

ADVOCACY, COLLABORATION & NETWORKING

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1.0. Aims and Objectives

1.1. Introduction

1.2. Concept of Advocacy

1.3. The Stages of Advocacy

1.4. Skills for Effective Advocacy

1.5. Stakeholders in Advocacy Work

1.6. Advocacy Tools

2.1. Concept of Collaboration

2.2. Advantages of Collaboration

2.3. Types of Collaboration

3.1. Networking

3.2. Aims of Networking

4.1. Let Us Sum Up

4.2. Key Words

4.3. Model Answers

4.4. Further Readings

1.0. Aims and Objectives

This unit enables the understanding of the concept of advocacy, collaboration and networking and their importance and methods. The reader will gain knowledge and skills by applying the skills for advocacy, collaboration and networking. Various tools and techniques will facilitate for better learning.

1.1. Introduction

Advocacy, collaboration and networking are the powerful tools to empower an individual, group or a community. These methods have been widely used by voluntary agencies and government departments while implementing projects through peoples' participation and collaboration with stakeholders. This unit highlights the concept of advocacy, collaboration and networking as

method to empower youth and their communities. The information given in this unit will enable the students to become familiar with concept and gain necessary skills by applying.

1.2. Concept of Advocacy

An **advocate** is an adult who acts in the best interests of another individual, groups and communities. The purpose of youth advocate is to ensure that youth maintain their human rights while aiding in skill development in all areas of life such as education, health, housing, employment, relationships, etc. The youth advocate aims to prevent youth from experiencing diminished self-esteem while interacting with adults who hold professional authoritative roles in their life. Examples of these adults are judges, lawyers, teachers, etc. Youth advocate is one who plays a significant supportive role in the social and legal processes in the lives of young people, especially homeless and foster youth who lack family support.

Advocacy is a planned action directed at changing the laws, policies or programs of institutions, and/or the beliefs, attitudes and behavior of citizens in the pursuit of social justice. In other words it is a process whereby you are endeavoring to convince others, generally decision-makers, to support a campaign or a policy that you consider important. It can apply at different levels, from the home to the government, and imply small or large changes, depending on the situation and the problem addressed

- Advocacy is an action directed at changing the policies, positions or programs of any type of institution.
- It is pleading for, defending or recommending an idea before other people
- It is speaking up, drawing a community's attention to an important issue, and directing decision-makers towards a solution.
- It is working with other people and organizations to make a difference.
- It is putting a problem on the agenda, providing a solution to that problem and building support for acting on both the problem and solution.
- It aims to change an organization internally or to alter an entire system.
- It can involve many specific, short-term activities to reach a long-term vision of change.
- It consists of different strategies aimed at influencing decision-making at the organizational, local, provincial, national and international levels.

- Advocacy strategies can include lobbying; social marketing; information, education and communication (IEC), community organizing, and/or many other tactics.
- It is the process of people participating in decision-making processes that affect their lives.
- It helps youth to find abilities to develop life skills and competencies for problem analysis, decision making, negotiation, communication and group work.

1.3. The Stages of Advocacy

1. **Identify overall objective:** Youth or youth worker can choose to advocate by brainstorming the various issues and the objectives for advocacy. It is important to focus on a particular issue instead of many aspects, to effectively use the efforts. Conducting educational forms and focus group discussions with key stakeholders will enable to set overall objective.
2. **Achieve a group vision:** The discussions and consultations with key stakeholders would help achieve a group vision for advocacy with a purpose. It is important to visualize the expected outcome and the process, which will bring out the possibilities for success and the possible hurdles. Vision for advocacy will enable the youth worker and the team to focus on a same target.
3. **Analyze the current situation:** Current situation and the magnitude of the problem and need should be studied with its caused and consequences and the expected changes. Scientific methods can be adopted for effectively analyse the situation. The analysis should consist of the reliability of people involved, cost, legal limitations and support and time availability.
4. **Choose a specific objective:** Based on the scientific methods such as drawing problem tree, focus group discussion, empirical study, it would be strategic to draw a list of issues from which the key issue can be prioritized. The terms of objectives can be finalized and formalized.
5. **Identify key stakeholders to help for effective advocacy:** Identify the decision-makers, those who can influence their decision, in each case. Who is responsible? Is it their duty? Is there a law to make them to do it? In the absence of duty, is there a good reason for them to do it? Do you have arguments to bring to the 'negotiation table' that could be of interest to the person you wish to influence?
6. **Define a strategy:** It is important to design and define strategy for effective advocacy. Questions like how will you convince the person or the target group to support you? Get as

much information as possible about them, about the arguments that they can use against you will enable for effective advocacy.

