

## Advocating for Change, Documentation and Improving Practice

### Preparing for Advocacy: Actor Factor Analysis

Actor factor analysis is a method for doing a political mapping of stakeholder and situations or circumstances around any issue for which change is desired or advocacy is to be planned. The exercise can be easily conducted in a training/community situation.

Actor factor analysis is a two stage process which when combined with planning becomes a three stage planning tool/process.

#### Stage one: Identification of Actors and Factors

In this stage all the stakeholder around the issue of concern are identified, along with those all who may have a potential interest in the issue. Similarly all the circumstances – beliefs, customs, practices, rules, events, situations affecting the issue under discussion are also listed. For example if the issue of concern is ***‘Discrimination in a Health Facility’*** setting the two lists that may emerge may look like this

<b>Actors</b>	<b>Factors</b>
Medical Officer	National policy of HIV/AIDS treatment
Nurse	National anti- discrimination laws (if any)
Other Health Centre staff	Guidelines for healthcare providers and clinics
District Health Officer	Community beliefs about stigma and discrimination
Local Chief	Sexuality related beliefs and practices
Members of the PLWHA groups	Past experiences at this clinic or in similar situation
Families of PLWHA	
Friends and neighbours of PLWHA	

There is no emphasis to make a complete or exhaustive list – but to start the process of enlistment. The lists can be expanded at a later stage.

#### Stage 2 – Political mapping

During this stage all the actors and factors who have been enlisted are entered into a five column matrix.

Strongly in favour	In Favour	Unmobilised/ Neutral	Against	Strongly against

All the actors and factors are classified into one of these categories. New actors and factors can be introduced in this stage. The emphasis is on identifying those who may be inactive at

this stage but who may have a potential role to play. Their current stage of interest/mobilisation on the issue is indicated in the matrix. Thus the female media person who reports on university issues may be potentially interested but may have shown no interest in sexual harassment issues so she has to be classified as neutral or unmobilised.

In a training/community situation the participants can be divided into groups and made to work on the same or different issues. Once they have prepared their initial lists on paper they may be asked to write down each actor or factor on a VIPP/ Idea card. Actors and Factors may be written on cards of different colour. Once the initial list of actors and factors are written down on cards the participants may be encouraged to physically map out these in a matrix form – thus.

Issue: (A = Actor from list of Actors; F = Factors from list of Factors)

Strongly in favour	In Favour	Unmobilised/ Neutral	Against	Strongly against
A1 A2 F4	A3 F4 F5 A9	A6 F3	A4 A5	A7 A8 F2

While this matrix is being mapped new actors and factors may suggest themselves and should be added. One should also try to identify those actors and factors that are currently uninvolved but have a potential to take a positive stand on the issue. This map may also indicate how ripe an issue is for change. If the overall distribution of actors and factors is towards the favourable side an issue is ripe for change, however if the actors and factors are overwhelmingly on the right side it may be appropriate to revise the issue and identify an interim change objective.

Planning for Change

This essentially involves strategies for moving actors and factors from the right side of the matrix left side. Different strategies may be appropriate for influencing different actors and factors. In some cases actors and factors on the extreme right may be left alone and isolated by organising all other actors and factors in favour or strongly in favour or at least neutral. In a training/community situation the VIPP/Idea cards can be manipulated while the strategies are discussed.

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	←	←	←	←

### **Alliance / Coalition building**

Advocacy can rarely be done alone. One of the key responsibilities of the advocate is perhaps to obtain a mandate from the very people whose cause she/he is taking forward. Thus building a partnership with the affected is an important step in the process. But this alone is not enough; other important constituents in an advocacy strategy include members of the media, NGOs concerned with the issue, academics, public personalities who can endorse the demand, health groups, legal and so on. The objective of coalition building is not only to engage more constituencies around to issue and build broader consensus and political support around the issue but also to increase resources within the group.

In the process of coalition building the main issue should remain clearly in focus and not get diluted. However together with this process there needs to be consensus built on the specifics- viz. what will be the position of the group on the issue, what are the various outcomes that are desired, who will take what roles and so on. During these discussions the various people involved should discuss which the non-negotiables are, what the common minimum understanding is and what the areas of compromise are.

