

Youth RISE Workshop Webinar Workbook



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Making Politics Work for Young People

INTRODUCTION

Capturing the attention of decision-makers can be a challenging task. With a busy and disputed schedule, government officials and members of parliament are hard-to-reach audiences. These stakeholders are exposed to a high number of matters daily, which means the attention they allocate to individual topics is often fragmented.

Young activists for harm reduction and drug policy reform may encounter additional challenges. Despite representation increasing in the last years, there is still a generational gap between youth and government officials in most countries. Moreover, drug policy and harm reduction remain highly sensitive topics in many contexts due to stigma and lack of an open debate.

This workshop will bring together young activists in the field of harm reduction and drug policy reform to learn how to best reach decision-makers, providing information on the best practices worldwide, using examples from within the group. Attendees will leave this training with a deeper understanding of the do's and don'ts of advocacy in terms of meeting with decision makers and have gained valuable insights into how to take their individual advocacy/campaigns to the next level.

Learning Outcomes:

After following this webinar, attendees will have:

- Critical reflection on the challenges of delivering advocacy messages to decision-makers
- Understanding of the key lessons for designing successful drug policy reform and harm reduction advocacy campaigns targeting decision-makers
- Knowledge of the best practice for effectively communicating with elected members of parliament and government officials
- Domain to use the Global Drug Policy Index as a powerful tool to support their local work as Drug Policy and Harm Reduction young activists
- Ability to use the UNAIDS Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS as a tool for advocacy - released in 2021

SUMMARY AND TENTATIVE AGENDA:

- **Introduction (10 min)**
 - About the facilitators
 - Round of introductions for workshop attendees
 - Planned activities and tentative agenda

- **Part 1 (50 min)**
 - About your target audience: why are decision-makers so hard to reach?
 - Using strategy tools: Spectrum of Allies and Power Mapping (Stakeholder Mapping)
 - Key lessons for designing successful advocacy campaigns
 - The Global Drug Policy Index
 - Exercise 1: How to use the GDPI data to support your advocacy campaign?

- **10 minutes break**

- **Part 2 (45 min)**
 - How to get the attention of a decision-maker?
 - The UNAIDS Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS as a tool for advocacy
 - Exercise 2: Apply the lessons from today to the case of the first exercise
 - Open floor and final discussion

- **Review and Key-points**

Part 1:

ABOUT YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Who?

Decision-makers, members of parliament, government representatives and elected officials.

Why are decision-makers so hard to reach?

With a busy and disputed schedule, decision-makers are usually a hard-to-reach audience. These stakeholders are exposed to a high number of matters daily, which means the attention they allocate to individual topics is often fragmented. Many factors add up to the challenging task of engaging decision-makers in advocacy campaigns, such as:

- Busy agendas
- Fragmented attention
- Generational gap
- Lack of awareness about how the ‘war on drugs’ impacts their country and why they should care

Discussion:

Can you think of other factors adding up to the challenge of engaging decision-makers in policy reform campaigns? If yes, what do you think is the motivation behind it? How does it impact your advocacy plans? How could you make your campaign work in face of these challenging factors?

HOW TO ENGAGE YOUR LOCAL DECISION-MAKER IN YOUR ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN?

It is fundamental to carefully developing your strategy before reaching to your target decision-makers. For such, you can use mapping tools to lay out all the stakeholders, understand your target audience and identify the significant individuals for your campaign.

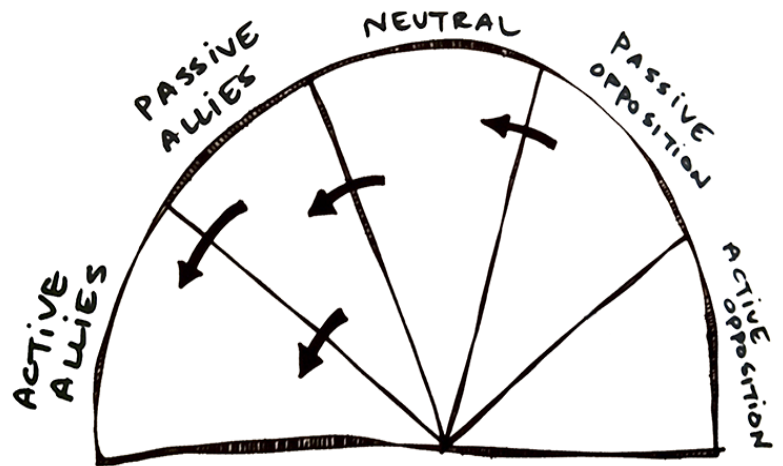
Using Strategy Tools: Spectrum of Allies and Power Mapping

