

# HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up

## A Toolkit for Strengthening Local Responses

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# 4

## Advocacy Action Tools

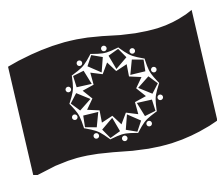
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## A Toolkit for Strengthening Local Responses

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An APCASO Community Advocacy Initiative



**A P C A S O**  
ASIA PACIFIC COUNCIL OF  
AIDS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

with support from the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations



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## Cover design rationale

The cover design is inspired by the visual of pegboard used to store and organise tools such as hammers, screwdrivers and spanners, making them readily accessible as and when it is needed. The cover is UV finished except for the evenly spaced circles which have been intentionally left untreated to resemble holes and simulate the tactile effect of a pegboard. The toolkit is divided into four books, each with a different colour to distinguish and guide the content.

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**Abbreviations/Acronyms**

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ARV	Anti-retroviral
ASO	AIDS Service Organisation
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
GO	Governmental Organisation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
IDU	Injecting Drug User
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSM	Men who have sex with men
PLHIV	People Living with HIV
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

# **HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up**

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# **4.1**

## **Taking a Seat at the Table: Working Inside the System**

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### 4.11 How to Work Inside the System

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**Advocacy Action Tools**  
1. Taking a Seat at the Table:  
Working Inside the System

**Taking a seat at the table: Working inside the system**

One of the most effective steps for influencing change is to work from inside the system by participating in decision-making bodies. While this can be very useful, it is not always easy. There is also a danger of being used as a token representative, which is being included for appearances only and not really making sure that you are involved in the decision-making.

Decisions affecting both your daily work and advocacy issues are made in many different places, for example at local council and civil society committees, sub-committees and working groups; joint committees between different public services; trade associations, company boardrooms or trade unions; committees of religious leaders or ecumenical councils; school boards of governors or district health committees; social welfare committees – and many more.

It is important to know how and where the decisions you want your advocacy to affect are made. The next step is to learn how people from your organisation can participate in such bodies and thereby influence the decisions made there. It is also important to take full advantage of any official posts, committee memberships, etc. that members of your organisation or coalition already hold.

**How to work inside the system**

**1. Find out where and how decisions are made**

- Make a list of all the decision-making bodies you know that could possibly be relevant to your advocacy issue (this could be similar to a list of advocacy targets). Include central and local government bodies, NGOs, businesses, professional associations, religious organisations – do not rule anything out.
- Find out how to join each decision-making body – are members selected, elected or appointed?
- Nominate or suggest your representatives for relevant bodies.

**2. Make the most of existing opportunities**

List all decision-making bodies on which your organisation or networks is already represented. Ensure that these positions are being fully used for your advocacy objectives.

**3. Choose good representatives**

Select representatives carefully. If possible, they should have direct experience in the advocacy issue or problem and should be reliable and confident.

**4. Support the representative**

- Empower the representative to speak on behalf of those affected by the issue or problem. This will put them in a stronger position in meetings when they can confidently speak on behalf of ten, one hundred or thousands of people affected by the same issue rather than speaking only as an individual.
- Hold preparatory meetings before the committee meets, agreeing upon key points for your representative to make and how to best use supporting information that was gathered.
- Hold debriefing sessions after meetings.
- Representatives should regularly report back to the network who chose them.
- Ensure that all representatives are treated in the same way – for example, financially or in terms of decision-making powers.
- Provide training in assertiveness, negotiation and the issues relevant to the committee.

**5. Use your role on decision-making bodies**

- Being a member of a committee or other decision-making body is a long-term form of advocacy. It takes time to understand how the group works,

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## Advocacy Action Tools

### 1. Taking a Seat at the Table: Working Inside the System

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to build relationships with members and to inform and persuade them about your advocacy objective.

- The decision-making body is an advocacy target, and therefore needs to be researched. You need to learn:
  - What is its mission?
  - Who are the other members?
  - How does it function?
  - How can it be influenced?
  - What are its limitations?
  - What are the expectations of members?
- Learn the primary issues of each individual member of this group. Offer to assist them with their issues. Find areas of agreement on which to build trust.
- Get to know each member. Each person is an advocacy target who needs to be persuaded. You may also feel more confident if you know the others.
- Avoid areas of disagreement or conflict among group members if possible. Stay neutral. Try not to be seen as supporting one side against another.
- Represent fairly the people who chose you. This includes keeping in regular communication with them for advice, review decisions and direction for future work.
- Often it is necessary to compromise to reach a decision. Compromise is part of negotiations, and it is different from betrayal. Compromise means that each person gives and takes to move beyond the differences that are obstacles to progress. It is important to be seen as a person who can be accommodating and fair when necessary.

#### Advantages

- You can influence decisions in a sustained, long-term way.
- It is often easier to have an influence inside the system than outside it.
- You can gain access to more information and find ways to influence change.
- It is a great opportunity to build relationships with decision-makers.
- Your organisation can gain more respect and credibility.
- You can meet other like-minded individuals and organisations to help you in all aspects of your work, including advocacy.

#### Disadvantages

- Some decision-making bodies are not open to change.
- You may feel isolated, frustrated and/or in over your head.
- You may find that your participation is tokenistic or that your opinions are not appreciated.
- As a result of serving on decision-making bodies in any capacity, you may be associated with decisions they make with which you may disagree.
- The decision-making body may have values different from those of your organisation.
- You may be encouraged to identify more with the decision-makers than with the people you represent.

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#### Exercise: Where are the 'tables'? (30 minutes)

Break up into groups of five and make a list of the decision-making organisations or committees in your region or area of work.

1. If you already are a member or regular participant in the meetings of these bodies, say how you gained access to them in the first place.
2. If you are not a member or participant in any of the bodies you listed, think of ways you could gain access. People? Causes? Other shared affiliations?

Write your findings up on a sheet of paper with the others and discuss.

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# 4.2

## **Advocacy Action Tools** 2. Affecting Legislation and Public Policies

### **Affecting legislation and public policies**

Understanding the policy or law and the way in which they are enforced – is essential for advocacy work. This skill can be used by advocates working both inside the decision-making system (for example, as committee members) and outside it. Analysis of a policy or piece of legislation that could affect you, your members or your beneficiaries is vital, so that you can advocate for its improvement, implementation or non-implementation.

Such policies and pieces of legislation may include:

- Draft or proposed policies
- New policies
- Long-established policies

Analysis involves obtaining and reading draft policies, new policies or long-established policies, which can be long, technical and boring documents, full of legal language and sometimes jargon. It is difficult and time-consuming to read these documents. However, the skill of understanding such documents can be learned and improved with practice. You need to find some legal experts to help. It is valuable to seek the advice and opinions of people affected by the policy or law or its implementation – because they are the real experts.

Developing this skill will expand the power of your organisation immeasurably. If you demonstrate your ability to affect the way a policy or law is made, legislators and other decision-makers may consult your organisation as they prepare future laws and policies. However, even constructive criticism can offend some policy-makers, particularly if they are strongly invested in them or have spent a long time preparing them. So, learning how to deal with legislators and decision-makers is a high-level skill, requiring equal amounts of practice and intuition. Consequently, your organisation may have to get outside help from skilled, seasoned professionals to help with this part of the advocacy action – since it is critical that existing or proposed laws and policies be well understood.

The basic questions to ask about any piece of legislation or statement of policy are:

- Who benefits from the legislation or policy?
- Who loses or is at a disadvantage as a result of the legislation or policy?
- How does the legislation or policy affect marginalised groups (for our purposes, particularly those from vulnerable groups)?
- Is it something that ordinary people will understand? (If it is not, it becomes your job to make sure that they do.)
- Who supports the law or policy and why?
- How did the issue first come to the attention of the decision-makers?
- What is the financial cost of the law or policy (if any)?
- Is it enforceable? By whom?
- What is the penalty for not obeying the law or following the policy?
- Is the law or policy consistent with your country's human or patient rights policies or laws protecting people living with HIV/AIDS (if any)?
- Does the law or policy violate the UN Declaration of Human Rights or any other international convention that your country has signed?

After you have answered all of the above listed questions, your organisation should respond with a position paper, providing decision-makers with your view of the legislation or policy. You may also have to do a media campaign or perform some other forms of advocacy actions.

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# 4.3

## Lobbying or Face-to-face Meetings

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**4.3**

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**Advocacy Action Tools**  
3. Lobbying or Face-to-face  
Meeting

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**Lobbying or face-to-face meeting**

Having a personal meeting with decision-makers and their staff members – either by yourself or as part of a small group – is one of the most effective advocacy tools, because it allows you to put a face to your issue. A face-to-face meeting with a targeted decision-maker, known as lobbying, is one of the most frequently used advocacy methods and often sets off a series of activities.

Personal contact with decision-makers gives you the opportunity to build relationships with them, which could prove useful in the future. Time spent setting up channels for regular contacts is time well spent, making future lobbying efforts both more likely and easier.

It is important to choose the right time for meeting decision-makers. The best time is when your issue or problem is already on their agenda or most likely to be taken up – for example, before an important vote – or when they are able to take action in support of your advocacy – for example, during the budget-setting process.

Arranging an appointment is usually as simple as calling, though you may be asked to make your request in writing and you may need to wait a few weeks.

**Advantages**

- It shows the human face of the issue or problem to decision-makers, especially if people directly affected by the issue are involved.
- It is good for involving people at the community level.
- It allows you to discuss the issue rather than just present your position.
- It creates a personal connection that is more likely to lead to action.
- It puts a human face on the issue at hand.

**Disadvantages**

- The message could fail to make an impact if the decision-maker takes a personal dislike to the messenger(s).
  - A decision-maker with greater negotiating skills could make the meeting a waste of time, or could persuade you to agree to actions you later regret.
  - It can be time-consuming and frustrating.
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**How to lobby**  
**It's less scary than it sounds!**

**1. Establish 'points of entry'**

Think creatively about how to meet with the target person. Is there something you have in common? For example, if a friend of yours attends the same mosque as the decision-maker, ask your friend to introduce you, so that you can negotiate a time to meet, or, alternatively, use the opportunity as a face-to-face meeting.

**2. Ask for a meeting**

Send a letter explaining what your advocacy goal is and why you would like a meeting. Follow up with a phone call. Often you will not get a meeting with the direct target but with one of their staff (an indirect target). Always meet with the staff person, and treat her or him the same way you would treat the decision-maker.

**3. Invite the target(s) to see the issue or problem themselves**

Invite the target with whom you have secured a meeting out of the office to see the issue or problem first-hand and to show them why you need their support. If the target person cannot leave the office, take your issue there. Bring people directly affected by the issue to your meeting, show a short video about the issue or take a few photographs with you.

