of personal information on-line has become a significant concern to many Internet users and increasingly the legal issues surrounding privacy and the collection of data on-line are being addressed.

Many companies – especially consumer business who are involved in e-commerce – now include a privacy policy on their websites and listserves. This explains what information is being collected; the use of that information; possible third party distribution of that information; commitment to data security and what steps the organization takes to ensure data quality and access.

These issues are of particular concern for NGOs who set up secure on-line giving facilities. Donations will not be made on-line unless there is confidence regarding the security of personal information.

However you use a website to support your advocacy activities, this issue is something you need to consider and monitor.

Useful Internet Advocacy Resources:

The Virtual Activist, A Training Course
www.netaction.org/training

Strategic Communications in the Digital Age
www.benton.org/Practice

Using the Internet for Advocacy and Community Building: Successful NGO Case Studies
www.wiredstrategies.com/inter-sample.htm

Internet Use: NGOs in Action
www.gdrc.org/ngo/internet-ngos.html

Internet Tools for Advocates
www.afj.org/eadvocacy/section1.htm
Printed materials

How you decide to reach the people you want to influence will depend on a number of factors. First and foremost will be what resources you can tap – both funds and expertise. Second will be how successful the differing ways of putting your message across are likely to be in your target groups. For instance, well produced educational booklets will have success with teachers and educators – and the investment may well be worth it if one of your main objectives is to persuade them that sexual and reproductive health should be included in the school curriculum. However they are quite expensive to produce and will not be the same sort of document you would want to send to the young people themselves. What follows are some printed material options for you to consider.

Publications can be used;

- for outreach and mobilising the public
- as ways to catch the attention of the media and others on your issue and campaign
- to report progress or findings.

Flyers

Flyers are the most inexpensive way to get your message out to the public. Flyers are generally one small page and give the what/why/who/where/when of your issues, activities and/or events.

Flyers are best used when you want to notify the public about an upcoming meeting or event and/or to carry information you want to convey quickly. They are also good to use when you need to mail something to large numbers of people as postage costs are lower.

Pamphlets

Pamphlets can be cost-efficient and effective if you have access to desk top publishing software. Pamphlets need to be;

- eye-catching
- easy to read
- free of jargon

They should summarise the main points of your campaign and organisation as briefly, yet as comprehensively, as possible. The more wordy a pamphlet is, the less likely it will be read.

Pamphlets are often used because they can be an excellent way to summarise your campaign and/or issues in a brief, eye-catching format. They can also be used as “handouts” when you are canvassing.
**Booklets**

Booklets provide much more detail about an issue or position and require extensive planning, research, and writing. They are, as a result, much more expensive to produce. Because booklets usually contain more substantive documentation and research, they can be used to establish greater credibility and visibility with the media, scholars, educators, and other advocates.

To make sure that your booklet is read and used include a summary page or cover letter summarising the main points when distributing it. Booklets also can be sold to the public, if the information contained in them is valuable and in demand.

**Newsletters**

Newsletters are excellent publications that keep supporters up-to-date on your activities, as well as other news related to your organisation or issues. They can be widely distributed at a relatively low cost, making them an important public information and constituency-building tool. They are also a valuable way of publicly acknowledging and thanking organisations and people who are contributing to your campaign.

However, the point of a newsletter is that it comes out regularly. This means you must allocate enough routine time for somebody to collect the material and produce it, as well as to update the mailing list and distribute it. While fliers can be prepared quickly, and pamphlets undertaken in quiet moments, a newsletter has to be recognised as a time-consuming on-going activity.

Newsletters can be as long or short as needed, although in issue-specific campaigns, shorter is usually better. A newsletter will include:

- details of your group’s latest activities
- general news pertaining to the issues you are working on
- interviews with relevant people who have something interesting to say
- upcoming events or dates
- in-depth articles on specific topics.

Since many people read newsletters as a way in which to familiarise themselves with an issue or group, include:

- a short description of your organisation in each issue – but not on the front page
- details of where and from whom people can get further information.