In most social-change situations there is a struggle between those who want the change and those who don't. On the one hand, there are people who are active supporters of the change—not just people who *believe* in the change but people who are taking actions to make it a reality. On the other hand, there are people who are active opposers, people who *actively take actions to prevent* the change.

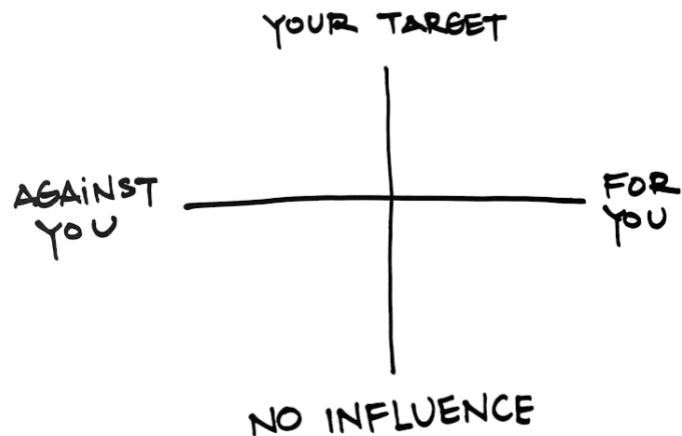
In activist work, we often are focussed on those two groups — yet *most* people are somewhere between. There is a range of groups that can be put on a spectrum from closest to the point of view of your campaign to farthest away.

The spectrum of allies helps you to identify different people—or specific groups of people—in each category, *then design actions and tactics to move them one wedge to the left*. In most social-change campaigns it is not necessary to win over the opponent to your point of view. It is only necessary to move the central pie wedges one step in your direction.

Note that you need to be specific to make this tool work. Identify specific groups—groups that have a phone number, or an address — a group you could attend a meeting of or meet with a leader. Think of specific individuals, both politically influential, but also socially influential.



Power-mapping can help you to identify targets and focus your strategy. The idea is to map out your potential targets, and the institutions and individuals who influence your target, so you can begin to understand possible ways to impact them. A power map can be a useful visual tool to help your team understand power, and see possibilities for campaigning. You'll see that there are two axes on the map – one indicates how influential that person is to your target, and the other shows whether that person is for or against your position (or neutral).



KEY LESSONS FOR DESIGNING SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

- **Clearly understand** the matter you are advocating for.
- **Keep it simple** – we are dealing with complex matters, but your opening message and argument should be as simple & clear as possible.
- **Make it inclusive, not exclusive** – Explain why reform is needed and focus on how it could bring benefits to society as a whole.
- **Be specific** – bring concrete recommendations that could be implemented to solve the matter.
- **Set SMART goals** - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timed goals.
- **Use real world examples** - something they can picture, put themselves in the shoes of and connect to.

THE GLOBAL DRUG POLICY INDEX: How to use it in your advocacy campaign?

[The Global Drug Policy Index](#) measures how drug policies align with many of the key UN recommendations on how to design and implement drug policies in accordance with the United Nations principles of health, human rights, and development.

The Index is composed of 75 indicators that run across 5 dimensions:

1. The absence of extreme sentencing and responses to drugs, such as the death penalty
2. The proportionality of criminal justice responses to drugs
3. Funding, availability, and coverage of harm reduction interventions
4. Availability of international controlled substances for pain relief
5. Development.

The Global Drug Policy Index is a unique accountability tool that documents, measures and compares national-level drug policies. It provides each country with a score from 0 to 100, where 100 represents full alignment with the United Nations recommendations. The first iteration of the Global Drug Policy Index was released in November 2021, and it evaluates the performance of 30 countries covering all regions of the world, for the year 2020.

The GDPI provides a powerful dataset to support the work of young activists in holding governments accountable and advocating for reform. By tracking countries performance on the Index, campaigns can identify which areas and drug policies need to be aligned with UN standards.

