

Module on Advocacy

Structure

- 1.1 What is advocacy?
- 1.2 Rights Holders and Duty Bearers
- 1.3 Participatory Advocacy
- 1.4 Develop an Advocacy Strategy
- 1.5 Minimize Risks
- 1.6 What can advocacy against FGM achieve?

[+ recommended time ->4 - 6 hours]

Relevant KAP for Module

- Is aware of the important roles institutions play in supporting communities to abandon Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
- Has developed an advocacy strategy to influence decision makers on FGM.
- Works together with institutional stakeholders to prevent FGM.

[+ Coffee and Tea BREAKS / 10 minutes]

1.1 What is advocacy?

“Advocacy is the deliberate process, based on demonstrated evidence, to directly and indirectly influence decision makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences to support and implement actions that contribute to the fulfilment of children’s and women’s rights.” UNICEF (2010)

Taking this definition, the word **Advocacy** describes a process in which people are given a voice about the issues that affect them, so that they can influence decision makers on these. It includes a call for positive change in society towards greater social justice and gender equality, based on facts and data. By building evidence on what needs to change and how that change can happen, advocacy aims to influence decisions accordingly. Women and Girls living with FGM in a European city e.g. could gather data on the lack of information on health services in their own languages. With this evidence they could approach the local government in their city and highlight the need to distribute flyers in their local languages and organize information campaigns.

To be successful, advocacy activities embrace a range of areas: lobbying, negotiating and awareness raising; campaigning and social mobilization; developing partnerships/ coalitions/ alliances and organizing groups to speak with one voice; communications and media work; research/ publications. All these complement each other to achieve change in legislation, policies and structures.

Human rights based advocacy specifically looks at the realization of rights, promotes participation, holds those in power accountable and strives to ensure that national laws and policies are in conformity with international human rights instruments.

Exercise (15 minutes):

Ask for two volunteers. Take the two aside individually and ask them to act out a short role play. Ask volunteer one to play a 16 year old girl who wants to convince her mother that she is old enough to stay at parties as long as she likes. Explain to volunteer two, the mother, that she should in the end agree to trust her daughter but insist before that to have some good arguments etc. presented to her.

Once they have concluded the role play, ask the group: What just happened here?

Explain that what volunteer one just did was advocacy. The daughter influenced the other person to grant her the freedom to stay at parties as long as she likes.

Open up group discussion briefly about how volunteer one had advocated.

As a group develop a definition or understanding of 'advocacy'. Write these up on a flipchart.

1.2 Rights Holders and Duty Bearers

Taking a rights-based approach to advocacy, it is important to distinguish between rights holders (those whose rights need to be realised) and duty bearers (those who have the responsibility to ensure the realisation of rights). It is e.g. the duty of the government to ensure that the right to health is respected by providing health care services for women suffering from complications due to FGM.

“Rights holders are individuals or social groups that have particular entitlements in relation to specific duty bearers. In general terms, all human beings are rights holders under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Duty bearers are those actors who have a particular obligation or responsibility to respect, promote and realise human rights and to abstain from human rights

violations.” Action Aid, British Youth Council, Plan, Restless Development (2015)

Exercise (15 minutes)

Ask the group to answer the following questions:

- Who takes decisions in the family regarding FGM?
- Who takes decisions in the community to continue FGM?
- What are the characteristics of these decision makers: man/woman, age, ethnicity, etc.?
- Who are the people who can influence those who take decisions?

Note the answers on a flipchart.

Share the definitions of rights holders and duty bearers and ask the participants to give examples of different duty bearers who are important to address regarding the abandonment of FGM here in Europe (e.g. teachers, aliens department, Ministry of Health).

1.3 Participatory Advocacy

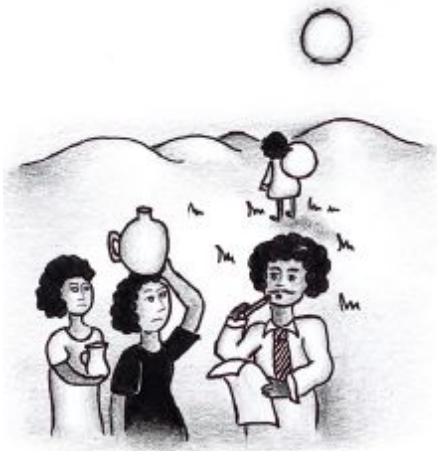
Exercise (30 min)

Divide the participants into pairs and hand them the cartoon hand-out. Ask them to discuss the following questions:

- Describe what is happening in each box.
- Compare the roles and actions of the organisers and the citizens in each scenario. Describe the power relationships in each. Who has more and who has less control over the process?
- In which case will the citizens gain more knowledge and skills? Which will be more empowering to the citizens? In which case will the organiser gain more knowledge and skills?
- What are the primary differences between the two kinds of advocacy in the drawing?
- What would you guess to be the final impact in each case?

Have each group present their ideas on one of the cartoons, based on the key questions. Discuss with all participants the strengths and weaknesses of the two approaches and what form they consider has a greater impact.

Process of policy making cards



'Experts' bring people's issues (the water problem) to policymakers



People organize to bring their own issues to policymakers

Source: Action Aid, British Youth Council, Plan (2015). Restless Development, page 93.