You also can use newsletters as fundraising tools by inserting contribution cards or printed contribution requests.
**Annual reports**

Annual reports describe organisations and their activities over the year (or years) and provide detailed financial reports, funding sources, and organisational accomplishments. If your campaign is substantial and long-running, annual reports are invaluable fundraising and promotional tools. They are also a good way of recognising the input and achievements of everyone involved and the generosity of donors.

Annual reports do not have to be expensive to produce. You can produce one in-house on your office computer or word processor and copy it for general distribution. The information it contains is more important than how glossy it looks.

Good annual reports include the following:

- a short general description of your efforts and organisation
- an introduction or overview of the time period covered by the report
- a breakdown of each programme area and a description of activities in each
- budget and financial statements
- staff listings
- donations or other contributions
- other information that highlights your progress and achievements.

**Position papers**

Position papers state your campaign’s position on a particular issue. It is useful to have these on hand in case you are asked by the media or public officials for your position on particular central or associated issues.

Although easy to produce, position papers are frequently more difficult to write. Pay careful attention to the way your position papers are phrased since they are often used as the basis for describing your effort in the media and public forums.

When writing position statements or papers:

- Use clear, simple language which is comprehensible to someone who knows nothing about your issues.
- Have others read the statement to make sure that it is clear. Ask the same individuals to take the opposing side of the position and point out errors or inconsistencies in your position so that changes can be made before the document is publicly distributed.
- Keep them as short as possible. That way everybody connected with the campaign will get to know them almost by heart and can respond without hesitation to questions.
**Fact sheets/Factcards**

Fact sheets or factcards list facts about your issue or a particular topic. They can be extremely efficient ways to impart information to the public, the media, or policy makers because they sum up the issues succinctly. They can also use data that are of interest to the public.

When writing fact sheets or factcards, make sure you use the most current data you can find, and footnote or indicate where and from whom the data originated. This will greatly increase your credibility in the eyes of people who use them. Do not spend much money on them since you may wish to update frequently.

**Canvassing**

Canvassing involves going from door-to-door, or approaching people in the street to tell them about your issue and recruit their support. Canvassers hand out flyers or other material and talk to people about the issue or campaign. While canvassing may not be the fastest method of getting your message out, it provides the opportunity for you to communicate your message in a more substantive and personalised way. It also provides an opportunity to hear what your community has to say about the issue, and for you to modify or adapt your message accordingly.

The key to successful canvassing is to appeal to people’s self-interest; people are interested in hearing more about organisations working on issues that personally affect them.

- Talk about how the issue relates to them, their family and/or their community
- Also, if you are recruiting them to volunteer for your cause, ask them to participate in a specific activity you may undertake in the near future.

**Petitions**

Petitions involve the gathering of names and addresses of people who support a particular campaign, piece of legislation, or other initiatives. In some countries, a public petition has to follow certain defined rules in its presentation, if it is to be presented to a public authority or to parliament. Always check for such rules before you start to organise a petition.

By themselves, petitions are not the most effective means for influencing elected leaders or others you may wish to target. However, petitions which gain, perhaps unexpectedly, large numbers of signatures may also make a good story about your campaign for the media – so don’t forget to tell them about it. Also petitions can be an extremely effective way of collecting the names and addresses of supporters and potential new volunteers, and for documenting the power of your support constituency. Everyone who signs a petition should be asked if they would be willing to undertake some volunteer activity for your cause. Providing they have given permission for you to do so, follow up on their signatures by mail, phone or e-mail.

If you have a website don’t forget to use it to canvass for supporters and signatories for your petition. It is quite simple set up an automatic reply function for people to ‘sign-up’ on-line.
Enhancing your public information efforts

Involving even more people and having some fun too

Not everyone who agrees with you about your issue and fully supports you will be either willing, or able, to be a long-term member of your team. But they may well be keen to be involved on a short-term basis for a particular event. Partly to utilise this potential energy and effort - but more importantly to help raise your profile, to be seen in the community and to have some fun - consider ways in which a much wider group/s can be involved. What follows are a few ideas to help you begin thinking - it is not exhaustive and there are many more events which will work for you in your community.