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## Advocacy Action Tools

### 3. Lobbying or Face-to-face Meeting

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#### 4. Prepare for meetings

The single most important ingredient in effective lobbying is thorough preparation in advance. Knowing your mission and immediate goal(s) is not enough. You must know everything you can find out about the people you will be meeting and their environments.

##### Step 1: Know your target

No matter who you are meeting, it is critical that you find out as much as possible about the person(s) in advance. Things to try to obtain or find out include:

- The person's correct full name, official title and, if obtainable, job description or list of responsibilities or areas of authority.
- The person's biography. Most officials of the kind you would meet in a situation like this maintain a complete, up-to-date biography that, if nothing else, presents the facts in the way the person wants them presented. You may find surprising similarity (e.g. coming from the same place, having gone to the same school) that would give you a great opener (but one to be kept brief, to allow time for the more important things to be discussed; a reluctant target could hold you hostage, message-wise, by talking about something you have in common, leaving too little time to focus on your message).
- If the person is a lawmaker, her or his voting record on issues of all kinds.
- Political affiliation or leanings.
- Personal, professional and social associations.
- Known views on the topic of your advocacy. If there is any record of what your target thinks about the issue of your advocacy, you must know it in the greatest detail possible. This is the most important part of this aspect of preparation.
- Entries on the internet. You could be surprised about what you find, including things such as papers or positions on matters the person has published or expressed in the past.
- Things you can learn about the person simply by asking key people you know. Something they find of little interest and mention casually might be information of great interest to you. When asking around, avoid saying why you are doing so unless it is necessary, just to keep open the broadest possible range of things you might find out about the person.

##### Step 2: Focus on your message

Choose your main objective and develop a simple message:

- What you want to achieve.
- Why you want to achieve it (the benefits of taking action, and/or the negative effects of doing nothing; evidence for the problem – statistics and anecdotes.)
- How you propose to achieve it.
- What action you want the target person to take.

Write a short position paper to give to the decision-maker, to remind them of your points. It is advisable to give them this paper at the end of the meeting unless they request it up front. You want to personally engage the target and not have them reading your paper while you are talking.

Remember, you have requested the meeting, so it's up to you to keep to the agenda, despite distractions. In order to make sure that all of your key points are made during the limited time you have, it is extremely important that all meeting participants stay on message, that is, cover the key points and not get lost in telling personal stories unrelated to the purpose of the visit. For example, if the meeting is about funding for HIV prevention, restrict your comments to that issue alone.

Bring written information to your meeting to leave with the decision-maker or support staff person. Ideally, you will have prepared a one- or two-page fact sheet, which:

- Describes the problem or issue you are trying to address using facts or data to support your claim

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**Advocacy Action Tools****3. Lobbying or Face-to-face Meeting**

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- Describes your proposed solution and the main arguments for it
- Respond to the main arguments against your proposed action; and
- Lists key supporters or coalition partners, including information about whom to contact for additional information.

Bring some form of paper to the meeting. If there is no fact sheet, bring copies of favourable news stories or letters of support. When you do bring written information to give the target, you've left something that the staff member can refer to when you are gone, and you yourself have something to refer to during the meeting. It also allows the target to listen to you and not have to take extensive notes.

Before ending your meeting, be sure to make your request. Ask the staff member to commit to voting for or against a bill, to introduce legislation, or in some other way to take a role with respect to your issue. Whether or not you receive a commitment, follow up by phone or in a letter. Always end the meeting with a thank you – for their support, for taking the time to meet with you and hear your views.

**CAUTION:** If a legislator or staff member asks you a question that you don't know the answer to, be honest and tell them you don't know. Tell them you will get the information and contact them within the next few days – and then do it. Your credibility is essential to your success as an advocate.

**Step 3: Choose the right messenger**

Often the messenger is as important as the message. If a friend arranged the meeting, ask that person to come to the meeting with you. Bringing someone directly affected by the issue or problem may personalise the issue and get the decision-maker's attention. If the target is an elected official, try to find a messenger from the target's constituency. Ideally, the messenger will have some speaking and negotiation skills. The messenger must come with the appropriate attitude to bring about a positive outcome without personal attacks on the target.

If you are lobbying as a group, make sure to identify a group leader to begin the meeting. Always start by introducing yourself and thanking the person for their time, providing them with your business card, if you have one. Then, explain why you are there and what it is you want them to do (e.g. sponsor legislation, send a letter or vote for more funding).

**Step 4: Practise!**

Rehearse your message with colleagues or friends. Ask someone to role-play the meeting, pretending to be the decision-maker, asking difficult questions. If you going in a group, practise with them, too. If possible, it is best to do a quick review with everyone involved with the meeting just before walking in the door.

**5. After the meeting**

Write to the person you met, thanking them for their time (even if the person was not helpful), briefly repeating your key points and any supporting comments made by the target person, especially any promises to take action. Tell the target person what you plan to do next, promise to keep them informed, and express the hope that you will be able to work together on the issue in future. Then, be sure to plan to follow up with them just as you promised.

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## Advocacy Action Tools

### 3. Lobbying or Face-to-face Meeting

## Face-to-face meeting scenarios

Here are some of the most common meeting scenarios you might encounter in lobbying. Reading them may help you prepare for such visits. Each of the scenarios is followed by a quick exercise. Following these scenarios are a group of in-depth lobbying exercises that will also help you practise face-to-face meetings.

### Meeting scenario 1: Polite, non-committal

The decision-maker listens to what you have to say and may ask a few questions, but for the most part does not give a clear indication of where he or she stands on the issue and does not commit to taking any particular action.

(In many cases, targets who disagree with you will remain non-committal for as long as possible. However, in some cases, they will tell you directly that they are opposed to your position. Knowing that they disagree with you may make the conversation more difficult, but it does not mean that the meeting is over.)

#### What should you do?

This is the most common type of advocacy meeting. Perhaps the decision-maker is still undecided, or maybe the staff person is new, or has not yet spoken to the final decision-maker about the issue. This lack of commitment is not necessarily a bad sign, nor does it mean that your meeting was unproductive. In such situations, you should:

- Ask if there are questions you can answer or if there is additional information you can provide that will help the target determine their position on the issue.
- Try to get a sense of any specific concerns or issues she or he may have so that you can respond to those concerns directly.
- Ask if the person has been contacted by others who support or oppose the issue; that way, you learn who your opponents are and whether they are actively organising against you.
- If the staff person is new to the job, consider this meeting as an opportunity to establish your reputation as an expert resource on HIV/AIDS issues. Remember, information about how an issue affects people is valuable to the staff member.
- Tell the staff person that you will follow up in the near future to find out the decision-maker's position. Then be sure to follow through; it's important to show that you care enough to monitor the progress of an issue.

### Exercise (15 minutes)

The facilitator selects someone from the training to play the role of the person doing the lobbying. After giving that person an advocacy topic, and a few minutes to prepare a presentation (with the help of other training participants), the facilitator leads a mock meeting playing the role of the target.

### Meeting scenario 2: I agree completely

Either before the meeting is arranged or during the meeting itself, you learn that the decision-maker strongly supports your position. Although you've come to your meeting with prepared remarks and supporting handouts, you quickly learn that it is not needed.

#### What should you do?

Don't think that because the decision-maker is supportive, the meeting is a waste of time. Supportive decision-makers and their staff members are important sources of information about how other people view your issue and about who else is lobbying for or against you. In such situations, you should:

- Be respectful of their time and recognise that you do not need to make your points at length and in detail. Instead, begin by thanking them for their support.

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## Advocacy Action Tools

### 3. Lobbying or Face-to-face Meeting

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- Ask them what they are hearing about your issue. This intelligence is very useful.
- Ask them what else they think should be done to broaden support for your issue.

#### Exercise (10 minutes)

The facilitator selects someone from the training to play the role of the person doing the lobbying. After giving that person an advocacy topic, and a few minutes to prepare a presentation (with the help of other training participants), the facilitator leads a mock meeting playing the role of the target.

#### Meeting scenario 3: I disagree with your position.

##### What should you do?

In general, even when a decision-maker does not support your view, he or she will hear you out and will express their opposition politely. Remember, it is your right to express your views, and you are there for that purpose. And remember, although the decision-maker may oppose you on one issue, he or she may be supportive on others. Think of this as a long-term relationship. In this situation, you should:

- Listen to their comments or ask questions to determine why exactly they are opposed to the issue.
- Respond to their concerns – respectfully – using supporting facts and data, if possible.
- Ask if the decision-maker will at least agree to stay neutral, rather than oppose the issue.
- Ask if there is specific information that would lead the member to change his or her position (such as additional information about how the issue affects his or her constituents), or possible amendments that would address his concerns.
- If you find yourself in a meeting in which a staff person becomes hostile, remain professional. Answer any questions they may have, but try to end the meeting as quickly as possible.

#### Exercise (20 minutes)

The facilitator selects three people from the training to play the role of the people doing the lobbying. After giving that person an advocacy topic, and a few minutes to prepare a presentation (with the help of other training participants), the facilitator leads a mock meeting playing the role of the target.

#### Three lobbying exercises (120 minutes, if all done together)

##### Note to facilitator

These three lobbying exercises have three different outcomes and should be carried out through role playing. In all cases, a facilitator will take the role of the target. In the first scenario, the lobbying effort ends with the advocate group getting no support at all for their proposals from the target and, in fact, assurances that all necessary steps to block the actions lobbied will be taken. The second scenario is the opposite. The target, who has already been identified through research as someone sympathetic to the cause, gives assurances of full support. In the third, more complex scenario, the target gives reluctant support to one of the actions but is firm that support for the other proposed action cannot be granted.

Use flip-chart paper if necessary to write out the details of each scenario, explaining it to the full group. Select three groups of participants to role-play the

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## Advocacy Action Tools

### 3. Lobbying or Face-to-face Meeting

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advocate groups. They will need to break into groups and plan strategies on how to influence the target to obtain their desired outcome. Give them a maximum of 10 minutes for this brain-storming activity, although explain that in real-life, lobbying efforts are to be carefully planned over a much longer period of time, preparing for all kinds of possible outcomes. Then do the role-play, taking your role with complete seriousness. This will involve stepping out of the persona you have developed as a facilitator.

Do not attempt to control the role-play. In particular, do not 'break character' to coach the participants on tactics they might take or things they might say. Allow participants to fumble or make mistakes. After each role-play, open a discussion on what has just taken place with the whole group. Other participants may be reluctant to criticise fellow participants, who will probably have become new friends at this point. So, to keep it from being personal, a criticism or performance review, and encourage the group to refer to the tips on effective lobbying (**Handout 1**). Have the full group use them as guidelines for spotting the successful things that were done during the role playing as well as the mistakes that may have been made.

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#### Lobbying exercise 1

**Background:** Your organisation has just gotten word from a staff member's friend inside the mayor's office that the local government is planning a crackdown on brothels in your city, with the intention not just of arresting the sex workers and management but of closing down the brothels permanently. This would interfere with one important aspect of your work: having access to high-risk groups that are a large part of your client base.

