UNDERSTANDING TRANSFORMATIONAL ADVOCACY

Our definition of advocacy
“transformational advocacy is the process of challenging ourselves and our leaders to change behaviour, policies, and attitudes that perpetuate inequality and deny God’s will for human flourishing.”

Transformational advocacy is...
- Inspired by scripture
- Guided by the Holy Spirit
- Grassroots and grasstops
- Shrouded in prayer (and fasting)
- Done in community
- Part of the Christian life

TRANSFORMATIONAL ADVOCACY IN PRACTICE

Some suggestions of simple steps that you can take to get started with transformational advocacy in your church or community.

1. Identifying the Problem

When identifying issues to undertake advocacy on we ought to reflect upon the following:
- Winnability – can you be successful? Does it fit with the relevant political and cultural climate?
- Impact – are you confident it’ll make a difference? Will it make a long lasting impact?
- Focus – Do you have a clear message and a simple solution?
- Does it fit within your aims? Does it draw from your experience?

Problem Tree exercise

Problem tree analysis helps to find solutions by mapping out the cause and effect around an issue in a similar way to a mind map, but with more structure. It forces you to ask the ‘why’ question – a key question in advocacy.

1. Write the ‘problem’ on the trunk of the tree.
2. Decide between you what the effects of the problem are. Write them on post-it notes and stick them onto the branches.
3. Then think about what are the causes of the main problem. Write them onto the roots. Keep asking ‘but why?’ or ‘what causes that?’ at each stage to seek root cause.

Some of the issues that you identify towards the bottom of the causes might lend themselves well to advocacy.

Agreeing a Advocacy Aim

A clear campaign aim will act as a beacon, towards which everyone involved in the campaign can head. It helps to make it clear what you’re doing and why.
- Succinct – it should be summed up in one sentence
- Compelling and inspiring – conveying the importance of the issue
- *Easily communicated* – so you can explain you campaign in whatever situation
- *Targeted* – identifying who needs to change, and how they should change.
- *Impact focused* – articulating the change that, when achieved, will directly lead to an improvement in people’s lives.

*Ask does it pass the elevator test?* Could you explain your aim to someone in the time that it takes to get from the bottom to the top floor of a skyscraper?

### 2. Working with Others

We can often have the most impact when we come together with others to undertake our advocacy work, many of the most successful advocacy movement have been formed by coalitions. We should look to work together as organizations in our advocacy. ‘Unusual coalitions’ of organisations and groups are often the most effective as they demonstrate the broad support for an issue.

### 3. Targeting the Right People

We need to ask who can deliver the change that we’re looking for. Sometime useful to ask who can wake up tomorrow morning and make this happen, it can be easy to get focused on the highest profile target, but often those further down have the ability to make the change needed.

1 – *Undertaking a stakeholder analysis* – map out all those people or group who might have an interest in this issue? Remember those who are interested but not supportive of the position that you’re taking.

2 – *Try to plot them on a allies/opponents matrix* – an example is outlined below. This will help you think about who you need to be working with, who might oppose the

3 – *Routes to influence* – when you’ve identified who the key target from your mapping you can then look to draw up an influence map This could be a simple list, or a diagram showing the connections between different individuals. Thinking creatively about the connections that you have and how you could use them to pass on the message.
4. Utilizing the Right Tools
Transformational advocacy doesn’t always require lots of money, but it needs investment primarily by providing it with oxygen and energy. Energy comes from people, oxygen from the ability to get the advocacy messages out.

The most important resource for advocacy is often people. This doesn’t need to mean lots of new staff but a commitment from across an organisation or church to participate in the work. Also need access to the right communication channels and the ability to get our messages.

There are hundreds of different tactics that you can use but they can broadly be grouped into ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ approaches. Inside tactics focus on direct contact with those you’re trying to influence, while outsider approaches look at mobilising others to demonstrate support for your issue;

![Diagram showing 'insider' and 'outsider' approaches]

5. Motivating others to act
Our communications, to other individuals or those we are targeting should be informed by best practice in campaign communication, but also reflect our Christian identity. For example;

1. Motivate people to action because it helps them or is the right thing to do
2. Recognise that people respond out of calling to their true identity as Christians. We need to acknowledge and speak to this.
3. Invite people to join us - help them to see that they are part of a bigger movement.
4. One simple, clear, action, and provide a true sense of urgency and need.
5. Avoid being politically partisan - be clear about why we're targeting representatives from one party, or look to target representatives from all parties.
6. In our posture towards those in power we should;
   a. Be respectful
   b. Assume that their motives for being involved as an elected official are good. That they’re trying to make a difference.
   c. Be clear with what we’re asking them to do, but don’t be too polite as it gives the permission to do nothing.
7. Feedback and follow up with those who are involved.
In our interactions with Politicians we should be guided by the following;
• Acknowledge that politicians want to do good
• Approach them with humility.
• Remember they’re individuals, and to get to know them as such.
• Share the knowledge that we have - elected official value the unique
• Being specific in what we’re advocating for.
• Engaging - invite them to see what we’re doing. Connect with stories of our work.
• See this as a partnership.
• Offer to pray for them and their work, but ensure that this is done in a respectful way.

6. Don’t overlook Monitoring and Evaluation

On Monitoring, think about;
• How are we getting feedback from those that are involved in our advocacy? How do we find out what’s working and what’s not working.
• After the event – providing space to reflect back. Comes back to this principle of respecting and empowering. Being proactive about asking for reflection.
• Celebrate the unsuccessful as well as the successful.

On Evaluation, it’s important to consider what you should be measuring? You might like to consider the following.
• Outputs – the hard numbers of what’s happened – for example the numbers of actions/participants/churches involved. These can be measured in real time, and we can have confidence over these.
• Recognising that we need to be clear about the assumptions that we’re making between our outputs and outcomes. What are they and why are we making them? Providing this evidence is helpful when making requests for grant funding.
• Outcomes – What happens as a result of our outputs, ultimately we hope that this is policies and practices changed. We can also use Signs of Transformation here to help us understand our organisation’s contribution to the outcomes, these can be stories and conversations with decision makers that provide colour to the numbers.
• Impact – Often the hardest to measure as it can take time. We need to recognise the contributions of others and the external environment within this.

For more ideas and resources visit;
Tearfund - Advocacy Toolkit
http://tilz.tearfund.org/Publications/ROOTS/Advocacy+toolkit.htm

Micah Challenge – Use By 2015
http://www.useby2015.org/