- Street parties, opened by a local celebrity, to mark suitable and relevant international days during which you can also publicise your issue.
- Discos and nightclub events organised and run by young people led by a popular DJ who also puts your message across.
- Public meetings, with refreshments and celebrity speakers at a range of venues to attract different groups.
- A ‘Run for Rights’ depending on your issue – it may well be possible to get sponsorship for something like this. Local firms may be prepared to provide caps and T-shirts for you with appropriate logos and messages. Enlist celebrity runners – sporting and others, the media, other organisations and the public to take part. Persuading a popular local radio station to be a partner is a very effective way of drumming up support. And you and your issue get lots of publicity.
- If other organisations are having big public events – e.g. a candlelight walk for their priority issue, providing of course you share their views, get involved with them. Get as many of your supporters to join the ‘Walk’ together, perhaps wearing T-shirts with your logo. Join, support and raise your profile too!
- Dinners and parties of any sort can be good ways to involve more people and can be helpful for fundraising too. Be careful though – be absolutely sure you can make more money than the event will cost! Prepare a detailed and complete budget which is on the conservative when you are estimating numbers who will come. Be sure there are good reasons for people to attend – just supporting your issue may not be enough to persuade them to buy a ticket and give up an evening – you probably need some sort of celebrity presence advertised in advance too. Be sure that any food and entertainment you intend to provide is appropriate to the people you want to come. You want them to enjoy themselves, to be generous on the night and want to come to other things you organise.

You can often get good support in the form of, for example, raffle prizes from local shops and businesses.

Don’t be shy about asking and make sure they know they will be given due credit, and that they are given it. As an NGO, venues too will often make you a good deal on premises and catering – again, don’t be afraid to ask. It is good for them to be seen to be supporting good community causes. And don’t forget to invite the media.
**Conducting polls**

Polls are a systematic, quantitative and impartial way of gathering information from a sample of voters and generalising about the larger group or population from which the sample is drawn.

Although undertaking a representative opinion poll is too expensive for many smaller agencies and NGOs, it is sometimes possible to purchase one or two key questions to a questionnaire on a related topic. Alternatively, a magazine or other media outlet may be willing to undertake a poll on a controversial topic if you persuade them it will be a good story. (This, of course, will only be representative of their readers/listeners so be careful how you present the results.) Or you may simply use the findings from polls which have been undertaken by the government or researchers. If you find, through a poll, that the public supports your issue, use this information to publicise the broad support you have.

**Example:**

A Gallup Poll found that 83 per cent of Americans think blockades of abortion clinics are wrong even where such Americans themselves believe abortion is murder. This poll was quoted in the prestigious journal the *Lancet* to support its editorial calling for stronger laws to protect the clinics from violent anti-choice supporters. If you cannot access an opinion poll, try to find other indicators of what the public thinks or wants. Possible sources include:

- KAP (Knowledge, Attitude and Practice) surveys or fertility surveys.
  
  **Example:** 30 per cent of married women say they already have all the children they want, according to a recent KAP survey.

- Programme statistics.
  
  **Example:** Numbers of young people attending the FPA’s new youth clinic have trebled over the past six months from x to x – a rise of y%.

**Conducting focus groups**

Focus groups involve a small group (a sample) of people who freely discuss your issue and your organisation in response to questions designed by you to find out what people think about your efforts. Groups are comprised of 10 to 12 individuals, are usually randomly selected, and are representative of the population being consulted.

You can use focus groups to:

- Learn more about what the public or another group of individuals thinks about your organisation, how effective it is, and/or what it might be doing better.

- Learn more about what individuals think about family planning or other reproductive health issues so that you can design better messages, educational materials and campaigns.

- Learn what individuals think about the opposition so that you can use this information to help devise your future strategies and activities.
Example:

In a ‘safe sex’ project to extend condom use among sex workers and their clients, a FPA brought together local sex workers, brothel owners and clients to answer a questionnaire about their knowledge of, and attitudes to, AIDS and the use of condoms. From this exercise the Association learned what information and messages were needed in the project.

But to define which communication channels would be most effective in spreading the educational messages, the investigation used focus groups consisting of sex workers and their clients. They were encouraged to talk about what they read, heard and saw from the media and how it affected them. The Association found that few were influenced by newspapers or magazines but that they did recall radio messages if they came in the context of a popular programme. It also found that these groups seldom noticed information unless it had direct, immediate relevance.