Exercise 1: How to use the GDPI data to support your advocacy campaign? (25 min)

Participants will be divided into groups of 5/4. Each group will work with a different GDPI dimension using Uganda as a case study. See Uganda's [ranking scores](#) and [summary fact sheet](#).

Each group will have 10 min to agree on:

- 1) The matter in which they will focus their advocacy campaign
- 2) Their campaign's key message
- 3) Their recommendation

Once back to the main webinar room, each group will have 3 minutes to pitch their campaign to the rest of the workshop attendees and 2 minutes to receive their peers' feedback (total of 5 min per group)

Discussion:

Is there any lesson from the campaign of another group that could be used in your campaign? What about personal experiences – are the lessons from part 1 useful to any advocacy story you have? How? Can you share it with the rest of the group?

10 minutes break

Part 2:

HOW TO GET THE ATTENTION OF A DECISION-MAKER?

As we have seen in the previous section of this workshop, decision-makers are a hard-to-reach audience. To successfully engage them in your campaign, it is important to carefully develop your strategy before jumping into action. Once you have identified and mapped the decision-makers for your campaign, it is time to plan how you will approach each of them. The recommendations below aim to provide useful advice to help young activists preparing their communications' strategy targeting local decision-makers.

1. Do your research:

- **Who?**
 - Which minister is in charge of the matter you are advocating for?
 - Which ministers and government agencies are involved in the decision-making of drug policies in your target region? (i.e. Ministry of Home Affairs, Health Ministry, etc.)
 - **Recommendation:** *check out the members sitting at the Health Committee or at the Sustainable Development Goals Committee. Check their social media pages to see their general interests and adapt the discussion of the content accordingly to play with their passions.*
- **How?**
 - Understand what the best way is of getting in touch with a decision-maker. i.e., sending e-mails may work in some countries such as the US, the UK and Germany. However, in some other countries, those e-mails will probably fall into oblivion. Many times, you will have better engagement through WhatsApp or Telegram. In other places, it is better to follow the protocol by submitting an official letter to the target government agency you are targeting your message for. You may need to work through the local government officials such as councillors to access the higher up government.
 - *i.e. the decision makers. If this is not possible, then it could be beneficial to contact other organizations working in the same sector or similar sectors to find out who they have contacts for and find out how they interact with these decision makers first.*
 - Tailor your message to be appropriate to this communicating channel.
 - *i.e. extensive messages and attachments in WhatsApp won't be as successful. Try using infographics and images.*
 - If trying to get the attention of a decision maker through the use of local government/councillors or other NGO's it is essential that you are clear and concise in your message and be able to simply explain why the decision-maker should care about this issue, so this message is clearly passed on to the decision maker prior to meeting with them.

2. Be accurate – “the coffee rule”

- More often than not, your time with a decision-maker will be limited. The coffee rule means you should be able to convey your full message during the time of grabbing a coffee.

3. Be organized – prepare supporting materials for your advocacy campaign

- Short videos or policy briefings are a good way to convey your message to a decision-maker. Remember: the coffee rule also applies here. Your target audience needs to be able to read and understand your argument and recommendations during their coffee break.
- Infographics and images sometimes deliver a message much more effectively
- It can be beneficial to bring printed out infographics or briefings/materials for them to take away with so they can learn more after you have finished the meeting.
- Are there any examples elsewhere that could help illustrate the positive outcomes of the reform you are proposing? Use case studies
- If you will have a meeting with a decision-maker, always be there on time and prepared.

4. Make sure you both are speaking the same language

- Capturing the attention of decision-makers depends on how you frame your message. Many arguments will explain the need for policy reform, but it is important to identify which one hits closer to the heart of your target audience.
 - *i.e. members of parliament sitting in the SDG committee will be more interested in arguments that contribute to their overall agenda*
- This is why researching about the decision-maker before approaching them/meeting them is essential - check their social media pages and what they post about and content they interact with to see how best to frame the argument.

5. Do the networking

- Identify the decision-makers that are allies to your campaign, locally and internationally, and connect them to your target decision-makers. Peer-to-peer advice is usually successful as individuals holding similar positions tend to face similar challenges. This type of networking enables the exchange of useful recommendations for their daily tasks.

