BUDGET ADVOCACY WORK: BRIDGING RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

• Budget advocacy work is a unique combination of two traditions that used to be conducted quite separately, usually by very different kinds of people and organizations:
  ➢ Advocacy work has been undertaken by civil society organizations (CSOs) for a long time. Historically, advocacy work has been the domain of activists and campaigners.
  ➢ Budget research (or analysis) was, until not so long ago, mainly undertaken by academics and finance managers. Historically, this kind of work was seen as a technical exercise conducted by economists.

• When combining these two traditions in the field of budget advocacy work, the link that holds the two together is evidence. Evidence is the reason why advocacy work can become more powerful when it is supported by budget research, and why budget research can become more powerful when it is grounded in advocacy.

• Both advocacy and budget research become stronger and more effective when they brought together in budget advocacy work. This is because:
  ➢ “Traditional” budget research produces findings, but these findings have little impact if they remain in academic articles and reports that very few people read. The findings from budget research have much more power and relevance if they are used strategically as evidence to inform the future decisions of policy makers and government officials.
  ➢ “Traditional” advocacy calls for change, but these calls often fall on deaf ears. In many instances, activists and campaigners try to appeal to the morality or conscience of decision makers, i.e., they ask them “to do the right thing.” As we know, such calls can easily be rebuffed and ignored. Leaders can brush them away, saying demands are idealistic, already achieved, or unrealistic. Advocacy efforts are much more compelling and persuasive when calls for change are backed up by evidence that builds a logical argument and presents feasible solutions and alternatives.

• Many CSOs are already familiar with the advocacy side, but what does budget research bring to their advocacy agenda?

WHAT IS BUDGET RESEARCH?

Budget research and budget analysis are the same thing; these terms can be used interchangeably. There are five main types of analytical work that are considered budget research. These are:

1. The analysis of fiscal policy, i.e., revenue, taxing, borrowing, investing, spending, public resource management.

2. The analysis of a government’s proposed budget allocations and revenue sources. This analysis may be conducted from a number of angles.
   ➢ For example, you might analyze revenue sources or budget allocations to see how they will impact on poverty or on other specific development/social problems.
   ➢ You could also analyze revenue plans or budget allocations to see whether, or to what extent, they advance or undermine economic, social, and cultural rights.
The analysis may be conducted to see how revenue plans and budget allocations will impact on a specific target group, like children, people with disabilities, or the elderly. The analysis could be done from a gender perspective so as to assess whether and how budget allocations might impact women and men differently.

Finally, an analysis of revenue sources and budget allocations may be designed to shed light on a specific sector, like health, education, the environment, etc.

3. **Analysis of the budget process**: to assess whether and how well it allows for public participation and the quality of that participation.

4. **Analysis of budget process**: to assess how transparent it is and to what extent it upholds the right to know. This type of analysis would also typically address issues of accountability and oversight of the budget process.

5. **Monitoring the implementation** of the revenue and expenditure sides of the budget.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DO EVIDENCE-BASED BUDGET ADVOCACY?**

- All advocacy work starts with a problem or a situation that you are trying to address.

- Doing evidence-based budget advocacy means looking at the problem that you are trying to address through the lens of the government budget to see how decisions and practices related to public resources are making the problem better or worse.

- In this way, the budget becomes an instrument through which to understand and address the problem you are trying to solve.

- Evidence-based advocacy means undertaking high quality research and analysis to generate evidence that can be used to advance your advocacy objective.
Developing a budget advocacy plan, as the Democracy Center \(^1\) writes, is a roadmap. It helps you to determine where you are and helps to guide you to where you want to go, through a route that is plausible. The process of developing an advocacy plan is comprised of many parts and begins with the identification of a clear development issue/problem, determining whether underlying the issue there is a budget issue/problem and then identifying a clear objective for budget work and developing a number of strategies for achieving the budget advocacy objective. The process of planning for budget advocacy also involves taking a clear reading on the policy and political environment (internationalbudget.org/budget-advocacy/political-policy-context/) in which that budget objective needs to be won. This reading will take you through the parts that will typically inform your budget advocacy project plan.