As a result of what the groups said, the project decided to use a radio programme mixing taped music with educational messages; attractive counter displays of educational materials in the brothels and posters on the walls and doors of the brothel rooms.

Hotlines

Many groups use telephone hotlines to tell colleagues and their members about important issues, legislative activity, or grassroots efforts going on in their community, state or country. Hotlines can be efficient ways to let your members know what is happening and how they can get involved.

Hotlines either feature a taped message which is updated regularly or a person at the other end who can answer questions, send materials, or provide information for the caller. Sometimes, hotlines can be used to conduct a poll of your membership to find out how they feel about a particular issue.

Example I:

One FPA organised a two-week hotline service to alert women to the need for routine cervical smears. Advertised in local radio and the newspapers, the campaign generated considerable publicity as well, with newspaper features, radio and TV interviews. Women who called the advertised number heard a recorded message describing;

- why cervical smears could save lives
- the importance of regular screening
- what the screening involved
- where it could be done, with a number to ring for an appointment with a female doctor.

Those who wanted more information were asked to leave an address or telephone number on the tape at the end of the recording. They were followed up with posted leaflets or a telephone call from a nurse, as required.
Example II:

Another organisation held a week-long hotline survey of what women wanted from a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health service. The survey was preceded by carefully planned advance publicity in the local media, which drew attention to the types of service which might be covered, as well as to issues like whether all-female staff would be preferred and what kinds of privacy women desired.

Women who rang the interviewers on an advertised number were asked to answer a short structured questionnaire and then invited to make additional comments or suggestions. Analysis of the answers and comments provided valuable input for determining policies and priorities for the new service. The results also provided considerable further media publicity and community involvement with the project.
Reaching policy makers

The lobbying process: how it works

If you are seeking political or legislative change, you need to make contact with policy makers and "lobby" them to see the issue the way you see it. Lobbying is most effective when you are in need of something specific from the legislative system, e.g. a bill that permits more funding for SRH and family planning services, a law that will legalise abortion, etc.

Before you approach policy makers:

- Familiarise yourself with the system or legislative process itself – the written and unwritten “rules” of how it works.
- Also familiarise yourself with the individuals you are trying to reach. Because different policy makers have different priorities, you should tailor your presentation to their interests when you contact them:
  - do they support SRH and family planning but not abortion?
  - do they support birth control but want it limited to adults?
  - what are their voting records on your issue?
  - who voted for them?
  - are they amenable to your issue or position? If not, is there an indication that they might be in the near future?

You should also:

- Familiarise yourself with the staff members of the policy makers you are targeting. A positive relationship with the staff will help ensure that you and your issue are taken seriously. Also, the more time you spend with staff, the greater chance you have of being called on for input when new policies are introduced or hearings held.

If you want to lobby for a particular bill, law or issue with a policy maker, you can communicate with them either through a letter, or even better, a personal meeting or a phone call.

When writing letters:

- Be brief and to the point. State why you are writing in the first sentence.
- Be personal in making your case. Include anecdotes or stories about your issue.
- Provide a convincing rationale for why the policy maker should support your issue and why it is important for you, your community and your country that s/he supports it.
Include your mission statement or position on the issue and mention how many members belong to your group and what your wider support is.

Tailor your arguments and points to the policy maker’s personal background and/or interests.

Don’t shy away from controversial topics. Provide reasonable arguments for your position without apologies.

Provide examples of how the policy you want the policy maker to support has already worked previously or elsewhere.

Offer to provide the policy maker with additional information or materials.

When making personal visits:

Thank the policy maker for past support and tell s/he how important it is to you.

Keep comments brief and to the point since you will probably have limited time to make your case. Provide strong arguments for your position.

Be personal, when possible. For example, “I know that when you travelled to Brazil last year you visited a clinic...”

Be prepared to provide clear and comprehensive answers to questions. Don’t dodge tough questions; it will hurt your presentation. If you don’t know the answer, say: “I’m not sure about the exact figures on that, but I can call you later this afternoon and give them to you.”

