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GUIDELINES FOR THE EFFECTIVE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY



Tbilisi, 2016

The presented guidelines were created by the non-governmental organization “Article 42 of the Constitution” in the framework of the project: “Promotion of Gender Equality in Employment.”

This paper was prepared with the generous support of the American people and funding of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). “Article 42 of the Constitution” bears full responsibility for the contents of the guidelines. It may not express the opinions of the USAID or the Government of the United States.



What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the action of advocating, pleading for, or supporting a cause or proposal¹. As for the legislative advocacy, it encompasses working with the legislative bodies to gain support for a specific cause or initiative, for the needs of a specific population, for an organization or group of organizations, or for specific services.



According to the UN Women: *“Legislative advocacy is the specific activity of working for the creation and adoptions of rights-specific legislation, or changes to existing legislation. This activity is also frequently known as “lobbying.” Lobbying necessarily involves having a strong draft bill or law that incorporates the best practices to present to the legislative branch of your government.”*²

¹ Merriam Webster Dictionary, available at: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advocacy>

² 2. UN Women, Women’s Human Rights and Legislative Advocacy, available at: <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/846-womens-human-rights-and-legislative-advocacy.html?next=847>



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The relevant advocacy efforts are an important factor in helping to form the public policy. Success can only be achieved step-by-step through a persistent and long-term commitment to the advocacy objective. The purpose of this guide is to present the parliamentary advocacy strategies including the planning, drafting, submitting, presenting and advocating the new laws or the legislative amendments.

Planning / Preparing for the Advocacy Campaign

Why should we meet with the relevant stakeholders?

While planning the certain legislative advocacy campaign, you need access to the important information. To this end, it is vital for the drafters to consult with the relevant stakeholders such as the NGO's working on a particular topic, the Public Defender's Office, beneficiaries of the proposed bill, target groups, representatives from the government, international and donor agencies and experts of the field. However, cooperation is only as effective as it involves the participants who have sufficient experience in the related issues. A little extra help has never harmed nobody.





Prepare a comprehensive legislative package

Bear in mind, you are the master of your draft bill, so make it good. If you want your legislative recommendations to be adopted, you should have a brilliant expertise on all aspects of the topic. Do not forget to include the reliable evidence, up-to-date data, state practice, the relevant case law, International and regional treaties, conventions and agreements and other human rights instruments. Remember that the State already has a number of international obligations undertaken, make sure that they are adequately reflected in the legislative package. Underline that what you suggest, is also beneficiary for the State, since it will facilitate the fulfilment of the already undertaken responsibilities.



To draft an outstanding legislative package, make it well-structured and laconic, include only the most significant information. The less recommendations you submit at a time, the more possibility you have to present them during the hearings. It is strongly recommended to have a precise wording of the suggested amendment or a new norm. A good draft bill is a half-way to the successful advocacy campaign.



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Coalition is always a good idea

One of the most effective means of promoting an issue is to have many messengers and advocates. If you have a common goal with someone else, gather, increase the alliance, make a coalition - it will only contribute to the achievement of the aimed objective. Specify and agree the scope of coordination and collaboration and complement each other with experience and expertise. Two heads are better than one. Organized efforts will have more chance to persuade and pressure the relevant authorities

Present your legislative package to the stakeholders

Once you have drafted the recommended legislative package, present it, impress the public, make everyone sure how needed those changes are. In the framework of the informational campaign, prepare the variations of visualisations of your argumentation (e.g. info-graphics, flyers, advocacy videos...). The presentation and the feedback received will help you in finding the flaws and shortcomings you might not have noticed before and thus, will contribute to perfecting your draft bill before it is submitted to the Parliament.



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Implementing the Advocacy Campaign

Be well-prepared for the Parliamentary Hearings

You might have a comprehensive legislative package, however, how it is present during the Parliamentary hearings is what actually matters in the further success of the bill. Besides the good presentation skills, be advised to take into consideration the character of the individual MPs of a certain committee (always check the members of the committees before the hearings and research their attitude, if any, on the topic at hand).



Be careful with your language, choose the words wisely. Aggressively pushing attitude does not always work before the legislative body of the Government, however, diplomacy can always be the key in gaining supporters. Remember, that the best results come when you reduce negative emotion and increase communication while presenting the legislative packages.



Have face-to-face meetings with the relevant MPs

Meeting with your legislators face-to-face is the most effective way to get your message across the audience. In order to improve the legislation you need to engage with the parliamentarians.



Be careful with your choices, map out the best possible supporters of your cause. Once you have identified the MPs who have a positive attitude towards



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the topic, make the appointments. Approach them with any possible means at hand – through the official letters, emails, during the events, phone calls or the mutual contacts.

Before the meetings, send the MPs the materials, so that they have the possibility to get acquainted with the legislative package. During the meetings, provide them with the “one-pager” of your recommendations, info-graphics and any other short visualisations you have. The last but not the least, keep in mind the so called “Ten Commandments”:

“1. Keep it short; 2. Be respectful; 3. Mention your connection to the issue; 4. State your concern; 5. Request a specific action; 6. Give your reasons; 7. Cite your expertise; 8. Ask for a commitment of support; 9. Express your appreciation; 10. Encourage your colleagues to follow these “rules.””

Don't forget the power of the media

In the process of legislative advocacy, you need to gain attention of the decision-makers and raise the public awareness of your campaign. If international and local pressure is placed on policy makers, then policy-makers will adopt necessary reforms to the law and enforce existing legal protections.

In addition, do not underestimate the power of the alternative media sources that can also serve the purpose of formulating the public opinion and contributing to the timely adoption of the necessary legislative changes you are trying to make. Do not limit your creativity and be innovative.