#### *Identifying Allies*

- Which other groups and organisations are working on the issue?
- Are there any pre-existing networks working on the broad issue?
- What are their stands, approach to the problem? How similar or dissimilar is it?
- What are the relative strengths of these organisations and networks?
- Can we contribute to their processes and activities, do they need our contributions?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of working together with these groups and networks?

### **Public Sharing/ Hearing of Evidence**

Public Hearings and Public Tribunals are public fora for sharing rights violations. In a Public Hearing the rights violations are usually shared in front of an official panel of empowered officials like the National Human Rights Commission and its state counterparts or the National Commission of Women and its state counterparts. The Hearing is a quasi-judicial proceeding in which the members of the panel provide instructions and directions to the responsible officials to take administrative action to rectify the situation. In the case of a Public Tribunal the panel is not official, however in order to give the panel credibility it usually comprises of eminent citizens who need not be experts on the subject, but who should be known for their social concern. The Panel members should be willing to make clear and unequivocal statements based on their observations during the panel. The panel hears the testimonies and experiences of the persons whose rights have been violated and then makes its recommendations and observations which are usually directed towards the state agencies responsible for action on the subject. It is essential to prepare carefully before organising a public hearing or tribunal.

It is important to strengthen a coalition of partners who will be participating in the event. It is also necessary to prepare detailed documentation of rights violations which take place. It is necessary to highlight the common kinds of violations which take place routinely rather than

exceptional cases which can be easily explained away. The documentation of cases could comprise of oral record of experiences substantiated by documentary evidence like Outpatient department tickets, indoor records, discharge certificates etc. In recording the experiences it is necessary to record the specific instances where the required services were either absent, or denied or provided in a substantially inadequate manner. Even though the testimonies from victims and survivors make the core of a public hearing or tribunal, it is often not possible to provide them justice through this mechanism. The persons making testimonies should be prepared for this. Secondary evidence on the issue is also useful in many cases.

The actual event could begin with the organisers explaining the objective and structure of the programme. This can be followed by the oral testimonies of the cases where rights denial and violations took place. In cases where the aggrieved person or the relatives want their names to be kept confidential or the organisers feel that revealing the identity of the aggrieved person could jeopardize him or her names and village should not be revealed. After the cases of denial are presented, the report based on the secondary data or survey findings, about the availability and status of health services can be presented. Then the Government Officials should be asked to respond to the issues and concerns raised during the testimonies and the presentation. In the end, the panel should give their comments. A press conference can follow the event.

### **Meeting with Officials**

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- *Meetings with the Health Providers*

Once the community leadership is aware of the different aspects of the health services that they need and what is available to them today it will be possible for them to discuss these with their health providers. It may be necessary to build relationship with the local Multipurpose Health Worker as well as the Medical Officer of the local PHC for this purpose. The community leadership can approach the MO or the CMO and share their problems. In case these officials are willing to acknowledge their communities own concerns it will be possible to proceed to the stage of Interface described below. In case this is not possible it may be necessary to organize public meetings and public tribunals at a later stage.

- *Interface with service providers*

Once a bridge has been built with the health service providers there can be a sharing of concerns, problems and plans. This can lead to a periodic review of activities at the Sub-Centre and PHC level. Sub-Centre review and planning meetings could take place monthly while PHC level meetings could be organised quarterly. Mutually agreed upon quality of care checklists could be the basis for monitoring the service provision and service uptake from both sides. These activities can strengthen the Community Needs

Assessment Approach which is already part of the Reproductive and Child Health programme.

### **Using media to promote accountability**

The media- both print and electronic are powerful channels for communicating an advocacy message to the government and to policy makers. It is also an important tool for public education on the issue of concern. Effective use of the media can result in increasing the visibility and credibility of the issue being advocated. Sometimes it may even so happen that when an issue is getting consistently highlighted by the media, the policy makers start taking action without being directly persuaded to do so. Institutions like the National Human Rights Commission and the National Women's Commission and their state counterparts are mandated to take suo mota ( on their own) action and in cases of rights violations ask the government authorities to provide explanation, relief and compensation. These commission can and do take such suo moto action on the basis of media reports. Despite the powerful and beneficial role that can be played by the media, media advocacy is better not left to chance. The advocacy plan should include a deliberate plan for media advocacy. If this is not done, there are risks that the reportage on the issue can do more harm than good. It is useful to remember that the media can sensationalise an issue and this may not be useful from an advocacy point of view. In addition to this the media often has the dominant perspective on an issue (which is seldom rights based) and this may reflect in their coverage. Some strategies and activities that may be used for effective media advocacy are given below.