**Development Issue/Problem Analysis (How do you know there is a problem?)**

Budget advocates generally begin with the development/social issue or problem around which they want to promote a change. When strategizing for your budget advocacy it is useful to ask: What is your organization ultimately trying to change? Your ultimate objective is usually not to see budget changes, but rather changes in peoples’ well-being. In order to achieve your ultimate goal, it is often necessary to bring about some changes to the budget process (participation, transparency) and/or to budget policy (increased allocations, reduced corruption).

**Understanding the Environment (How do you know you are asking the right questions?)**

Budget advocates as with all organizations need to understand the environment in which they work. The environment includes the civil, economic and political conditions and relationships at the local, state/provincial, national and global levels. In order to achieve their goals, budget advocates need to understand the various layers of the context in which they live, both to identify the work that is needed and the conditions that affect their ability to effect change.

For budget advocacy, it is vital to have a good understanding of the budget process for your issue. For example, your ultimate goal may be to increase access to safe drinking water for people in Kenya who do not have access. Your budget research has identified that funds allocated to the water sector are not being used efficiently (i.e., there are few outputs given the large amount of money that has been spent). In order to address this issue in the budget, it is vital that you develop a good understanding of the budget implementation process. Therefore, you would need to understand how funds flow from the central level to the local (service delivery) level, what information is produced during the implementation stage, and who (individuals and institutions) is responsible for

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\(^1\) [http://www.democracyctr.org/advocacy/strategy.htm](http://www.democracyctr.org/advocacy/strategy.htm)
ensuring that service delivery is achieved. As a result, it is important to remember that in each stage of the budget process, as well as in the aid cycles of donors, there are processes that affect your issue.

Research and Evidence Collection (What information do we have or need to obtain that can provide evidence for our budget advocacy?)

Again the process of gathering, analyzing and using appropriate quantitative and qualitative research and evidence should be ongoing in order to be able to provide the necessary support for each part of the your budget advocacy campaign. Once you have begun work on your budget project, it is critical that you regularly consider if there is any additional information that is needed to support your budget advocacy objectives.

Budget Advocacy Objective (What do we want from Government?)

Having identified the issue and gathered evidence, it is therefore critical that budget advocates identify what it is that they want Government to do in order to address the findings of their research. Budget advocates should develop long-term, medium-term and short-term budget advocacy objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic/Result-oriented and Timely. Their budget advocacy objective should be related to the development problem identified and their project’s research findings and recommendations.

Primary & Secondary Audiences and Other Stakeholders Analysis (Who are you trying to convince?)

To bring about the budget changes identified in the budget advocacy objective, action may be required from one or more specific decision takers and shapers. Who needs to make a decision, change their mind, or act differently before your desired budget change can take place? Next, budget advocates should undertake an exercise to identify their primary & secondary audiences and other stakeholders – i.e., who is the decision maker (your primary audience) who has the power to make the change that you want, and who are the stakeholders who influence this decision maker (your secondary audience)? For example, the primary audience could be the Executive, Head of the Budget Office, or Chair of the Finance Committee in Parliament. The secondary audience could be the administrative staff of the Office of the President or support staff of the Finance Committee. In some cases, primary and secondary audiences may include donors or international financial institutions. The primary audience could be an individual (e.g., Minister of Finance) or an institution (e.g., Office of the Auditor General). In some instances, the individual or institution that is formally responsible for the issue is not the right person to target. For example, sometimes a strong line ministry or the president has more influence on budget allocations than the Ministry of Finance. In these cases, your advocacy plan should seek to target, at all times, the real power brokers.

Message (What will you say to convince them?)