**Aim:** You want the government officials involved in the sting operation to see the downside of their plan. So, in addition to convincing the officials of the value of the brothels – already a tough sell – you must propose some form of regulation for the brothels that meets the needs of both law enforcement officials and your clients.

**Target:** Your target is the newly appointed metropolitan Police Captain. Relatively new to public life, the Captain was also a past member of the city council, ambitious and hard working and with a record of non-support of the sex industry in the area. There is a rumour that the Captain's mother may have been a sex worker – out of economic necessity when the Captain was a small child. The Captain has strong, negative and personal (but unknown to others) feelings about the evils of prostitution and sees closing brothels as a righteous mission on top of a political advantage for career advancement.

**Note to facilitator:** Your position is a consistent "no" to all proposals and positions presented.

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#### Lobbying exercise 2

**Background:** A government-sponsored study in your province has just revealed that the largest growth in new cases of HIV/AIDS is among injecting drug users (IDUs). Your organisation has suspected this for some time and wants to start a needle-exchange program, and perhaps on a simultaneous drug-substitution service as well. You need government support because no programme exists in your area and the kind of actions it requires does not appear in current law or policy in any form. It is unclear if the actions that are being advocated for are illegal.

**Aim:** To gain provincial government support of a needle-exchange program and endorsement of the idea to provide drug-substitution to IDUs who might seek it, particularly future HIV positive clients.

**Target:** Your target is the chief aide to the provincial governor. You have just learned, through your research and advocacy planning, that the aide is a former

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**Advocacy Action Tools****3. Lobbying or Face-to-face Meeting**

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senior staff member of UNAIDS who fully understands the problem and the appropriateness of the solution. You know, through your advocacy partners in the local drug users support group, that this aide is in fact the most trusted advisor to the governor.

**Note to facilitator:** Your position is supportive and you agree to everything in advance by the advocates, the lobbyists. Be sure to observe whether the group influencing the target is clear about exactly what it is they want and that they take full advantage of the cooperativeness of the target.

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**Lobbying exercise 3**

**Background:** The national AIDS control unit has revealed that HIV infection levels among male prisoners are four times the national norm and is rising. Nevertheless, with all forms of homosexuality explicitly stated to be illegal in your country, there is little that prison officials are interested in doing about the situation. You would like to implement a programme of free condom and lubricant distribution at a large local prison, using it as a pilot project. Your one point of access is the Chief Warden of the prison, who has indicated to someone in your network that an out-of-control AIDS epidemic within the prison will only add to the funding burden faced by the prison such as increased medical care costs.

**Aim:** Your goals are to get the Chief Warden not only to allow your organisation to come inside the prison, distribute condoms, conduct in-training services with staff and a support group for prisoners, but also to convey your concerns to the senior officials in the prison system. Because you know that your proposals, both short and long-term, are a tough sell, you have sent a delegation of representatives from five different kinds of HIV/AIDS organisations in the hope of being able to present a large number of view points on the value of your ideas and to have greater strength in numbers.

**Target:** Your target is the Chief Warden of the national prison. The Chief is personally not happy with the idea as it may not be completely in line with national laws and policies. However, money is always tight in the prison systems and the Chief Warden sees the opportunity for cost-reductions and access to free services and goods for his staff and prisoners.

**Note to facilitator:** You take and maintain a tough stand on the impossibility of implementing the proposal. You take a range of positions such as: these people are criminals and don't follow rules anyway, so why would they use the condoms; they get what they deserve if they do those things while in jail; as a member of the law-enforcement system, he must not be seen as disregarding the law in any way and, after all, those homosexual acts are against the law. Finally, after negotiating some free services such as staff trainings, IEC materials, an occasional Saturday afternoon lunch for the prisoners at which a panel of HIV positive ex-prisoners will speak and so forth, you agree to let the organisations start a small programme, very low-key and with no publicity. In effect, you agree to allow the group to carry out some of the proposals while you look the other way. But you cannot and will not under any circumstances take the issue to other prison authorities.

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**Advocacy Action Tools****3. Lobbying or Face-to-face Meeting**

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**Handout 1: Tips on doing effective lobbying****DO**

- Begin by praising the decision-maker for any past support on your issue.
- Early in the meeting, point out areas of agreement and mutual interest with the decision-maker.
- Listen, as well as talk – you need to hear what your target thinks. Imagine how the issue or problem looks from the decision-maker's point of view. This is why it is wise to have fully researched the targeted decision-maker in advance.
- Show the decision-maker that there is widespread support for your advocacy objective.
- Link your objective to an issue the decision-maker cares about.
- Know more about the issue than the decision-maker! Gain a reputation for being knowledgeable.
- Make realistic requests.
- Be willing to negotiate, but be clear about how far you will compromise. If your organisation is representing a larger coalition or joint action group, be clear of what the coalition is willing to compromise on beforehand.
- If more than one member of your organisation is present, decide who will say what.
- End by summarising what the decision-maker has said or promised.

**DO NOT**

- Do not ask the decision-maker to do more than one thing at a time, unless that person seems very eager to help you.
  - Do not confuse the decision-maker with too many messages.
  - Do not give too much information.
  - Do not use technical terms or jargon.
  - Do not give false or misleading information – it can cause you problems in the future.
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# **HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up**

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# **4.4**

## **Preparing a Position Paper and Briefing Note**

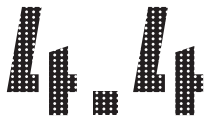
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### 4.41 Guidelines for Writing Position Papers and Briefing Notes

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**HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up**  
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**Advocacy Action Tools**  
4. Preparing a Position Paper and Briefing Note

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## Preparing a position paper and briefing note

A briefing note and a position paper are both documents that clearly state the position or opinion of an organisation (or a coalition of organisations) about a particular issue. The message of these documents is: “This is what we think about this topic, and this is what we recommend.”

The general distinction between the two is based on the intended audience.

A **position paper** is written for a target, not an ally. It is a formal written record of the position (opinion) of an organisation or coalition, articulated for an external audience. Position papers can:

- Be left with an individual decision-maker at the end of a face-to-face meeting, to summarise the main points of your message.
- Be sent to local and national governments during consultation exercises.
- Be sent to people in influence, in response to a policy or action, to explain an alternative or supporting position.
- Be given to delegates or members of a committee at the beginning of a meeting or conference – whether or not you are allowed to speak at the meeting.

A **briefing note** is written for an ally, not a target. It is similar to the notes a speaker uses. Sometimes a briefing note is a position paper with additional advice for the speaker – for example, how to answer questions or key points to emphasise. A briefing note can:

- Be written by a programme officer involved in the advocacy work, to assist the executive director in supporting the advocacy objective at a high-level meeting.
- Summarise agreed advocacy objectives and messages of a coalition to ensure that all members of the coalition give a consistent message.
- Include talking points, or sound bites that can easily be understood and memorised.

### Advantages

- Briefing notes and position papers are a good way to provide clear documentation of your ideas for external audiences.
- They reduce distortion or misinterpretation of your positions.
- They are a way of contributing to decision-making processes – for example, as a way of delivering your analysis of policies or legislation to influential people.
- They help to identify allies based on the reaction to them.
- They can help build consensus on policies inside the organisation.

### Disadvantages

- Briefing notes and position papers commit the organisation to a certain position. An organisation can change its mind – but if a position paper exists, it cannot deny what its position was at some point in the past.
  - They are only as up-to-date as the last time they were edited/written, but they may still be in existence long after you have changed your position.
  - They can be misread if you have not used your words carefully or misinterpreted if you are not there to explain them.
  - They can be ignored.
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## Advocacy Action Tools

### 4. Preparing a Position Paper or Briefing Note

## Guidelines for writing position papers and briefing notes

### General advice

- Briefing notes and position papers should be as short as possible, so people are more likely to read them.
- Do not assume that the reader understands the subject well. Include enough background information so that the reader does not have to do additional research.
- Separate fact from opinion. Provide supporting evidence to back up facts, and write opinions as quotes where appropriate.

### Format for position papers

If you can, follow the format for policy documents used in the target organisation itself but there is a high probability that you will not be able to find or work with it. So, develop your own standardised organisational format and stick to it. You may want to follow this format:

Statement of main recommendation	One to two sentences.
Background	Explanation of why the position paper has been written; list of the laws, international treaties, and other policies that support the recommendation.
Provide evidence supporting the recommendation	Quantitative evidence: facts and figures. Qualitative evidence: case studies, personal testimonies, anecdotes or examples supporting the recommendation. (Always ask for permission from individuals being quoted and protect their confidentiality, as needed.)
State your position	Logical explanation of how the evidence leads to your recommendations. Answers to possible questions or objections.
Make your recommendations	Specific, realistic actions that the decision-maker can understand easily.
Cite organisations and individuals supporting this position paper	Be sure the list is accurate and up-to-date.
Provide the name of your organisation or coalition	Include logos whenever available and appropriate.
Give the date	Use the date the writing was completed.
Provide an individual to contact for follow-up	Including job title, organisation affiliation, street address, telephone, fax number and e-mail address.
State the mission/goals	Of your organisation and/or coalition.

### Format for briefing note

This document will only be seen by individuals within your organisation, or within your advocacy alliance, to assist them in delivering advocacy messages. Therefore, it is acceptable to write notes instead of full sentences and to use bullet points. Follow the same format as above, but also:

- Emphasise the most important points – by, for example, using boldface type.
- Suggest possible strategies, tactics, minimum demands that cannot be compromised.
- Include possible questions that might be asked with suggested answers.
- Include problematic issues that might arise, and suggest how to deal with them.

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**Advocacy Action Tools****4. Preparing a Position Paper or Briefing Note**

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**Handout 2: Tips on writing position papers and briefing notes****DO**

- Use appropriate language for your target audiences.
- Tailor your document to a particular audience for a particular reason.
- Give full references of any research or information quoted.
- Be brief and to the point.
- Ask others for ideas before writing.
- Make sure the appropriate people have been consulted.
- Ensure that everyone in the organisation understand the organisation's position.
- Read it carefully for mistakes before sending or using it.
- Ask others who are stakeholders or allies to help review it.

**DO NOT**

- Do not distribute a position paper that contradicts what you have said.
  - Do not include the words 'advocating' or 'advocacy'.
  - Do not use indecisive language – make clear points and highlight them with bullet points.
  - Do not quote people without their permission or break confidentiality in case studies.
  - Do not use abbreviations or acronyms unless necessary or they are commonly known. At the very least, spell an acronym out the first time you use it.
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# 4.5

## Writing and Delivering a Presentation

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### 4.51 Making a Presentation

## HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up

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# 4.5

## Advocacy Action Tools

### 5. Writing and Delivering a Presentation

## Writing and delivering a presentation

A presentation is a formal way of delivering a message directly to an audience. It can range from a brief talk to a small group to a presentation to hundreds of people at an international conference. Giving a presentation can be terrifying, but good preparation and lots of practice will make it much easier.