Try to get a commitment from them. If you are asking them to sponsor a particular bill or oppose a piece of legislation, try to get a commitment that they will do what you want them to do.

Leave information on your campaign with the policy maker. Local items or examples affecting their constituency are especially helpful.

Treat staff members as you would the policy maker. Meet with them as well. They are your link to the policy maker and can help you present your case. Leave information with them.

Send thank you notes to both the policy maker and/or staff members after meetings.

Telephone calls are best used when there is an emergency situation that needs “quick” lobbying: a bill is being voted on that day, a court decision is being announced, etc.

When phoning:

Identify yourself and give your address

Make your message short and direct

Be precise about what you want the policy maker to do

If unable to reach them, talk to one of their staff members.
The lobbying process: general tips

You will be a successful “lobbyist” when you are viewed as credible, dependable and knowledgeable. You can help achieve this by:

- Establishing yourself as a resource for policy makers working on this issue by providing them with your position papers, your publications, and other solid information you have about your issues.
- Making it clear that you are ready to help them by providing additional data or other materials promptly on request.
- Keeping your issue in front of the policy maker as much as possible. Don’t make the mistake of approaching policy makers only when you want something. Take your time and develop contacts and personal relationships with policy makers by thanking them when they vote positively on your issue or by publicly supporting them. Put them on your mailing lists and invite them to events.
- Remembering that there are no permanent friends or enemies; last year’s “villain” on a particular issue may be this year’s “hero” on a different issue that is of interest to you. For example, a policy maker may have voted against legalised abortion, but may be supportive of subsidised SRH and family planning services.
- Network with policy makers and their staff whenever possible.
- Count the supportive policy makers at the beginning of and throughout the lobbying campaign. Make sure you know exactly how many policy makers you need on your side to implement your bill or law before starting a lobbying campaign. By doing this, you can be more strategic about whom you approach and when.

Letter-writing campaigns

Letter-writing campaigns are coordinated efforts to deliver hand-written, personal letters urging support of a particular issue to elected or public officials, as well as other public figures.

Never use a form letter. Each separate letter, while emphasising the same issue, should be individually expressed. Personal letters are taken very seriously by elected officials, especially when they are accompanied by petitions of signatures you have collected.

If you have set up a meeting with an elected official:

- Get your volunteers and supporters to start sending letters stating your position to him or her a few weeks before the meeting.

When you attend the meeting:

- Bring your petitions to substantiate your level of support; be brief and well-organised in your presentation. Tell him/her how much their support would mean for your issue.
Letter-writing campaigns also can be used to bring pressure on other individuals and groups to support or oppose a particular activity. For example, SRH supporters who would like to set up a youth centre in their city might initiate a letter-writing campaign to the city authorities to point out the sexual health problems of young people and the need for a specialised service for them.

Encourage everyone to write letters to the editor of your local newspaper and call radio phone-in programmes when you need to:

- attract more attention to your issue
- respond to something that was printed about your issue that you liked or did not like
- provide additional information that may not have been included in the original coverage.

**Briefings**

A good way to get policy makers interested in your issue and to learn more about it is to hold periodic briefings for them and/or members of their staff. Briefings usually feature experts from your group and/or from others affiliated with your efforts talking about the issue, the latest data about the issue, and the importance of it. If appropriate ask them to invite others who may be interested.

Make sure when you hold your briefing that you have handouts or publications available for the policy makers so that they can read them at their leisure or hand them on to their staff. Short fact sheets about your campaign and the issue that are easy to read are especially good to have at the briefing. Also:

- Have participants sign in before the briefing so you can send ‘thank you’ notes to everyone who attended.
- Follow up with a phone call asking if they need more information and/or for a meeting to discuss your efforts in greater depth.