You then need to develop compelling budget advocacy messages and frame and tailor them on the basis of your stakeholder analysis. Effective budget advocacy messages have three basic components: 1. a statement of the budget problem; 2. a solution grounded in evidence to address the budget problem; and 3. an explanation of the action that government must take to address the problem. When framing and crafting

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2 These questions are adapted from Shultz, J. “Strategy Development: Key Questions for Developing an Advocacy Strategy.” Available at [http://www.democracyctr.org/advocacy/strategy.htm](http://www.democracyctr.org/advocacy/strategy.htm).
the message for different stakeholders, we make an appeal to what is right and an appeal to the stakeholder’s self-interest. As a result, budget advocates must think carefully through the framing and crafting of their messages.

**Message Delivery: Communications Strategy (How are you going to convince them?)**

Ultimately, the goal of a budget advocacy effort is to bring all of these elements together – a strategic budget objective; a clear sense of the decision makers, influencers, and other stakeholders; a compelling message; and strong alliances – into a set of activities to deliver that message effectively.

Different formats, styles, and content of communications are appropriate for different purposes and audiences, and sometimes it is necessary for budget advocates to prepare more than one message delivery strategy. Strategies for delivering budget advocacy messages can include: press conferences, workshops, public hearings, rallies, sit-ins, boycotts, strikes, print and electronic media, public drama, puppetry, poetry, and songs.

In addition to how the message is conveyed, who will convey the message (researchers, key experts, key constituencies, affected communities and individuals, public figures, etc.) is central to a successful budget advocacy strategy. The messenger should not only be familiar with the budget changes being called for but also should be someone that the decision maker/shapers and other advocacy audiences will respond to. For example, a former Minister of Finance sympathetic to your project might have more access and influence with the current Ministry of Finance.

**Schedule/Action Plan (What actions in what timeframe will you use to convince them?)**

Once budget advocates have identified their target audience and who can influence them, crafted their various messages for each, and created a communications strategy, it is time for them to confirm the specifics of implementing these decisions. A schedule and action plan that is aligned to the budget process and key power brokers within this process can provide the motivation for advocates to continue working until the problem is solved. It also places some limits on how long advocates are willing to wait for an active response to their efforts. Remember that an action plan must also include other key steps in the budget advocacy process, including research and analysis, review of research, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

The budget process also provides the timeframes and decision-making processes of government and budget advocates need to be aware of all times what can be achieved within the budget cycle. For each of the activities budget advocates have identified, they will need to go into more detail of what will need to be obtained, produced, or coordinated, and who will be responsible. For example, if you are planning to hold a press conference on the day the government releases its budget, advocates need to identify the participants, location, and the date for the event, in addition to the materials that will need to be available.

**Monitoring and Evaluation (How do we know if it is working?)**

A budget advocacy strategy is only useful when it is used to guide the work that you do every day. Ideally your budget advocacy plan should give an outline of the activities that you undertake from day to day. In reality, budget advocates find themselves doing a lot of responsive works such as responding to media that puts pressure on the implementation of their longer term strategy. In addition, the environment in which budget advocates formulate their budget plan can change dramatically in a short period of time. For example, a new President is elected that appoints new Ministers who are
no longer sympathetic to your work. Such a change would require you to reconsider your stakeholder analysis. Reviewing your budget advocacy plan is critical. Budget advocates, throughout the planning stages should be considering the kinds of indicators that will enable them to monitor whether they are achieving their desired budget objective.

- **Monitoring** – should be understood as the process of gathering information to measure progress towards their advocacy objectives. In order to do this, it is useful to develop project indicators that can help you keep track of your progress. For example, currently parliamentarians are not making use of your materials and part of your strategy involves targeting parliamentarians and indicator could be the number of requests for information and input from parliamentarians.