### Advantages

- You can offer your selection of facts and opinions.
- You can speak directly to a target audience.
- You can show visuals, like PowerPoint slides, to illustrate your message.
- A presentation can have a powerful impact when it is done well.
- You can give out copies of your presentation as a written record.

### Disadvantages

- It is not always easy to make an interesting and lively presentation.
- A bad environment – noise, distractions, poor lighting, faulty electricity, time of day – could spoil your presentation.
- You could be open to difficult questions from an unpredictable audience.

## Making a presentation

There are three main stages of making a presentation:

- 1 Planning
- 2 Writing a presentation
- 3 Delivering a presentation

### 1. Planning

- Research and review the key factors that will affect your presentation:
  - Who is the audience?
  - What are their interests and level of knowledge about the topic?
  - How much time has been given for the presentation?
  - Does this include time for questions?
  - Where will it take place?
  - What equipment will be available?
  - What is the broader context of the event – is the presentation the main event or part of something else? How does it fit within the event?
- Gather the information and materials that will inform the presentation.
- Don't forget to check out the space in which you will be presenting – in person, if possible.
  - Is it big enough to hold the number of people you hope to attract?
  - Do you need to arrange sound amplification (a good sound system)?
  - Is technical equipment set up and working properly (such as a computer with PowerPoint and a projector or an overhead projector)? If not, bring it with you and arrive early enough to test it out.

### 2. Writing a presentation

- Some people just use an outline for their talks, while others prefer to have the text of the talk written out in full.
- Make sure the presentation has a beginning, which introduces the topic; a middle, which contains the bulk of the talk; and a summary or conclusion.
  - Decide ahead of time if you want questions during your talk, at the end in the group or one on one; tell the audience of your decision during the introduction.
- Catch the audience's attention at the start with a quote or a short story to make the situation human and real for them.
  - Jokes can be good but they can also fall flat or offend your audience so use them with great caution.
- Identify and list the key points and ensure that each has supporting facts and references.
  - Place these key points in a logical order.
  - Persuade the audience by supporting each statement with strong evidence.

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## Advocacy Action Tools

### 5. Writing and Delivering a Presentation

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- Make or select visual aids that support your presentation but also add some value – for example, that add interest or provide a human angle.
  - Pictures of affected clients can be good but only if they were taken and used with each person's permission. Explicit or graphic pictures can be a draw but they can also turn some people off and you may lose your audience who may stop listening to what you have to say.
- If you are using PowerPoint, put only key, broad points on the slides – and only two or three to a slide. Do not simply read from the PowerPoint slides, either; use them as guides or as back up to your talk. Do not use too many fancy animation features and technical gimmicks. These may distract the audience.

### 3. Delivering the presentation

- Do not simply read your written text aloud. If you have written out a script, that is, your entire talk word for word, be very careful. It is very easy to lose your place and spend too much time shuffling through all of your papers. Either learn or memorise the text or simply use bullet points as a reminder for you of each point.
  - Using small index cards (10 X 15 cm or smaller) can be the best way to organise your talk, using bullet points – and don't forget to number your cards!
- Don't go over your allotted or planned timeframe. If you must and it feels like the audience wants more (they seem to be engaged and attentive), ask them for permission.
- Speak loudly, clearly and slowly, and pause to allow people to consider key points. Pause, too, if there is applause or laughter during your presentation.
- Use good visual aids to make the presentation more interesting and easier to understand. You should turn to look at visual aids from time to time, to encourage the audience to do so, too or use a laser pointer, if available.
- Decide if you want the audience to have copies of your presentation and visual aids during or after your presentation (if at all).
  - If you provide it beforehand, refer to it. If it is available after the presentation, tell them that also so they are not writing down information while you are presenting.
  - Be sure to have adequate copies of any handouts with you, in case there are more people attending than expected or if someone takes more than one set.
- Make eye contact with all of the audience – don't only look at the floor, at your notes or at one person in the audience. A good tip, if you must use it, is to look a little over the heads of the audience and not directly into their eyes (but don't stare at the back wall either).
- Make the presentation like a conversation – don't talk at people, talk with them.

### Dealing with questions

During or after a presentation, you will need to deal with questions. Remember the following:

- Think before responding to a question. A short pause is okay and lets you consider the question and decide on an answer.
  - If needed, repeat each question to the entire audience.
  - If a question is very complex, repeat and rephrase it to be sure that both you and the other audience members have understood it.
    - If the question is long, break it up into parts and answer them one at a time, if possible (but don't forget to answer all of the parts).
  - Reply to the whole audience, not just the individual who asked the question.
  - Take an easy-going approach to sarcastic questions. Don't get flustered by them.
  - Just as in face to face meetings, if you don't know the answer, say so but offer to try and find the answer and get back to the questioner in some way. Never pretend that you know the answer or make one up on the spot that you think might be correct.
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**Advocacy Action Tools**5. Writing and Delivering  
a Presentation

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**The 3 P's of Presenting****The 3 P's of Presenting by Steve Wetmore**

<b>Preparation</b>	behind every memorable presentation is a good deal of planning, preparation and attention to details.
<b>Practice</b>	an effective presentation demands good delivery.
<b>Performance</b>	think of your delivery as actually being on stage.

From <http://people.senecac.on.ca/kerry.jarvis/Tips/705tips.htm>.  
Accessed June 2007.

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# HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up

## A Toolkit for Strengthening Local Responses

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# 4.6

## Understanding Media Advocacy

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- 4.61 Developing a Message
- 4.62 Ideas for Creating News
- 4.63 Working with Reporters

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**HIV Advocacy from  
the Ground Up**  
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**4.6**

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**Advocacy Action Tools**  
6. Understanding Media  
Advocacy

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## Understanding media advocacy

When we talk about the media or mass media, we refer to all the ways the general public gets its information, including news, current and community events. The types of media include newspapers (daily and weekly); magazines (usually monthly); community, trade organisation and business newsletters (frequency varies); radio; TV (free broadcast and cable); and the internet (websites, blogs, newsgroups, and other new online features and developments). As the media is usually privately owned and operated, they often have viewpoints about the things they think matter the most to their audience – their readers, listeners, viewers and their larger community.

Using the mass media is also an information, education and communication (IEC) method. It becomes an advocacy method when:

- The general public has been identified as an indirect target that will go on to influence a direct target – for example, voters who will influence an elected official.
- Influential people are the targets of the article or broadcast item – for example, clergymen reading a newspaper.

### When to involve the media in advocacy work

- When you have begun your advocacy work.
- When your advocacy work is going well and you are making good progress.
- When there is a burning issue (something that needs immediate attention).
- When other methods are not working.
- When looking for allies.

### When not to involve the media in advocacy work

- When you do not know understand the media.
- When there are disagreements within the organisation on the issue.
- When the timing is not right – for example, due to political circumstances.
- When bigger issues are dominating the media, preventing your issue from getting the attention you think it deserves.

It is important for advocates to develop media advocacy skills to shape the stories and policy solutions reported by the media about HIV/AIDS. The media plays a very important role in educating the public about HIV/AIDS issues as well as in shaping public opinion. The news media can provide us, our issues and our organisations with visibility and credibility and can contribute significantly to the successful promotion of a progressive HIV/AIDS advocacy agenda. Through the media, advocates are also able to speak to decision-makers to whom they may not otherwise have access. If your organisation does not have anyone who can liaise with media very well, try to work with or seek help from another group who has managed to develop good media relations.

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## Developing a message

Successful advocates know that getting a story in the media is only half the battle. The other, more important half is getting the issue reported in a way that supports your advocacy. Ensure that a story reported in the media accurately characterises your issue. How a story is told is referred to as the ‘frame’ or ‘spin’ on it, and it influences the audience’s view, particularly, of the parties portrayed as responsible for the problem, and those associated with the solution. The frame determines what is included in the story and what is not. That is why developing a media message is so important.

People who work in the media – usually referred to as journalists or reporters – can be a touchy bunch. They are generally in the jobs they have because they care about the issues they report on, which means, among other things, that they have opinions, even prejudices of their own. Even so, they – and others – see their views as being open, fair, and even-handed in their coverage of their area of expertise (sometimes called their beat). Most reporters are in their professions

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## Advocacy Action Tools

### 6. Understanding Media Advocacy

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because they care. Except for high-profile, highly-paid broadcast reporters and a very small number of well-known, big name writers, reporters work for comparatively low salaries and their hours are long and irregular. These factors can make the reporters, who are also expected to be objective even more unpredictable.

Most important to keep in mind is that virtually all reporters have both time and space limitations, so advocates working with the media must recognise that their success in getting a reporter to write about something (known as pitching a story) depends, among other things, on the degree to which they can help the reporter do their job. In most cases, that starts with getting the reporter to see why the issue is newsworthy. There are four parts to developing your media message:

**Statement:** The statement is the main idea of the message and you need to be able to present the heart of your message in only several strong sentences.

**Evidence:** The evidence supports the statement or central idea with facts and/or figures and should include limited data that the reporter and their audience can easily understand.

**Example:** After providing the facts, try to add a human face to the story. An anecdote based on a personal experience gives a human face to the facts and figures.

**Action Desired:** The desired action is what you want the reporter's audience to do as a result of hearing the message. The advocacy objective should be stated clearly to the target audience as an invitation for action!

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### Tips on message development

- Choose language that is accessible to a wide audience and which reduces complex issues into manageable talking points. Use facts and examples to reinforce the points you make. Don't try to explain the entire issue.
  - Assign responsibility for solving the problem to a policy-making entity. Unless they are told otherwise, most people assume that the solution to a problem lies with the individual rather than a policy-making body.
  - Frame the problem as a social justice issue rather than an individual problem. It is important that decision-makers are not able to shift blame onto one person or group, which allows the decision-maker to avoid taking action. Concentrate on shared values. Give specific examples.
  - Define your policy or legislative solution and make a specific call for action.
  - When possible, use compelling visuals and symbols. Evoke images or pictures that help connect your story to the audience.
  - Develop catchy ways of delivering your message in a few memorable words (called 'sound bites'). If they are clear, strong and memorable, a reporter is likely to pick them up and use them – often without crediting you, which is something you just have to live with.
  - Never lie to a reporter. If a reporter asks you a question you cannot answer, say that you do not know the answer but will call them back with it. Make sure you find out exactly when reporters need information so as to make their deadline.
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## Advocacy Action Tools

### 6. Understanding Media Advocacy

## Ideas for creating news

Often, sending a press release or calling to pitch a story is not enough. Journalists want to write about issues and cover stories that are compelling and dramatic. Sometimes, to generate news stories, advocates are forced to be more creative by staging news events. Be strategic and develop events that most effectively communicate your message – not only with facts and figures, but with strong visual elements, too. If the news event creates an opportunity for a compelling photograph or television image to accompany the report, it usually means the story will be placed in a prominent place in the paper or television news report. Where you choose to hold your event is also important, so be strategic and think about what message you are trying to send by the choice of location.