**Example:**

Starting a SRH youth clinic in a particular town may be a controversial step. When your plans are complete, you may wish to invite local policy makers to a briefing session, where you:

- describe, with statistics and anecdotes, why you believe such a clinic is needed
- invite an expert familiar with youth clinics to explain their work and advantages
- list those organisations and individuals you have consulted or are networking with, such as social workers, teachers, parent groups
- outline your plans and your expectations, and how you will evaluate the clinic’s achievements
- display the types of materials (pamphlets, posters, videos etc.) which will be available
- introduce the staff who will be directly involved, and identify those who will always be available for further information
- provide a fact sheet as well as a briefing kit with fuller information and samples of the educational materials
- reassure them that you will keep them in touch with all developments, and tell them you would like their involvement at every stage.
Educating colleagues and others

Conferences and workshops

Conferences and workshops can be effective ways to promote your cause to a variety of audiences and colleagues. Conferences and workshops:

- give people a general orientation, conception or overview of a subject
- teach people to do something, e.g. legislative advocacy, media relations, fundraising
- create a common language, attitude or approach to an issue or campaign and thereby, improve communication among members and their ability to convey your message to the public
- bring people together and provide opportunities for mutual support and learning
- create enthusiasm and solidify commitment among members
- map out future key actions and activities.

Planning

The following are the steps you should take in planning workshops and conferences:

- Clarify what you hope to achieve by holding a conference or workshop and set objectives for its outcome. The design of your conference or workshop will depend on what you hope to achieve. For example, a conference to provide participants with new information about contraceptives will be different from one that gives participants a chance to interact and share strategies.

- Decide who should attend. The most successful conferences involve people with similar backgrounds or levels of experience.

- Fine tune your content. To save time and energy, and to design a worthwhile conference, find out as much as you can beforehand what your audience already knows and what they want to know about your issue.

- Plan specific activities and the programme. After you have determined what participants’ knowledge level is, decide what specific activities should be included in the conference.
  - will there be hands-on opportunities to learn
  - will the conference mainly consist of speakers and lectures
  - will there be panel discussions or presentations?
  - will there be use of visual aids
• Decide who your facilitators will be
  who will lead the panel discussions, who will participate on the panel
• will there be an equal mix of people regarding sex, race, geographic location, etc., participating as leaders and attendees.

When designing the programme:
• Shape it carefully to maximise the quality of topics and speakers – for example
  if you have one person who, although essential in terms of their subject and stature, is a less animated speaker place him/her between two lively sessions or just before lunch
• if there is to be a keynote speaker place him/her carefully in the programme
• Decide if there is to be a reception or some other informal event for all attendees
• What handouts or written materials do you want to give to participants
• Decide what the fee, if any, will be to attend. You may be able to cover the expenses of a conference by charging participants a fee to attend, or for materials.

Implementation

After planning what kind of conference or workshop you will hold, you need to:
• Find out when your keynote speakers are available to take part and book them
• Do a calendar of deadlines i.e. getting invitations out, reserving the space, etc. Make sure you give yourself enough time for planning and producing printed materials
• Secure the space in which you plan to hold the conference
• Make mailing lists of people you intend to invite as participants
• Send out invitations, flyers, or other notices about the conference. Include a reply slip with space for the attendee’s name and address so that they can send it back to you with their form of payment (if you are charging a fee). This way, you will know who is coming and if they’ve paid at the time of the conference.

Evaluation

Distribute evaluation forms at the end of every conference or workshop to find out what participants thought of the:
• presentations
• panels
• networking opportunities
• meals and accommodation
Also ask for their suggestions and use this feedback when planning your next event.
Evaluations should be as specific as possible. People usually quite enjoy conferences as a change from their routine, so that if you ask:

“How useful did you find this session (please circle one answer):

Very useful  Quite useful  Not useful"

most people will reply that it was quite useful, even if they have learnt very little. You will get better feedback if you ask more specific questions.

Example

“In this session, did you:

Confirm your knowledge  Learn little new information  Gain valuable

Did you find out all you wanted to know? Yes/No
Why/why not?

Was there anything which you would exclude?

Please give specific comments on a x Session Leader’s delivery style.

In what way could the session have been improved? Please be specific.
Dealing with the opposition

You have now:

• defined your mission
• decided on your goals and objectives
• outlined what activities you will undertake to meet your goals
• identified potential supporters and detractors
• created lists and other systems to maintain contact with your supporters and potential supporters
• examined the pros and cons of forming or participating in a coalition.