1.4 Develop an Advocacy Strategy

Explain to the participants that if they want to influence decision makers, it is important to plan their advocacy work well and be very strategic about it. Here are some points to take into account:

1. Choose your issue => what needs to change?
2. Analyse and research => generate evidence
3. Choose priorities => define an advocacy goal and message
4. Identify opportunities and map your network => advocacy action planning and looking for partners
5. Monitor and evaluate

Exercise (2 hour)

Divide the participants into groups of four and inform them that each group is going to practice how to develop an advocacy strategy around FGM.

As a first step (*“choose your issue”*), ask each group to identify a concrete problem regarding FGM in their communities. This could e.g. be the lack of midwives in the city’s health centres trained on FGM.

The group should then as a second step (*“generate evidence”*) verify this issue by identifying relevant information and data (e.g. there exists no module on FGM in the training curriculum for midwives).

On the basis of their evidence, the participants in a third step then define their respective advocacy goal and messages (*“choose priorities”*), e.g. the goal could be: “To count with a number of midwives trained on FGM to offer adequate and culturally sensitive support to women affected by FGM during pregnancy”, while the concrete advocacy message to the decision makers is to demand that a module on FGM is included in the capacity training of midwives.

As a fourth step, inform the groups that they should then map the responsible decision makers to approach (e.g. the local health minister) and devise a strategy to lobby their demand (*“advocacy action planning”*). This strategy could e.g. include that the group decides to raise awareness among midwives so that these join their demand (*“looking for partners”*). It could also include to do a research with the university to have robust data to draw back on and to organise a conference on the issue, inviting experts, politicians and media representatives.

Ask them to also think of possible dates (*“identify opportunities”*) to address decision makers or to involve media (e.g. on February 6th, the international day against FGM, or world health day on April 7th).

To finish the exercise, ask the groups to present their advocacy strategy to the other participants answering the following questions¹:

- What do you want to change?
- Who will make the change happen?
- What information do the decision makers need? What are your concrete advocacy demands for them?
- Who do they need to hear it from?
- How do you make sure they hear it?
- How do you begin to take action?
- How can you tell if your advocacy work has been successful?

1.5 Minimize Risks

It is important to highlight that advocacy activities involve risks. Risks may be particularly high when advocacy requires a strong stand on an issue as sensitive as FGM.

There are two types of risks:

- those that affect your safety and
- those that affect your advocacy strategy.

What is important is to identify the risks in advance and consider how to avoid them if you can – or how to deal with them if the risk turns into a reality. An example of how to avoid the risk that individual community members are threatened because they are identified to lobby against FGM, could be e.g. that all the advocacy activities are done in the name of a women's group, so that all its members are identified with the advocacy messages.

Exercise (30 min)

Working in the previous groups, brainstorm the risks that might affect your advocacy strategy. Write each risk on a post-it note and sort the risks/post-it notes into degree of risk: high, medium or low. For each risk, discuss how it could be avoided and how it could be managed.

¹ Adapted from UNICEF (2010). For more details to each questions, go to page 17ff

Ask the groups to fill out the risk table

Risk	Degree of risk	How to avoid it?	How to manage it?
e.g. upcoming elections might lead to changes in political power	medium	Speak before the elections with all political parties and get their support	Identify supporters in the different the political parties and present your issues, asking them to commit to them.

1.6 What Advocacy against FGM can achieve?

To ensure an enabling environment for the abandonment of FGM, it is fundamental to include duty bearers at all levels. Advocacy influences the decision makers to create the conditions for girls and women to exercise their rights, e.g. the right to bodily integrity and to be protected against all forms of violence. FGM activists are therefore continuously lobbying for policies and national action plans against FGM. They e.g. lobby the government to ensure that laws to prohibit FGM are in place, that they are implemented and that perpetrators are persecuted.

In Egypt in 2007 e.g. a broad network of organisations jointly advocated for a change in law and achieved that with the decree No 271 by the Ministry of Health FGM was no more allowed to be performed in hospitals when approved by a doctor.

On July 1st, 2016, due to international advocacy work, the UN Human Rights Council e.g. adopted a Resolution on the elimination of female genital mutilation recognises FGM as an act of violence against women and girls.

Advocacy therefore is an important part of creating an environment for the abandonment of FGM.

To end the session, you could read out the text from a youth advocate at Forward: <http://forwarduk.org.uk/why-im-a-youth-advocate-on-fgm/>

Bibliography/ Sources:

Action Aid, British Youth Council, Plan, Restless Development: Power, Rights & Participation. A practical guide for youth action in a post-2015 world. To download at <http://restlessdevelopment.org/news/2015/05/22/power-rights-and-participation-a-practical-guide>

A World at School, Plan, YAG: An Advocacy Toolkit. To download at <https://plan-international.org/advocacy-toolkit>

Plan International West Africa: Capacity Building for Youth. Training Curriculum: Youth Advocacy.

UNICEF (2010): Advocacy Toolkit. A guide to influencing decisions that improve children's lives. To download at http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Advocacy_Toolkit.pdf

To give examples of advocacy actions go to the End FGM Page from Equality Now: <http://www.equalitynow.org/issues/end-female-genital-mutilation>