Press conferences are useful activities for releasing research or survey data, announcing a boycott, delivering petitions, announcing a legal action, using a celebrity spokesperson for your issue, or giving an award.

Demonstrations, marches and rallies are good for mobilising grassroots advocates in a very visual or dramatic fashion – and provide an opportunity to expand your coalition efforts.

Special events are good for interesting stunts that create excitement (called a ‘buzz’ in the industry) within your target audience. Such events include holding your own mock or shadow event – one that resembles an event by your opponents but mimics it in a satirical way, to point out its shortcomings – to counter the message of your opponents. Be creative!

### Exercise: Creating news (30 minutes)

Break into groups based on organisation and draw up a plan for an event that will create news. Make it specific to your organisation’s work. It must be something that is newsworthy enough to draw press attention. A rally or demonstration in front of your country’s Health Ministry to call attention to an HIV/AIDS-related issue is something at the level needed, though other kinds of events are certainly possible. Think of people who could speak or otherwise take part whose presence would draw direct attention to the issue, create a public that is more aware or sympathetic to the action you are advocating, and be of interest to the media. Your indirect target is the media because you want them to cover the event but in the exercise, identify who your primary target or targets would be.

## Working with reporters

You will be much more successful as a media advocate if you develop an understanding of how the media and its reporters work.

- Different media outlets have different deadlines. Learn – and respect – them, and do your planning with them in mind. They are not flexible, and you will not be able to get by with anything done at the last minute.
- Do your homework to identify reporters covering your issue for the various media outlets you have identified in your media advocacy plan. More than one reporter may cover HIV/AIDS issues. Some reporters only cover law-makers while others only cover science and health policy. Identify the appropriate reporter by contacting the media outlet and asking the assignment editor.
- Seek out reporters at meetings and introduce yourself, offer them a business card and inquire about contact information.
- Remember that a reporter is neither your friend nor your enemy but a professional doing a job. Stick to the facts and avoid strong language or overstatement, since both will hurt your credibility. Know your issue, make accurate statements – and be prepared to offer a catchy quote for publication. Your objective is to be known as a trusted and knowledgeable source of information for reporters and editors alike.

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**Advocacy Action Tools****6. Understanding Media Advocacy**

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**Staying on message**

How and what a reporter asks you are important measures of what frame a reporter is testing out for the story. Reporters may be hostile towards you or your issue and ask questions that are intended to frame the issue in a negative light or put you on the defensive. Be prepared! Know your opponents' arguments and be prepared to respond if a reporter uses those arguments to counter your proposed solution. To succeed, you must shift the debate (and frame) back to your strategic message.

While you can't control what you are asked, you can control how you answer. Good media advocates learn how to use an interview skill known as bridging to avoid answering a hostile or negative question while keeping the interview focused on the strategic message. Prior to conducting an interview, practice handling difficult questions with a fellow advocate or friend, if possible, someone who is experienced in interviews with the media. Then you will be prepared if you are confronted with a hostile question.

**Sample bridging phrases**

- "I can't tell you that. What I can tell you is..."
- "What is important to remember is this..."
- "That brings me back to my main point, which is..."
- "The real issue is..."
- "The most important point to remember is..."

**Pitching a story**

Picking up the phone and calling reporters to supply them with creative, newsworthy story is known as the news pitch. Elements of a good news pitch include:

- a local or human-interest angle
- good visuals
- a credible and articulate spokesperson
- newsworthiness

Plan and practise your pitch in advance. Anticipate questions and be prepared with clear, simple answers.

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**Handout 3: Tips on working with reporters****DO**

- Provide the media with the information reporters need in a format they can use (for example, a press release).
- Develop good relationships with reporters and be as helpful as possible.
- Understand the pressures under which, and limitations within which, reporters work. By all means, respect their deadlines.
- Work with, not against, reporters, regardless of whether they agree with you.
- Be clear about what you are trying to achieve when involving the media in your advocacy work.
- Find out which reporters are the most relevant ones to cover your story and send them your press release, using correct contact details about yourself.
- Coordinate all your media work through one person in your organisation, so there is one person for reporters to contact.
- Provide a 24-hour contact number on your press release, so that reporters on deadline can contact someone for more information at any time, day or night. If you think your story is worth covering, you must be willing to go to that length.

**DO NOT**

- Do not plead for your story to be published. Even a reporter who is genuinely interested in your story may not be able to convince an editor or manager to go with it. You pushing hard only makes it more difficult for them – and increases the likelihood that they will avoid you and important stories in the future.
  - Do not dictate any terms – at all – but particularly about story placement (what part of a publication the story will appear in). Everyone thinks they have a cover story, but no one is more sensitive about what makes the cover (or the top of the news) than the manager of a reporter. Never ask for cover-story placement.
  - Do not be defensive. If challenged, just restate your position clearly, perhaps in different words if you think you did not make yourself clear the first time.
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# HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up

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# 4.7

## Writing and Using a Press Release

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- 4.71 Writing a Press Release
- 4.72 Giving a Media Interview

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**Advocacy Action Tools**  
7. Writing and Using  
a Press Release

## Writing and using a press release

### Writing a press release

A press release, or news release, is the standard method of distributing a story to the media. The aim of a press release is usually to do one or more of the following:

- Draw attention to an issue.
- Provide background information on an issue/event or action.
- Give advance notice of an event.
- Announce new campaigns and provide progress reports.
- Provide a report of a meeting.
- Report decisions taken by organisations/groups.
- Circulate speeches in advance.
- Outline an organisation's response to an event/action.

Media organisations receive hundreds of press releases each day, most of which are never read or used. To get any attention, press releases must be well written and interesting.

### Guidelines for writing a press release

#### 1. Content

Write a simple and interesting headline – this helps the reporter understand the story immediately.

The first sentence should summarise the most important facts of the story:

- WHO is involved?
- WHAT is happening?
- WHERE is it happening?
- WHEN is it happening?
- WHY is this happening?

The body or main part of the press release should then explain these points in further detail. This information helps to persuade the reporter of the importance of the subject, and why it is of interest.

Quotes can often make a press release more interesting and appealing to the reporter, because they may not have access to the relevant people or in some cases because the event has passed. For direct quotations from people involved in the issue or activity, remember:

- They should express an opinion, fact, or be able to support the view you have expressed in your press release.
- They allow you to make stronger statements than those you might express in an indirect way.
- They give a human dimension to the story.
- Always get permission from a person affected by the issue if you are quoting them.

#### 2. Style

- Short sentences, maximum 20 words.
- Short paragraphs, maximum two to three sentences.
- Use a good case study or anecdote as evidence to support your point of view.

#### 3. Presentation

- Use letterhead paper so that it looks official and professional.
- Make sure that it is well laid out and easy to read.
- Use double-line spacing, and print it on one side of the paper only.
- Include the date and the name of the organisation.
- Provide a contact name, telephone and fax number, and e-mail address for follow-up questions from a reporter.

## Advocacy Action Tools

### 7. Writing and Using a Press Release

- Give an embargo time (the day/time when the reporters are allowed to use the information). This should include the day, date and time but can also state: 'FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE' (in capital letters as here), if appropriate.
- Include photographs of key people, places or action mentioned in the press release if you have them or put high resolution photos on a website with the direct link for in the release so publications can download them easily.
  - Be sure to always include a caption for the photo giving all names of people in the photo (listed left to right) and the credit to the photographer, as needed.

After a press release has been written, distribute it to selected reporters, media outlets and press services by fax and e-mail. Once the reporters have the press release, they will consider whether to include the story in their media work. They may also contact you for more information.

#### Exercise: Writing a press release (30 minutes)

Break into groups of four, this time not by organisational affiliation. Together write a press release for the following event:

Event: Public Address by Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf  
 Date: International Women's Day  
 Place: Steps of Parliament House, New Delhi, India  
 Subject: President Sirleaf has offered to speak out for the empowerment of HIV positive Indian women by talking about her work to help African positive women. The sponsor of the event is an organisation to which you all belong.

## Giving a Media Interview

A media interview is a formal, pre-arranged conversation between a reporter and a person who has an interesting story that could become a story for publication or broadcast. Although NGOs/CBOs usually use interviews for education and awareness-raising work, media interviews can be used for advocacy work.

In the advocacy context, reporters are merely a means to an end. They will usually ask the questions about things they think their audience might want to know and obtain information they think is important about the topic. Reporters usually have their own angle to the story that they want to present. If your information does not conform to their point of view, they may not use your information at all, especially if they have lined up interviews with other people or organisations. Do not be discouraged if this happens.

Interviews may be reactive or proactive. A reactive interview is one in which a reporter approaches a person for an interview, particularly if there is large public interest in an issue they are involved with. This kind of interview often takes place when an issue arises which is related to your work or the work of your organisation. A proactive interview is one in which a person or organisation approaches a reporter directly about an issue that they think is important and would be of interest to the media. A proactive interview requires greater preparation, but it is an important method for doing advocacy work.

The key to giving a good interview is knowing your subject well and preparing carefully for the questions that you may be asked.

#### Advantages

- Interviews can help you get your information to the public.
- They can profile you and/or your organisation and establish you as an expert.
- You can reach a wide audience with relatively little effort.

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## Advocacy Action Tools

### 7. Writing and Using a Press Release

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#### Disadvantages

- It can potentially go wrong and create problems for the individual or the organisation.
- The person being interviewed must know and use the organisation's point of view as the basis of their answers; otherwise, the organisation may be discredited.
- Those who are inexperienced at being interviewed or who are badly prepared can be caught off guard by being asked difficult or unrelated questions. This can cost you loss of support for your organisation and your advocacy work.

#### Guidelines for giving a media interview

##### Preparing for the interview

Find out the answers to the following kinds of questions before any interview:

- Where and when will the interview take place?
- How long will it last?
- Who else, if anyone, is being interviewed?
- Will the interview be linked to another story?
- Why has the subject of the interview been chosen?
- What questions will be asked (if the reporter is willing to share them)?
- Will the interview be broadcast live?

Find out about the person who will be interviewing you:

- Investigate who the audience will be – who are the targets in that audience, and what kind of information do you need to get across to them?
- Find out what topics the reporter has covered in the past and how well did they cover these issues. Was the reporting and quotes from people accurate?
- Contact the interviewer and agree upon the subjects to be discussed. You may offer a short list of sample questions, but only if the reporter agrees. Remember: the interview starts as soon as you begin talking to a reporter. There is no such thing as 'off the record'.