You have also:

• decided who your target audience is and what your goals are in reaching that audience
• decided what your message will be and how you will frame your issue
• thought about and determined ways to reach the public with your message
• decided how to approach policy makers with your issues
• considered and decided on which tools are available to you to enhance your education, outreach, and organising efforts.

So you are well on your way to establishing a strong advocacy campaign. The more powerful and successful your campaign is, however, the more likely it is to be attacked by the opposition. Unrelenting attacks by the opposition can lead to demoralisation for you and your team. This next section aims to help you to prevent the opposition from destroying your morale and, perhaps, your campaign and ways to use them to your advantage.

Knowing the opposition

It’s a good idea to know as much as you can about your opponents – brief yourself on their:

• activities
• public statements
• news coverage
• background of the organisation and their base of support.

With this information, you can bring public attention to show your issue is being actively opposed, how these efforts will have a negative effect on your community and individuals, and how the public can get involved in fighting back. Use the results of your research to expose misinformation campaigns if they occur – but be cautious about doing so. ‘Answering back’ can sometimes serve to give the opposition more publicity and credibility. Some attacks on you might be better ignored or even treated humorously – in other words you make the attack look trivial rather than serious!
Examples:

Those opposed to family planning often hold extreme religious or conservative political views. If you can document these views you can show that they do not represent community standards or values, but only the views of a small minority which they are attempting to impose on the community.

Such people often write to newspapers and politicians or appear in the media as concerned individuals. If you can show that they are in fact members of an unrepresentative and extreme organisation you reduce their credibility as voices of the general public.

Some of the opponent organisations have surprisingly large financial backing which enables them to bring speakers and campaigners from other countries to publicise their cause. Identifying the sources of their support may also document their links to organisations or beliefs which are unacceptable to your community or target audiences.

Addressing the opposition

Advocacy can often generate opposition, particularly in the area of sexual and reproductive rights and health. Your opponents work just as diligently as you do to present their position as the “correct” one. The opposition may negatively portray or publicly denounce your organisation and its activities and, in some cases, you personally. These tactics;

- may strengthen the opposition’s own position and ranks of supporters
- may create feelings of uncertainty and hesitancy among your own current and would-be supporters.

Whether the opposition is mild or strong, you should be prepared to address it in a way that is most beneficial to your own efforts. Try to meet hardcore opposition head-on otherwise you may confuse the public and weaken hard-won support.

To lessen the influence of (and potential influence of) the opposition:

- Take clear positions on major and controversial issues right at the start of a campaign after undertaking careful research that will substantiate your position.

- Prepare for the questions and criticisms you will most likely receive. The more knowledgeable and professional you appear, the more confident you are, the more trust and support you will engender and the less damage the opposition will inflict.

- Gather information about opponents. The more you know about the opposition itself – who they are, what they do, who they are affiliated with – the better you can anticipate and respond to their actions. For example, if you know that the leadership of the opposition is affiliated with an extremist organisation that is viewed unfavourably by the public, you can use this information in your public statements and materials. But, please, be very careful to triple check such information before using it. Libel cases are expensive and do everyone involved damage.
• Prepare a media strategy to use in response to negative campaigns against you. Even though the press and the public may be aware that negative campaigns are being instituted solely to discredit your efforts, it is still important to publicise this and to respond, when appropriate.

• Weigh the benefits and disadvantages of responding, especially to just one attack in a little-read newspaper, since doing so can attract more media coverage for the other side because your fight becomes “the news” rather than the issue.

• If you decide to respond, clarify your position and identify any inaccuracies that have been stated by the other side. If your campaign efforts are being distorted, provide a calm point by point refutation of inaccuracies backed up with documentation.

• Avoid hostility and never resort to name-calling when speaking about the opposition, whatever the provocation.

• Try to anticipate negative campaigns by the opposition and take whatever action you can before they occur. When the attacks come be sure reporters and the public have basic information about the opposition, their tactics, and their ultimate goals. Prepare a one-page explanation of your position for use with the press.

• Handle attacks by the religious community with great sensitivity. Attacks on your campaign by the religious community may include sermons denouncing you or your position, letters to the editor, or editorials in religious publications. In your response never attack, or be thought to be attacking, their religion – simply respond factually to the points being made.