6. Be confident but not aggressive

- Constructive criticism is key. Start with the positive. MPs often respond better when you recognize and praise the things that are working, becoming more open to listening to your recommendations regarding those that could be improved.
- Have your facts in line and bulletproof with the ability to name the sources of the information you are giving; politicians oftentimes fight back on the argument you make with facts and numbers, and it can get confusing. Be prepared with facts to back everything up.

7. Offer to support their work, rather than “giving” them more work

- Yes, elected members of parliament and government officials are at the service of the people. However, demanding multiple complex tasks from your decision-maker will likely result in unsuccessful campaigns. Do a roadmap of the work needed and identify to what specifically you would need them to engage with.
 - *i.e. if your decision-maker sits in the Health Committee, instead of asking them to bring a proposal to parliament, ask if it would be possible to have a session open to your organization to briefly expose the matter to the health committee members.*
- If you had a meeting, ensure you are coming out of it with time-framed action points and a method of following up on them to measure if they are being achieved.

8. Use international commitments to you advantage

- International agreements can exert important influence on local politics, serving as a tool for accountability.
- Research political commitments recently adopted by your target country and that could support your argument. (i.e. the 2021 UNAIDS Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS)

The UNAIDS Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS as a tool for advocacy

In June 8, 2021, UN Member States adopted a [political declaration](#) at the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on AIDS. Member States **agreed to ensure that less than 10% of countries have restrictive legal and policy frameworks that lead to the denial or limitation of access to HIV services by 2025.**

In accordance with the Global AIDS Strategy 2021–2026, adopted by consensus on 2021, UNAIDS also welcomes stronger commitments on evidence-based HIV prevention options such as harm reduction, a call for the decriminalization of the transmission of HIV, sex work, drug use and laws that criminalize same-sex sexual relationships.

Exercise 2:

Apply the

lessons from today to the case of the first exercise (25 min)

Participants to continue the first exercise applying the lessons from the workshop. Returning to the groups from exercise 1, they will have 10 minutes to:

- 1) Draw a Spectrum of Allies and a Power Mapping.
- 2) Rethink your campaign's key message if needed.
- 3) Plan your communication strategy with the key decision-makers according to your Power Mapping.
 - *Can you share international commitments that you are aware of and could be useful for this advocacy campaign?*

Once back to the main Webinar room, each group will have 3 minutes to present their results to their colleagues and 2 minutes to receive feedback (total of 5 min per group).

Discussion:

Can you think of potential influent personalities and decision-makers for the campaigns in which you are involved? How would you reach to them?

REVIEW AND KEY-POINTS:

Capturing the attention of decision-makers can be a challenging task, in particular for harm reduction young activists. Good news: there are tools young people can use to help prepare themselves and develop their campaign to successfully engage target decision-makers in drug policy reform. Below we summarize the main steps to guide young people's advocacy efforts:

- 1) Carefully planning your strategy and mapping your stakeholders is an essential step for advocacy campaigns. Identify your audience by drawing a Spectrum of Allies, and assess their influence and importance to your campaign using a Power Mapping.
- 2) Some of the key lessons for designing successful campaigns are: 1) **clearly understanding** the matter you are advocating for; 2) **Keeping it simple**; 3) **Making it inclusive, not exclusive**; 4) **Being specific**; 5) setting **SMART goals** - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timed goals; and 6) **Using real world examples**.
- 3) The GDPI provides a powerful dataset to support the work of young activists in holding governments accountable and advocating for reform. By tracking countries performance on the Index, campaigns can identify which areas and drug policies need to be aligned with UN standards.
- 4) Preparation and research contribute to successful advocacy campaigns. Do your research, be confident, accurate and organized.
- 5) Work on your communications and skills and choose the right tone to ensure you are speaking the same language of your target decision-maker. Know how to use available data and international commitments to your advantage.
- 6) Some networking might be beneficial to your campaign. Identify local and international decision-makers that are allies to your campaign and connect them with your target audience.
- 7) Offer to support your target decision-makers work, rather than "giving" them more work. If you had a meeting, ensure you are coming out of it with time-framed action points and a method of following up on them to measure if they are being achieved.

Final Discussion:

Do you have any personal experience you would like to share with the group today? Will any of the lessons today contribute to your local advocacy work?