Define the issues clearly. Ask the interviewer or reporter what kinds of questions will be asked and whether they will be supportive or argumentative. Prepare appropriate information beforehand – for example, statistics, facts or a personal story (yours or someone else's).

- Make a list of key messages you want to get across, with three or four key points for each.
- Prepare catchy sentences (sound-bites) that summarise your message.
- Check that you have up-to-date information on your issue.
- Work closely with your colleagues to develop a draft list of possible questions. Prepare answers to these and practise developing responses to them.

##### What to do during the interview

- Keep calm and composed.
  - Keep in mind that the journalist is not your advocacy target – the target will be influential people listening or watching or the general public as indirect targets.
  - Remember that you have the facts you need and that you probably know more than the journalist does about the issue.
  - Keep your answers concise and short, using simple language, avoiding jargon or acronyms.
  - Do not get side-tracked. Keep to your key points. If a question strays from your topic, try to move the conversation back to the area you want to talk about – for example, "I think what you are asking about is important but the main issue is..."
  - If you need time to think about a response, repeat the question before responding.
  - Always bring the journalist back to your key messages/points. Repetition is a way of getting your message across.
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# **HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up**

## A Toolkit for Strengthening Local Responses

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# **4.8**

## **Learning How to Use Media Advocacy Tools**

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- 4.81 Media Advisory
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**HIV Advocacy from  
the Ground Up**  
A Toolkit for Strengthening  
Local Responses

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**Advocacy Action Tools**  
8. Learning How to Use  
Media Advocacy Tools

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## Learning how to use media advocacy tools

There are a number of valuable tools that can help generate news stories. Each is helpful in different situations and should be used as part of an overall media plan. Some tools – like organising a press conference or a demonstration – require significantly more time, resources and planning. Other tools, including letters to the editor and opinion editorials, can be relatively quick and easy to accomplish with limited time and resources. The following overview provides basic tips for developing and using common media advocacy tools.

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### Media advisory

The media advisory is a standard tool used by organisations to inform and invite the news media to cover news events. It is brief, and contains the who, what, when, where, and why – so journalists can decide whether to cover a story. An advisory should be distributed to media outlets via e-mail, fax or mail between two weeks and 24 hours prior to an event. Generally, it is preferable to distribute media or news advisories close to the day of the event or action you are promoting. This helps ensure that your advisory registers on the media radar screen in a timely manner. Remember, reporters are interested in news, so make your event and your media advisory both interesting and newsworthy.

#### Note to facilitator

Select a recent HIV/AIDS event and ask groups to develop a media advisory.

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### Press release

The press or news release is designed to provide journalists with a more detailed overview of your event and is usually written in a format that is similar to the way a news story is written for a newspaper. It puts the most newsworthy information first, quotes key spokespeople, uses relevant facts and statistics, and most importantly, frames the problem and solution from your perspective. Small neighbourhood newspapers may actually use your press release in its entirety, so write it the way you want it to appear to your target audience. Here are some basic tips for writing an effective media release:

- Writing **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** at the top of the release tells the news outlet that the information can be used immediately.
  - Use **EMBARGOED UNTIL**. (date) tells if reporters to wait to use the information until the date (and often time of day) you specify. (This means “hold and do not release until X date” and is the language used by reporters.)
  - **DATE** of the release and **CONTACT** of the person responsible for follow up questions should always be at the top of the page.
  - The **HEADLINE** should be in capital letters and should summarise the news in the release. Use a logo if your media release is being generated by a coalition or organisation. The headline is critical: It is what the reporter will read first and may determine whether your news has merit and deserves an investment of their time.
  - Begin the release with a summary paragraph that frames the issue and key messages.
  - Prioritise the news in the release. Put the most newsworthy information first.
  - Quote your spokespeople following summary paragraphs reinforcing key messages. Remember, the messenger is important and should be credible to your audience. Brief quotes are more likely to be used in news stories.
  - Try to use catchy sound bites that frame the issue and capture the attention of the audience.
  - Be brief (generally one, or at most, two pages), factually accurate, and refrain from using strong rhetoric or inflammatory language.
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## Advocacy Action Tools

### 8. Learning how to use Media Advocacy Tools

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## Letter to the editor

Reporters, policymakers, and the public often read letters to the editor to measure the public mood, identify timely issues and monitor any public debate. For individuals not comfortable with doing a television, radio or newspaper interview, a letter to the editor provides a simple, easy and valuable tool for contributing to the media and the overall advocacy efforts on an issue. Letters can extend the length of time an issue remains on the public agenda and help maintain a sense of urgency for policymakers. However, editors may – and often do – choose to not publish these letters if they feel that it will antagonise their stakeholders in any way. However, if the letter is meant for the editor as an individual, not publishing it does not necessarily mean that he has not taken note of your position.

Some basic tips for writing letters to the editor include:

- Make them timely. Tell the reader why you are writing.
- Make them brief. Touch on one or two points. Use facts and data if possible.
- Make it personal. Take a strong stance but use respectful language.
- Start the letter with a reference to a recent related story in the publication, if possible.
- Sign the letter and provide contact information. You may request that the editor not print your name with the letter, if you prefer, but its impact on the reader will be greater if there is an actual name of a person signing the letter.

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## Opinion-Editorial or guest editorial

The Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed) provides advocates an opportunity to bring more attention to an issue and explore the problem and proposed solution in greater detail. They are also very effective in communicating your perspective to policymakers. The Op-Ed allows you to frame the issue from your own perspective, using statistics and studies to reinforce key arguments, and communicating your message in the strongest terms. While letters to the editor often run after a news story and can be reactive in nature, the Op-Ed can be used proactively to frame an issue before a decision or action has been taken. Op-Eds can also be used to counter a negative editorial or expand on a prior news story that failed to carry the HIV/AIDS advocates perspective. Consider having some key community people or constituents write follow up letters to the editor after you Op-Ed piece is printed, praising your position and restating the issues (but keep it from looking too orchestrated).

Some basic tips for writing and submitting an effective Op-Ed include:

- Identify an author or spokesperson with credibility on the issue and who is persuasive in the eyes of your target audience. (Not just anyone can write an Op-Ed; the writer must be known in some way.)
  - Be brief (between 600-800 words). Begin the piece by outlining the issue using your frame.
  - Use compelling personal stories. Evoke strong images. Praise success.
  - Use statistics and make key arguments that are persuasive to your target audience.
  - Timing is important. Work to pitch the Op-Ed at a strategic time that will most benefit your media advocacy and broader advocacy efforts.
  - Identify the person in charge of Op-Eds at your target paper(s). Call in advance and explore the level of interest in publishing an Op-Ed. Remember, the paper is in the business of selling news, so make your pitch newsworthy.
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**Advocacy Action Tools****8. Learning how to use Media  
Advocacy Tools**

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**Editorials**

The editorial pages of your local newspaper provide another opportunity for you to advance your agenda. Policymakers will often follow the editorial pages as a way of gauging public opinion. Each newspaper has its own editorial board whose members often look to community and business leaders to get ideas for editorials. Although the process for preparing editorials may vary from paper to paper, most are written two or three days in advance of publication. If you are trying to secure a favourable editorial, start by pulling together a packet of information and sending it, along with a cover letter, to the paper. (You can find out who the editorial page contact is by calling the phone number listed in the paper.) Your cover letter should include a description of the issue and your main arguments. If necessary, request a face-to-face meeting to explain your issue in greater detail. Remember to include supportive editorials in media kits you distribute to lawmakers as they show broad support for your issue.

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**Advocacy Action Tools**8. Learning how to use Media  
Advocacy Tools

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**Sample of media advisory****Media Advisory****For Tuesday, March 28, 2006**

Contact: Tuan Nguyen +84.4.378.1975

Email: tuann@viet.com

**WHAT:** Announcement of new Vietnam government plan for condom and lubricant distribution**WHY:** Vietnam Government has formed partnership with PSI for increased distribution of Number One™ condoms and lubricant.**WHO:** Hon. Troc Van Huon, Minister of Health**WHEN:** 10 a.m., 28 March 2006**WHERE:** Press Conference Room; Ministry of Public Health  
32 Dang Dung, Ba Dinh District, Hanoi  
Room 310 (third floor)

Year-long discussions between officials from the Vietnam Ministry of Health and representatives of 6 national and 5 local NGOs doing HIV/AIDS work in the country have produced an agreement whereby the government will permit free, anonymous distribution of condoms and lubricants at select government and private clinics. The condoms, with the brand name Number One, will be provided by Population Services International (PSI) and the lubricant, in single-use bubble packs, will be provided by the Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF).

At the conference, Chief Minister of Health Troc Van Huon will explain how the programme has come into existence. Officials from the Health Ministry will provide a list of the clinics at which the condoms and lubricant will be available. Representatives from all of the NGOs and PSI and the EJAF will also be present to explain their participation in the process and answer any questions.

Members of the press and other interested parties are encouraged to attend.

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## Sample of press release

[UNAIDS logo] [APLF logo]

### Press Release

#### Leadership Initiative Calls For Urgent Action On AIDS

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, 22 February 2005 – The Steering Committee of the Asia Pacific Leadership Forum on HIV/AIDS and Development (APLF) met last week to discuss ways in which both political and civil society leadership can be supported and strengthened in the region to reduce the spread of AIDS.

The Governor General of Papua New Guinea, Sir Paulias Matane welcomed the members of the Asia Pacific Leadership Forum on HIV/AIDS and Development to the country, calling the AIDS epidemic a crisis of spiritual, social, economic and political consequence. He reaffirmed the need for “effective leadership through active advocacy, commitment and allocation of national resources and the mobilization of citizens to action”, in order to curb the alarming rates of infection now seen in Papua New Guinea.

Dr Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director and member of the APLF Steering Committee, called Papua New Guinea the “new frontline of the epidemic”. Dr Piot visited a number of initiatives while in Papua New Guinea. At the launch of “I Gat Hope”, an organisation for people living with HIV, Dr Piot reminded participants that the launch of I Gat Hope was a “defining moment for the response to AIDS in Papua New Guinea.”

Papua New Guinea has the highest HIV prevalence in the Pacific with 0.6% of the adult population infected -- or roughly 16,000 people. Recent national estimates from a Consensus Workshop held in November 2004 suggest that the prevalence rate could be as high as 1.7% among 15-49 year olds.

Dr Banare Bun, Chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on HIV/AIDS, stated that Papua New Guinea “is a free sex society, where substance abuse and violence are major contributors to risk behaviour”. Dr Ninkama Moiya, Director of the National AIDS Council Secretariat joined Dr Bun in stressing that all of these issues are not discussed in Papua New Guinea and until they are openly addressed the AIDS epidemic will continue to grow. The two-day meeting concluded with APLF Steering Committee members resolving to bring greater focus to the initiative through not only their own individual and collective action, but also through engaging other leaders in particular those from the media and business sector, to speak out.