• Don’t directly challenge or criticise the religious group that attacks you. In most cases, it is best not to respond at all. Instead, try and reach out to religious groups. Explain your position and focus on areas where you and they are in agreement.

• Disseminate your materials on the issue to other organisations who are supportive of your efforts. Educate other organisations on the issues and your positions so that they can join you standing up to the opposition.

Example:

Religious fundamentalism as well as widespread patriarchal attitudes create an unfavourable climate for many FPAs. One Association believed that its most vocal critics often knew least about its real work. It met religious and social opposition through a programme of education and reason, including ‘orientation’ meetings for local community and religious leaders.

Over a decade, the Association created dialogues with thousands of such local leaders in an attempt to overcome distrust and suspicion. By developing an understanding of their fears, and by willingness to meet critics with carefully-researched discussion the Association has moderated many of the attacks. One religious leader even made a public apology for his criticisms of local people who used contraception.
It’s all gone wrong!

Over time, oppositional confrontation, public denunciation and a seeming lack of perceptible progress can result in the seeming demoralisation of you and your team. This happens when caring, committed people can no longer find the motivation to continue and feel that their work is meaningless and a waste of time. Unrealistic expectations about the pace of change - which is often very slow - also contributes greatly to this not uncommon situation.

Ways to help

- Set clear, realistic, and incremental goals for your organisation and each member of it. Whenever a success, however small, is achieved ensure the person/people responsible is/are thanked and the achievement is acknowledged and shared by the whole team.

- People will feel more commitment to a campaign when expectations are realistic and clearly defined, as well as when their work is recognised.

- Be clear about what constitutes “success”. Small victories are just as important as big ones. Create an environment where your group can learn to recognise and enjoy small victories, as well as appreciate their role in moving toward larger goals.

- Stress the positive and avoid focusing on the negative. Continually pointing out what was done wrong or what was left undone will not motivate anyone; instead, it will fuel feelings of resentment, anger, and/or depression and lead to demoralisation.

- When conflict occurs, don’t ignore it. Address it immediately in a way that is sensitive to the individuals involved and listen to all sides with an open mind. Try to establish an atmosphere where conflict is less likely – that is an open, friendly and co-operative one where there are no hidden agendas and everyone who has something to say is able to say it and where grievances therefore cannot fester. The occasional purely social gathering with the team can help people find common ground outside the office.

- Give members of your team a realistic, but inspiring/encouraging perspective on your issues and how they will affect social change.

- Provide insight into the history both of the organisation and of the larger movement to which it is committed. Remind people occasionally of past successes which took a long time to achieve – it can be helpful for people to recognise their frustrations, their difficulties and problems are not unique or insurmountable.

- Visit the places or communities where you want to affect change. Making personal contact with the people you want to help serves to remind your group why you are doing this work and add a personal connection to abstract policy debates.
• Keep your sense of humour and perspective. When things go wrong, take a minute to assess how important a mistake is in the larger scheme of your organisation’s work – the chances are it really isn’t important at all.

• Recognise that a commitment to social change is a long-term commitment and that you and your colleagues contribution matters.

• From time to time try and get an influential/important outsider to send a note of appreciation to the team for their efforts. This could be equally from someone who will benefit from your efforts as from a government minister or another NGO. Such acknowledgements will help you demonstrate to the team that however frustrating, difficult and long the campaign is turning out to be, it is not only you who says it is worth the effort!
Conclusion

Advocacy campaigns are hard work and require constant enthusiasm, energy commitment and dedication from you and your colleagues. Along the way they should also be fun. With time, careful planning, and commitment, your efforts can result in change in, and for, your community, in your state, or your country.

If you would like more information about specific areas of advocacy contact the Global Advocacy Division at IPPF Central Office or Regional Offices and the following are suggested resources which you might find helpful.

- ‘A’ Frame for Advocacy, Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs (JHU/CCP) (available at www.jhuccp.org/pr/advocacy/index.stm)
- Advocacy Guidance Notes, British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND) (available www.bond.org.uk/advocacy/guidance.)