

## Blood: Water Technical eUpdate Vol. 6 – Advocacy

Dear Partners:

This month's edition of the Technical eUpdate is dedicated to Advocacy. Although the context is HIV/AIDS related, The processes and techniques are transferrable across sectors. One might think that over 30 years living with HIV in our world, the need for advocacy would have been filled. Although there have been tremendous strides that result in global prioritization of HIV responses that made ART available in the developing world, in many areas it is just beginning! Immense barriers have been broken that propagated the early forms of stigma and discrimination as result of advocacy. We can attribute the successful prioritization of scaling up universal access to treatment, testing, prevention and care to advocacy. At various levels, the need still exists to advocate on behalf of those individuals and communities affected or infected by the virus.

It has been well acknowledged by at all levels (medical and social sciences sectors alike), that there still remains very tangible gaps in protecting even some of the basic rights for persons who are most vulnerable or living with HIV. Recognizing these areas are crucial for your organizations to make long lasting legacy of change for the populations you are committed to serve.

At the national policy level advocacy needs still present:

- Policy and enforcement of laws protecting women, children and other vulnerable groups
- Ensuring there are laws in place and enforced to protect persons living with HIV/AIDS and their dependents from discrimination manifested in various forms including denial of health services, education, employment, loss of personal or family assets
- Preventing the criminalization and marginalization of vulnerable groups, which intensifies stigma – such as sex workers, sexual minorities, and persons with addictions.

Advocacy needs at community levels include:

- Equity of health care access and other reproductive and sexual health services,
- Modification of social norms and customs that intensify risk or cause harm
- The non-tolerance of domestic, child, sexual and other abuses

All of these are just a **few** of the issues still without proper redress, the full range of which you face in your work daily through the struggles and experiences shared with you by persons and households in need. It might not even be an issue directly related to HIV rather, a **cross-cutting** social issue that compounds and intensifies HIV affected communities. If you are new to advocacy work in the formal sense, you might feel intimidated by the processes involved, however it is as possible and accessible as the rest of the work you do. To help, consider these **4 steps!**

The First Step to HIV/AIDS Advocacy is Information: Make sure you know the issues, the facts and do your research! Primary and secondary information sources can be used as long as they are reputable and valid! Getting information is key to educating others and building a “case” in support of an issue! Learn from other groups or organizations with more experience than yours as well to learn their recommended best practices and know what approaches work best

The Next Step is to Know Your Elected Officials or Persons of Influence: Identify your district's elected officials and the people who represent the HIV/AIDS you are affiliated with national activities. If you are working on social change, make sure you know the elders responsible and the most

appropriate ways to engage them. Talk to them about the key issues you are concerned about local service providers, service gaps or challenges, and emerging issues and needs that are anticipated. This education will help them be effective lawmakers, and enforcers of social norms. Cultivating these relationships will have a lasting and positive impact on how persons of influence respond to HIV in your community, at even the most local level.

The Third step: Encourage Others to Get Involved in AIDS Advocacy: Advocacy is about consensus. There is strength in numbers with a harmonized voice. Effective communication is critical to bringing volunteers, partner organizations, community stakeholders and the general public on board to support the cause you are petitioning for. Advocacy alerts can be useful tools in your local efforts to fight AIDS. Share HIV/AIDS advocacy information with friends, clients, partner agencies and volunteers. Increasing participation will make your advocacy efforts more effective, and will show legislators the strength and number of those concerned about the epidemic

The Fourth Step: Take Action! Once you are affiliated with advocacy groups, networks and have engaged your organization in the process with others decide on collective priorities and strategies to move forward. Share alerts or other news through email or other means which generally instruct you on what action is needed: calls, emails, community mobilization or education, petitioning etc, all in line with what the law permits and guides.

With a little time and effort, you can make a **huge** difference! The following are some **resources and materials** to help support you as you develop skills and experience to support change through advocacy.

**1. TearFund Advocacy Toolkit:** This 3 part toolkit is divided into 3 parts. The sections in Part A explore advocacy's links with development. Part B looks at the biblical basis for advocacy. The sections in Part C provide tools to show how to plan an advocacy intervention to address a particular problem. There are two main distinctions within this toolkit compared to some of the others shared in this newsletter,

- This Toolkit includes a significant section on advocacy, the mission of the church and the example of Jesus. Few other resources look at the spiritual nature of development and advocacy.
- It is aimed at local communities as well as local churches and NGOs working with these communities. Many other resources are aimed at national or international NGOs and deal with advocacy at a much higher level. However, the principles and guidance given in the Toolkit can also be developed for national and international advocacy.

The Toolkit is designed for use by an organization, a community or any group of people considering an advocacy intervention. The 16 sections are in a logical order for groups that are completely new to advocacy. **See Attached PDFs – two files for this resource: Tearfund-1.pdf and Tearfund-2.pdf**

**2. Moment in Time: HIV/AIDS Advocacy Stories:** This collection of stories developed by the POLICY Project highlights some of the key advocacy moments of our time as told from the unique perspective of those who are engaged in advocacy work in communities around the world. Despite the availability of several excellent guides to advocacy, no group or individual has developed a manual that offers a tapestry of stories as a practical resource for advocacy training, reflective learning,

and strategic planning. This manual begins a process of documenting HIV/AIDS policy advocacy stories as a means of preserving them and making them available to others as more and more people become involved in HIV/AIDS advocacy issues.

**See the Attached PDF: MomentsinTime.pdf**

**3. Networking for Policy Change:** This training manual developed by the POLICY Project was prepared to help representatives of non-governmental organizations and other formal groups of civil society form and maintain advocacy networks and develop effective family planning/reproductive health advocacy skills. The manual's tools and approaches can be used to affect family planning and reproductive health policy decisions at the international, national, regional, and local levels. The manual is based on the principle that advocacy strategies and methods can be learned: formation of networks, the identification of political opportunities, and the organization of campaigns. **See the Attached PDF: NetworkingForPolicyChange.pdf**