The APLF, a leadership initiative agreed in 2001 at the first Asia Pacific Ministerial Meeting on HIV/AIDS by 33 countries in the region, is funded by the governments of Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union. The APLF’s aim is to keep HIV at the top of regional and national agendas in Asia and the Pacific, to promote effective leadership and to intensify commitment at all levels.

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*For more information, please contact Pensri Tasnavites, UNAIDS, Bangkok, mobile. +661 810 3151, or Dominique De Santis, UNAIDS, Geneva, (+41 22) 791 4509, email: [desantis@unaids.org](mailto:desantis@unaids.org). For more information about UNAIDS, visit [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org).*

*Source: [http://data.unaids.org/Media/Press-releases03/PR\\_APLF\\_22Feb05\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/Media/Press-releases03/PR_APLF_22Feb05_en.pdf), accessed March 2006*

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**Advocacy Action Tools**
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**Sample of press release**

[Logo here]

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

For further information, contact:  
Sahachai Tanarat, +66.9.345.6789

**NEWS RELEASE**
**Interior Ministry Issues Directive to All-male Saunas to Stop Distributing Free Condoms**
**Directive, effective immediately, alarms Thai HIV-prevention activists**

Bangkok, March 13, 2006 – Thailand’s Ministry of the Interior (MOI) yesterday announced a new policy forbidding the distribution of free condoms in all-male spas throughout the country, effective immediately. An MOI spokesperson stated that the reason for the new policy was to prevent the spas from being “places where men meet to have anonymous, unsafe sex, which we know to be a major factor in the spread of HIV.”

While there has not yet been a coordinated response from the unofficial network of spa owners, Bangkok AIDS activists have been quick to condemn the new policy. “It seems to have come from police raids of two smaller Thai saunas, where the officers found used condoms,” stated Nappadol Vinachai of Rainbow Hearts Foundation of Thailand. “Our view is seeing that condoms are being used is the good news. But the police apparently regarded the evidence of proof that illicit sex was taking place in the saunas. As we have pointed out repeatedly, banning distribution of condoms in venues like this will only drive unsafe sex practices into places where there are no other HIV-fighting ‘tools’ – like clean running water and soap.”

Historically, Thai male sauna owners have been cautious in their public responses to such policies. Their fears are that being perceived as places where anonymous sex takes place can easily be perceived as their being places of prostitution, which are illegal and could easily be shut down by law-enforcement authorities.

An unofficial meeting of sauna owners to discuss the new policy has been called for Friday, March 17, 2006 at 6 p.m. at the headquarters of Rainbow Hearts Association, Pradiphat Road, Soi 25, Saphan Kwai, Bangkok. Until the MOI rescinds or otherwise changes its new policy, sauna owners will be obliged to obey to it, since the consequences of not doing so could be having their businesses shut down.

Unannounced police raids of all-male saunas have been on the increase in recent months. Some have resulted in media news stories, including television stories that reveal the identities of some sauna patrons. Despite protests of these actions – and even some calls for legal tests to determine whether the MOI and police actions, and those of the media, are constitutional – the policy remains in effect for now.

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*The Rainbow Hearts Foundation has been at the forefront of the battle against HIV disease since 1989. Through its comprehensive array of compassionate and critical services, such as HIV testing and treatment, housing assistance, and free legal advice, it has been the leader in serving Thailand’s gay community in issues associated with HIV/AIDS.*

*Rainbow Hearts Foundation can be reached at +66.2.345.0789.*

*The non-profit, community-based organization reaches some 40,000 individuals confidentially through community outreach, advocacy efforts, intervention activities, and information on the World Wide Web, at [www.rhearts.or.th](http://www.rhearts.or.th).*

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**Advocacy Action Tools****8. Learning how to use Media  
Advocacy Tools**

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**Sample of letter to the editor**

Letter to the Editor about the unclear position on mandatory HIV testing.

**Letter to the Editor**

The recent articles in the major newspapers with regards to mandatory HIV testing for couples have caught my attention.

What is interesting to note is that so far, only the religious authorities have been quoted for their views on the issue. Why has the Ministry of Health been silent? What are the guidelines for HIV testing and screening in Malaysia?

From what I gather from the World Health Organization's website, HIV testing is most effective if it is voluntary and not mandatory.

I am certain that the religious authorities are not able to implement this HIV test at the state level without the assistance of the State Health Department. I would like to know what is the official stand of the Ministry of Health on HIV testing?

Would appreciate if a spokesperson from the Ministry of Health can shed some light on this matter.

Nur Azyan Ismail  
No. 1, Jalan Tekukur 6/1C, Seksyen 6  
40000 Shah Alam  
Tel 012-289 6607

Source: [www.mac.org.my](http://www.mac.org.my), accessed March 2006.

Note: it is now customary to send Letters to the Editor by email, which is easier for the newspaper as well as for the sender. Look for an email address for such letters in each publication.

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**Advocacy Action Tools**8. Learning how to use Media  
Advocacy Tools

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**Sample of Op-Ed article****It Starts with Seeing**

As the nation with the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia poses unique problems for its citizens from what is frequently referred to as the population with 'alternative sexualities'.

While there is no reason to believe that the ratio of people who are not heterosexual is no different than anywhere else in the world at 1:7, it is not apparent – as evidenced by the lack of visibility of homosexual men, lesbians, transgendered and transgending people.

While the country is not exclusively Islamic, of course, the huge majority of people from that religious group, which forbids alternative sexualities of these kinds (but yet permits polygamy), not only encourages these oppressed communities to stay 'in the closet', but makes it dangerous for them to come out.

Given that, it is time to recognise the courage it took for these key populations to organise into some 25 organisations, throughout the archipelago but, not surprisingly, mostly in Jakarta and largely Hindu Bali.

The people who have dared to stand up and stand out can also be applauded for taking care of their own. Sadly without the support from those infected with HIV, the call to provide HIV care and prevention by the Indonesian government would not be possible.

Of all the countries in the ASEAN region, Indonesia has far to go in recognising and honouring its sexual minorities. Even its neighbours from the 'old communist' world, Laos, Vietnam and politically repressive Myanmar are doing better on this score.

Consequently, today's 'AIDS Awareness Day', Indonesia's first ever such commemoration, provides an opportunity for us to take time out to recognise the courageous individuals who found the strength in numbers to insist on being visible in a country in which most people are taught, from birth and in mosques, to hate them.

The selflessness of their actions in banding together to promote the most advanced AIDS services available on the archipelago must be acknowledged. And you don't have to be 'gay' to benefit from them. Hats off to a repressed group with the courage to respond with a compassion its government cannot muster for the untold number of Indonesians infected with a virus whose name they never heard until it was delivered to them personally.

It starts with being seen.

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# HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up

## A Toolkit for Strengthening Local Responses

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# 4.9

## Engaging the Media

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4.91 Organising Media Interviews

4.92 Holding a Press Conference



**Advocacy Action Tools**  
9. Engaging the Media

## Engaging the media

### Organising media interviews

Print-press interviews tend to be more relaxed than radio or TV interviews. If you make a mistake during the latter, say so and answer again.

**Radio interviews:** In a studio, the studio manager will give you specific instructions about where to sit, how to use the microphone, and so on. Sometimes this is done with little time to spare. However, take your time and be sure you understand the instructions. Ask what the first question will be so as to help you concentrate. You can take notes with you – but try not to rustle the pages. (Brief notes on postcards are often more helpful.) If you make a mistake during a recorded interview that will be edited, you can ask to try the answer again. If it is live or will not be edited, you can say, “Please, I’d like to explain that answer,” and then immediately continue with your self-correcting explanation.

**TV interviews:** The same rules apply for the radio interview, but you can be seen! TV interviews are usually shorter than radio interviews and may be pre-recorded or broadcast live. Remember that you must look professional and knowledgeable and dress in a way that is not distracting to the audience. Wear a solid, light-colour top or shirt (no busy patterns and avoid solid white); light blue is the best for all types of cameras. Do not wear dangling or noise-making jewellery. Do not wear heavy makeup, although you may want to give your forehead a light powdering to reduce the shine often caused by skin under bright, hot lights. The TV studio may offer you some makeup. Consider using it regardless of your sex.

### Holding a press conference

The aim of a press conference is to gain media coverage for an issue. It is a meeting held by an organisation or group of organisations for invited journalists and reporters who listen to speakers and then ask questions. It usually includes statements by speakers from your organisation followed by questions from the reporters. So the format is similar to a panel discussion, although the purpose is not to discuss but, rather, to gain publicity for the advocacy issue.

A press conference requires careful organisation. Press conferences are expensive and time-consuming to put on. Therefore, they should only be used if they are truly the best option. It is also necessary to think carefully about confidentiality, especially when discussing or involving people living with HIV/AIDS, since they may not wish their HIV status to be made public.

#### Advantages

- It brings many reporters from different media outlets together in one place at one time.
- It encourages all media to publicise a similar message.
- It is a chance to meet reporters face-to-face and learn about their opinions and attitudes about the issue.
- It aims to make the job of journalists easier; therefore, the issue is more likely to be covered by the media.
- It allows reporters to address questions to a panel of speakers.
- It provides an opportunity to correct misunderstanding before reporters write their articles.
- It can save the time of key people in the organisation who would otherwise have to talk to each reporter individually.

#### Disadvantages

- It requires a great deal of planning and time-consuming preparation.
- There is always the risk that a bigger news story will break at the last minute and the invited reporters get diverted to another location.

## Advocacy Action Tools

### 9. Engaging the Media

- Reporters may turn against your campaign if the press conference is badly organised.
- Time is needed to prepare speakers for a press conference to make sure that everyone agrees upon and reinforces the key messages and yet each person contributes something different.
- You cannot predict the questions that the reporters will ask or whether your issue will be presented positively by the media.
- Journalists tend to be cynical about them, and they increase the difficulty of their work, beginning with the need to travel to the venue of the press conference.

#### Guidelines for giving a press conference

##### Preparing for the press conference

- Give at least a week's notice of the conference, if possible, to all relevant journalists (reporters, columnists, TV and radio news rooms, newspaper and magazine editors, blogs, and so forth) and send them an announcement that includes:
  - The purpose of the press conference.
  - Date, time and place it will be held.
  - Who will speak at/present/chair it.
- Choose a suitable venue including the following as required:
  - Easy location, access and adequate parking space.
  - Low noise levels.
  - Enough capacity – power points for TV lights, space, layout.
  - Audio/audio visual equipment.
  - Room or quieter space for individual follow-up interviews.
  - Helpful staff with technological expertise and experience hosting press conferences.
- Choose an appropriate time of day so the majority of the media invited can attend in time to write or produce the story before their deadlines. (However, you will not be able to accommodate everyone's deadlines).
- Select and brief a chairperson and appropriate speakers. Identify and practise answering questions you think the journalists might ask – especially the difficult ones.
- Select a press officer/key contact person for the press to liaise.
- Prepare a sturdy, attractive press kit or packet of information for the journalists, that includes:
  - Press release.
  - Background on your organisation/coalition.
  - A list of the key points you are making and sample quotes.
  - Recommendations for future action.
  - A list of contacts whom journalists can contact to discuss the issue
  - Any relevant photographs, statistics, graphs, and other appropriate graphics.