- Identify Media persons and develop contacts – A useful first step is to follow reportage on health related issues in the local newspapers and journals. This can lead to the identification of specific media persons who are report on these issues. Once these media persons are identified it can be useful to get in touch with them, provide them with information about the advocacy issue and key messages by inviting them to events, providing them with press releases, briefing kits, human interest stories and so on. Media persons especially those associated with daily publications need information on a very regular basis, and would like to be in touch with reliable and credible sources. It is necessary to build a relationship of respect and mutuality with some media persons.
- Press releases - Press releases are concise news items describing an event or issue of significance. They are the easiest way to get in touch with the media, and when there is a good relationship with the media persons they start looking forward to such press releases, because it gives them a news item without having to work too hard to get it. However it is important to realise that press releases should be prepared for newsworthy items and not all activities undertaken as part of advocacy. Too many press releases may lead to their devaluation. Press releases may be prepared for events, in response to news and events relating to the issue of concern, release of a research report, on anniversaries and commemorative days and so on. When preparing press releases it is necessary to be careful about the newspaper deadlines.

- Press Conference – A press conference is organised when the information that has to be shared is ‘very significant’. Thus a press conference can be organised to share information about the issue like the release of a report or even to respond to some government announcement or a judgement from the Supreme Court or if there is a celebrity who is willing to endorse the issue. However while a press conference allows for greater interaction with members of the media, leading to greater elaboration of the issue and hopefully a better articulated news item, it can also lead to problems if the preparations are inadequate and questions posed by the media cannot be handled with appropriate data and consistent messages. It is useful to prepare printed handouts and briefing kits for the media persons, and also have space for one to one interaction between the spokesperson and any media person who would wish to do so. Preparation is paramount in a press conference.
- Letters to the editor – Writing letters to the editor is one way of using the media for advocacy. However it is difficult to plan and execute to perfection because the final publishing of the letter is in the hands of the editorial staff. To improve the chances of letter to get published it helps if they are clear, precise and short. It is useful to respond to articles and features that have raised issues similar to or affect the advocacy issue in question. These responses need to be sent in quickly in order to keep them relevant as far as the publication is concerned. Adding your organisation’s name and your position within it (to your name) may increase the possibility of the letter getting published.
- Writing Opinion pieces – Newspapers carry opinion pieces on their editorial pages. These opinion pieces or Op-eds, as they are called are often written by experts or well known personalities rather than journalists. If the advocacy effort you are involved with has been able to gather the support of acknowledged subject matter experts, it may be useful to ask them to write a short opinion piece on the issue. The opinion piece should use simple language to explain the problem, have clear messages and then provide specific solutions. Alternatively op-ed articles may be placed with development feature services.
- Working with the Electronic Media – There are some similarities in working with the print and electronic media with one big difference. The electronic media – in most cases the news channels require images and ‘sound bites’. This characteristic of the electronic media can be used to advantage with careful planning and preparation. As with the print media the electronic media should be invited to press conferences and other events and they may prepare a brief news-item on the issue. With regional and state specific news channels coming up it may be easier to get coverage. However with a smaller coverage the reach of the advocacy message may also get reduced. With human interest stories the electronic media has the advantage of relaying the image and the voice of the persons involved into thousands of homes. At press conferences articulate spokespersons can deliver creatively crafted messages which can become ‘sound bites’. Giving individual interviews are another method of reaching out through the electronic media. Here again the spokesperson needs to articulate the message very clearly and in the shortest possible

time. After editing only a few seconds of the interview will possibly get broadcast. While replying to a question it is useful to weave in the question within the answer otherwise the answer loses context and this may happen during the editing process.

### **Documenting our stories and change: Lessons for the Future**

### **Refining / improving community monitoring practice**