7. **Well prepared meetings and discussions:** It is important to strategically plan meetings and discussions. This is the place where most important decisions will be taken and hence, the facilitator need to plan and rehearse each detail to present to the team and convert them into fruitful results.
8. **Plan the strategy:** Who will do what? With whom? When? Where? What do we need? Such questions will lead to proper delegation of tasks to the right person.
9. **Develop messages:** it is necessary to develop effective message. Questions such as which messages for which target groups? Child Protection. What are the risks of our actions? Assess these risks carefully and make sure that you and the stakeholders are always safe and secure.
10. **Identify effective methods:** Methods of advocacy can include everything from letter writing campaigns; opinion pieces sent to the newspaper; tabling; on-line bulletin boards, and chat rooms; speaking to groups of youth; call-ins to radio shows; buttons, bumper stickers, etc. with the message inscribed; flyers; rally, strike, etc.
11. **Implementation of the action plan:** Effective delegation and tactful implementation will enable effective advocacy. Each progress and process will give a learning, which needs to be carefully observed and analyzed for further progress. Continuous encouragement and cooperation will play as a key for effective advocacy.
12. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Monitoring and evaluation will bring experience and act as a change agent in advocacy strategy. It is important to monitor and evaluate how did we carry out our activities? What results did we get? What lessons did we learn?.
13. **Rejuvenation:** The learning from the experience should enable the process more effective and rejuvenation will ensure appropriate strategies with right human power.

1.4. Skills for Effective Advocacy

1. Effective communication skills to communicate and negotiate
2. Critical thinking to understand the present and future situation while practicing advocacy
3. Leadership skills to establish a team that will support the process of advocacy
4. Inter personal relationship skill to ensure an environment that will make the advocacy more successful
5. Documentation skill to capture the process and situations for evaluation and future learning.

6. Problem solving and decision making skill to understand the problems in the process and make right decision for any required change.

1.5. Stakeholders in Advocacy Work

1. **Government: ministries connected to the issue**, election mandate, political authority, access to state resources, access to civil service, access to business, access to donors, access to other governments, membership of international organisations, influence over provincial and local government.
2. **Civil society organisations**: Constituency / membership base, information drawn from development work, expertise, credibility, access to international networks / sector organisations.
3. **Union federation**: Membership, money, access to union media, mobilisation skills.
4. **Business**: Money, capacity to buy intellectual power, access to officials, access to media, power as employers.
5. **Religious organisations**: Membership, moral authority, outreach
6. **Media**: Access to the public, variety of sources of information, communication skills, captive audiences.

1.6. Advocacy Tools

In advocacy, each issue demands different approaches and strategies, partners, tactics, methods, resources, materials, and so on. In embarking upon an advocacy campaign, it is important to have the capacity to consider all available options and to make strategic choices amongst them. The most important of these tools include:

- **Information**: Gathering, managing and disseminating information lays the basis for determining the direction of an advocacy campaign. Research is one way of gathering information.
- **Research**: Conducting research and policy analysis uses the information from various sources and develops it into policy options which become the key content of an advocacy campaign.
- **Media**: Various media are used to communicate the campaign's message(s) to the different stakeholders.

- **Social mobilisation:** Mobilizing the broadest possible support from a range of stakeholders, including the public at large, is essential to building the influence of the campaign.
- **Lobbying:** Convincing the decision-makers who have the power to make the desired change involves a set of special knowledge and skills.
- **Litigation:** Sometimes, using the court system to challenge a policy or law can reinforce an advocacy campaign.
- **Networks, alliances and coalitions:** Sharing of information and resources, and strength in unity and commonality of purpose are key to the success of advocacy work.

Advocacy is a powerful method that would enable the underprivileged and deprived to access to their rights and dignified life. The people involved in advocacy need to document the experiences of advocacy for the future reference and follow up.

2.1. COLLABORATION

The term 'Collaboration' refers to the process of working with others to achieve a common objective or task. It is a method where more number of people or organizations are involved to share the responsibilities and achieve the goal. It is a cooperative venture wherein collective decisions are taken to reach the identical objectives.

2.2. Advantages of Collaboration

1. Identifies human resources from all the collaborating agencies or individuals.
2. Delegates the responsibilities to the personnel of all collaborating agencies.
3. Effective utilization of common resources for the effective implementation of projects
4. Sharing of experiences from the past will enable for effective application of strategies and process
5. Accountability is high in collaboration and hence, transparency is ensured.
6. Collective learning takes place while working together
7. Greater sum of creativity, expertise and problem solving skills applied (Woodside & McClam, 2006)

2.3. Types of Collaboration

1. **Vertical Collaboration:** Collaboration can include those who work within an institutional hierarchy such as teachers, principals, receptionists, coaches, parents and students.
2. **Horizontal Collaboration:** Here, we can include the resources from the cross institutional setting such as social workers, youth workers, juvenile justice, institutions with similar objectives or resource, government and private departments.