Take special care concerning confidentiality, and brief the chairperson and speakers about these issues where necessary.

##### Format of a press conference

- A Welcome, refreshments and distribution of the press pack
1. Have a media-only check-in table.
  2. Get the business cards for all members of the media in attendance.
- B Chairperson:
1. Introduces the speaker(s).
  2. Explains arrangements and proceedings.
  3. Points out the press officer/key contact person for all enquiries.
  4. States whether interviews are available afterwards.
  5. Stresses confidentiality issues where appropriate.
- C First speaker, second speaker, and so on until the speakers have all made their presentations (try to limit the number of speakers to a maximum of three)
- D Chairperson opens the floor for questions and moderates the session. Questions from journalists are directed to the relevant speakers. Other speakers may also add remarks.
- E Chairperson thanks the press for attending and closes the press conference.

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**Advocacy Action Tools****9. Engaging the Media**

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- F Individual interviews with speakers. This can be arranged beforehand or may happen spontaneously. Be sure to have a quiet place with an interesting background for live media.

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**Feeding the press a story, or just feeding the press**

Media-savvy people often refer to getting journalists' attention for stories as feeding them the story. The simple fact is that the press is quite cynical about press conferences. It also means they have to do the work of getting there – fighting traffic, finding parking, etc. The press conferences they like the best and like to go to offer them food – tasty, interesting food and enough of it.

**After the press conference**

- Send the press packet to the journalists or media outlets that did not attend.
- Make a list of attendees and update your database where appropriate
- Note the names of journalists who asked particularly important questions and/or appeared sympathetic to your cause.
- Time permitting, send a brief thank you note or letter to each attendee.

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**Exercise: Preparing for a press conference (45 minutes)**

Break up into groups based on organisation. Press conferences are one of the most important media tools of advocacy. Take some time to consider all the things you would have to do in your community to set one up. First, think of a reason for calling a press conference. Then make a list of all of the things you would have to take care of for the press conference to run smoothly and, most important, draw the press. Then, make a list of members of your local press corps you would invite to attend – and how you would invite them. Which ones of them do you know personally? Which of them do you know to be interested in or maybe sympathetic to your work and/or the issue?

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**Handout 4: Tips on giving media interviews****DO**

- Practise responding to questions. Role-play with your colleagues.
- Show some emotion in your voice for radio – it shows you care – but keep it under control.
- Sit upright with your hands on your lap for a TV interview.
- Sit still and make sure you do not fidget or swing in your chair.
- Look happy to be there, not nervous.
- Answer the interviewer's questions whenever possible – it is their interview.
- Be respectful and patient with the interviewer. The interviewer will not necessarily know the subject well – but then neither, perhaps, will the audience.
- Get your key messages across; if you are not asked relevant questions, add your key messages to the end of one of your most relevant replies.

**DO NOT**

- Do not bluff. EVER. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so.
  - Do not get angry if a reporter tries to throw you off or purposely provokes you by asking sensational or emotional questions (some reporters mistakenly think this makes good news). Stay calm and polite and on message or it will become unclear and the audience will assume you are in the wrong.
  - Do not let an interviewer put words in your mouth. Reply firmly but politely, "That is not exactly what I am saying..."
  - Do not look at the camera during a TV interview – look at the interviewer. (Exception: if you are making a point directly to the TV audience, you may look into the camera lens, but you must be sure it is the camera that is on you at the time. Do not do this very often.)
  - Do not use extreme facial expressions during a TV interview.
  - Do not wear jewellery or glasses, if possible, since these can distract the audience from what you are saying.
  - Do not try to cover too many points or give too much new information.
  - Do not wear patterned or all-white clothes for TV.
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**Handout 5: Tips on holding press conferences****DO**

- Make sure that your press conference does not coincide with an important event that will prevent the journalists or speakers from attending.
- Call media outlets to check whether the announcement has been received. Use this as an opportunity to encourage journalists to attend.
- Choose speakers carefully. They should be interesting, confident and known speakers and show the human face of the issue/problem.
- Ensure that each speaker knows your key messages and co-ordinate with each speaker to ensure that they say something different from the others.
- Capture the journalists' attention with quotes, examples or visual aids such as photographs or graphs.
- Respond to questions clearly and simply.
- Make sure that the person chosen to deal with the media is clearly identifiable.
- If this is a joint press conference, make clear why the different organisations or people are involved.
- Try to involve a journalist in advising you on how to organise and plan the press conference.

**DO NOT**

- Have too many speakers; the message can get confused.
  - Allow any speaker to talk for more than 10 minutes.
  - Start late or run overtime. Journalists have deadlines and hate to be kept waiting.
  - Allow the speakers to make conflicting statements. Rehearse the key points with the speakers before the conference.
  - Organise a press conference if there is a cheaper, more effective way to publicise the issue.
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# HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up

## A Toolkit for Strengthening Local Responses

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# 4.10

## Using the Internet for Advocacy Work

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4.101 Become a Virtual Advocate

4.102 Internet Tools for Advocates

**HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up**  
A Toolkit for Strengthening Local Responses

**4.10**

**Advocacy Action Tools**  
10. Using the Internet for Advocacy Work

**Using the internet for advocacy work**

**Become a virtual advocate**

The internet has revolutionised grassroots advocacy (that is, advocacy that begins at the most basic levels, or from the ground up), allowing advocates to research and share information, organise events, demonstrate and mobilise other advocates with the simple click of a mouse. Whether you are an expert or a relative novice, the internet provides valuable opportunities and resources to increase your knowledge and success as a grassroots advocate.

In its simplest form, the internet links HIV/AIDS advocates from around the country (and the world), primarily using electronic mail (e-mail), thereby enabling you to expand your efforts quickly and inexpensively. In addition, all the forms of traditional advocacy tools – e.g. newsletters, action alerts, petitions and community meetings – can be conducted online using tools unique to the internet. The internet also helps you stay informed. You can sign up to receive daily e-mail updates or use the World Wide Web to scan dozens of government web pages that are full of helpful HIV and health-related information.

**A tip on e-mail advocacy**

Create an E-mail Action Group, a list of the names and e-mail addresses of individuals who agree to take action on issues when they receive an e-mail alert. Actions could include writing their own e-mails to primary or secondary targets, writing a letter to editors or calling government officials to voice their opinion (as advised). Give your group a catchy name, so that people both in and out of the group have a sense of its purpose. Keep members updated on important issues so that they are ready to take action when you send an alert. Always thank group members for their involvement. Be careful not to reveal the e-mail addresses of your group to anyone whom they have not authorised to have it. Use the BCC (blind carbon copy) command to easily protect the address from others.

**Internet tools for advocates**

**E-mail**

E-mail is just like regular mail, except that it's faster, less expensive and deliverable at any hour of the day or night. Exchanging e-mail addresses has become as common as exchanging telephone numbers, and in many cases it has all but replaced the use of long-distance phone calls and faxes. You can use e-mail to receive daily HIV/AIDS news updates, check the status of pending legislation, or receive or distribute Action Alerts.

**Electronic bulletin boards/news groups**

Bulletin boards or news groups are websites that allow individuals to post messages online and read messages posted by others. Usually a bulletin board or news group is established for back and forth discussion on a particular topic. In addition to helping you stay informed, news groups are also a great resource for online organising. You can easily post a message to share information or enlist support for your issue or action.

**Blogs**

Web logs, or blogs, have taken over much of the function of the electronic bulletin boards and news groups just mentioned. They are websites or areas within websites where individuals can post items, ranging from information to opinion and beyond, and others can respond, their responses automatically posting on the same site. Blogs are probably the most popular and rapidly growing electronic communication of the internet. Someone must, of course, create the blog, but it is relatively easy to make and register, and there are many

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**Advocacy Action Tools****10. Using the Internet for  
Advocacy Work**

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internet sites designed to help you create a blog. In addition to allowing people to post messages, blogs have the added advantage of providing links to other websites, specific stories within them, and other blogs.

**Sign-up for daily e-mail updates**

By signing up for news services, you can receive daily e-mails about HIV and health-related news, research and events. To subscribe, simply go to the website identified. All services are free of charge. One such service, the Kaiser Daily HIV/AIDS Report, provides a daily summary of news coverage of US-based and international HIV/AIDS issues, <http://www.kff.org/>. Others examples include [www.aidsmap.com](http://www.aidsmap.com), [www.hdnet.org](http://www.hdnet.org) (many electronic forums to sign up for), and [www.isds.org.vn](http://www.isds.org.vn) (Vietnam).

**Chat rooms**

A less formal version of the electronic town hall meeting is the chat room. Available on various web sites, issue or topic-specific chat rooms allow you to share information about meetings, demonstrations, legislative action, and the like with an audience that is interested in that particular subject.

Organise your own on-line meeting, focus group, or training by simply creating a chat room on the topic or issue you want to discuss. Since personally created chat rooms disappear immediately after you (the originator) leave them, you will have to do a little planning at the beginning. You will need to know the location of your chat room in order to post it to a news group, and to notify your E-mail Action Group. Usually, the choice to make your chat room public (where anyone who sees the 'door' can come in), or private (accessible only if you know the password) is up to you. The process is simple and relatively self-explanatory.

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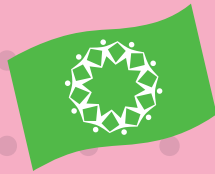
This comprehensive toolkit on advocacy is designed to build capacity of NGOs and CBOs who have garnered valuable information and data that could better inform and influence policymakers but who often lack the specific skills, understanding or experience to do so effectively.

Objectives of the toolkit are two-fold:

1. A tool to facilitate a process for NGOs and CBOs to identify their policy and/or advocacy aims.
2. A tool to provide training on developing action plans on advocacy to enhance the role of NGOs and CBOs in the national response to HIV/AIDS.

The Toolkit is divided into four books. They are as follows:

1. Understanding Advocacy
2. Integrating Advocacy Into Your Organisation
3. Building Networks for Advocacy
4. Advocacy Action Tools



**A P C A S O**  
ASIA PACIFIC COUNCIL OF  
AIDS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organizations (APCASO), is a key regional network of non-government and community-based organisations which provide HIV/AIDS services within the Asia and the Pacific region. Its main strategies are to increase the capacity of NGOs and CBOs to respond to HIV/AIDS, and to develop a coordinated regional response through capacity building, advocacy and networking.

For more information please go to [www.apcaso.org](http://www.apcaso.org)

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