3.1. NETWORKING

Networking is a method of connecting people (individual, groups or organizations) who have similar values, objective and willing to share their ideas and resources for a purpose.

3.2. Aims of Networking

1. **Mobilization of resources and human energy:** Resources are important to ascertain the short and long term goals.
2. **Communication:** To communicate the information across the political system, countries, contexts and cultures, it is important network to enable effective communication system.
3. **Promotion of coordination and alliance:** For effective communication, sharing of information and implementation of ideas, coordination and alliance will be a great support.
4. **Influencing Policy Formulation:** Networking is a political strategy to deal with repression and opposition, which will provide support, protection and solidarity.
5. **Effective Division of Labour:** Networking enables effective division of labour, which will reduce time, money and the efforts of human power.

4.1. Let Us Sum Up

Advocacy is an action directed at changing the policies, positions or programs of any type of institution. It is a process of pleading for, defending or recommending an idea before other people and speaking up, drawing a community's attention to an important issue, and directing decision-makers towards a solution. The different stages are such as; Identifying overall objective, Achieving a group vision, Analyzing the current situation, Choosing a specific objective, Identifying key stakeholders to help for effective advocacy, Defining a strategy, Conducting Well prepared meetings and discussions, Planning the strategy, Developing messages, Identifying

effective methods, Implementation of the action plan, Monitoring and Evaluation and Rejuvenation of the action. Stakeholders in Advocacy Work are Government, Civil society organisations, Union federation, Business. Religious organisations and Media. Advocacy Tools are Information, Research, Media, Social mobilisation, Lobbying, Litigation, Networks, alliances and coalitions. Collaboration is a process of working with others to achieve a common objective or task. It enables effective utilization of common resources for the effective implementation of projects and sharing of experiences from the past will enable for effective application of strategies and process. There are types of Collaborations such as Vertical Collaboration and Horizontal Collaboration. Networking is a method of connecting people (individual, groups or organizations) who have similar values, objective and willing to share their ideas and resources for a purpose. Aims of Networking are mobilization of resources and human energy, communication, promotion of coordination and alliance, influencing policy formulation and effective division of labour

4.2. Key Words: Advocacy, Collaboration and Networking

4.3. Model Answers

a. What are the different stages of advocacy?

1. Identifying overall objective,
2. Achieving a group vision,
3. Analyzing the current situation,
4. Choosing a specific objective,
5. Identifying key stakeholders to help for effective advocacy,
6. Defining a strategy,
7. Conducting well prepared meetings and discussions,
8. Planning the strategy,
9. Developing messages,
10. Identifying effective methods,
11. Implementation of the action plan,
12. Monitoring and Evaluation and
13. Rejuvenation of the action.

b. What are the Skills required for Effective Advocacy?

1. Effective communication skills to communicate and negotiate
2. Critical thinking to understand the present and future situation while practicing advocacy
3. Leadership skills to establish a team that will support the process of advocacy
4. Inter personal relationship skill to ensure an environment that will make the advocacy more successful
5. Documentation skill to capture the process and situations for evaluation and future learning.
6. Problem solving and decision making skill to understand the problems in the process and make right decision for any required change.

c. What are the advantages of Collaboration?

1. Identifies human resources from all the collaborating agencies or individuals.
2. Delegates the responsibilities to the personnel of all collaborating agencies.
3. Effective utilization of common resources for the effective implementation of projects
4. Sharing of experiences from the past will enable for effective application of strategies and process
5. Accountability is high in collaboration and hence, transparency is ensured.
6. Collective learning takes place while working together
7. Greater sum of creativity, expertise and problem solving skills applied (Woodside & McClam, 2006)

d. List the aims of Networking.

1. Mobilization of resources and human energy: Resources are important to ascertain the short and long term goals.
2. Communication: To communicate the information across the political system, countries, contexts and cultures, it is important network to enable effective communication system.
3. Promotion of coordination and alliance: For effective communication, sharing of information and implementation of ideas, coordination and alliance will be a great support.
4. Influencing Policy Formulation: Networking is a political strategy to deal with repression and opposition, which will provide support, protection and solidarity.
5. Effective Division of Labour: Networking enables effective division of labour, which will reduce time, money and the efforts of human power.

4.4. Further Readings

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