- **Evaluation** – should be understood as a process of gathering and analyzing the information (that may be guided by your project indicators) to determine if the budget advocacy objectives have been achieved. This evaluation should also include an evaluation of the workings of the coalition/network that has supported the project. It is important that budget advocates evaluate on an ongoing process to enable them to strategically modify or adjust their budget advocacy plan.
Five key components of an advocacy strategy are:

1. **Objectives**
2. **Audiences (decision makers and influencers)**
3. **Message Development (core message and tailored messages)**
4. **Message Delivery**
5. **Schedule/Action Plan**

### 1. Objectives

- An advocacy objective should set out very clearly and specifically what civil society wants government to do, how it should be done, where, and when.
- The more information and evidence that you have about your issue, the environment/context, opportunities, and the actors/decision-makers involved, the clearer your objective is likely to be.
- Your advocacy objectives should be **SMART**. That is, each objective should be:
  - **S**pecific
  - **M**easurable
  - **A**chievable
  - **R**ealistic
  - **T**imebound

#### Specific

- Specify an action that you want government to take.
- Be as clear and specific as you can. For example, it is too general to set as a goal: “to provide safe drinking water for all.” Rather, set a specific goal to prioritize the provision of safe drinking water to those who currently have no access to safe drinking water.
- Don’t just state what the problem is (e.g., many people do not have access to safe drinking water). For the objective to be specific, you must state the solution that you would like to see and the specific ministry, department, or agency within government that needs to implement the solution. You also need to be specific about which beneficiaries should be targeted. For example, a more specific objective would be: “The Ministry of Water & Irrigation (MOWI) must provide access to safe drinking water to those who do not have a safe water source within 2 km of their homes.”

#### Measurable

- Be as exact as possible. If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.
- Provide the numbers so that you can evaluate your achievements at the end of your campaign.
• It is not sufficient to state that the “government must increase in the number of safe drinking water sources,” because the increase could be very small and not what you are advocating for. The government could provide 10 additional safe drinking water sources and still meet such an objective.

• There’s an old saying: “Be careful what you wish for, it may just come true.” Therefore, state the number of goods, structures, or services that you want the government to deliver. Where norms and standards exist for the quality of service delivery, make sure that your objective also incorporates these measures.

• For example, a measurable advocacy objective would be: “MOWI must construct 10,000 new taps that provide safe drinking water to those who do not have a safe water source within 2 km of their homes.”

• Keep in mind that not all problems can be solved simply by increasing service delivery, e.g., discrimination against girl children.

**Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound**

• This is the “ART” in SMART.

• Making your advocacy objective achievable, realistic, and timebound means linking it directly to the stages in the government’s planning, budgeting, and service delivery cycles:
  ➢ Consider what is possible in the current context and what can be realistically achieved.
  ➢ Always set a timeframe for the objective, e.g., this financial year, over the next three years, by 2015.
  ➢ State how the government can achieve the increases or improvements in service delivery that you are proposing.

• Keep in mind that not everything can be changed immediately. Existing programs and budgets are often rigid due to political compromises and legal obligations.

• For big and long-term goals, think in terms of **progressive realization**. Progressive means that if the government cannot immediately attain what you are asking for, it should at least have a medium to long-term plan for attaining it. This makes it possible to hold the government to account for following a plan on a year-by-year basis.

• For example, if your advocacy objective is – “MOWI must construct 10,000 new taps that provide safe drinking water to those who do not have a safe water source within 2 km of their homes by 2016” – think about how this could be done over the period 2013-2015. (3,300 new taps by the end of 2014; 6,600 new taps by the end of 2015; and 10,000 new taps by the end of 2016.)

• Partners in a coalition will probably not commit to objectives that are too far out of reach.

2. **Audiences**

There are two kinds of audiences for your budget advocacy: primary and secondary.

• **Primary audiences**: decision makers, i.e., those (individuals or institutions) who have the formal authority to take action to make your desired change happen.

• **Secondary audiences**: influencers, i.e., those who can help to convince the primary audience to take action. They can put pressure on the primary audience, by raising the profile of the issue, demanding action, publicly shaming the government, or quietly speaking behind closed doors about the merits of your proposed solution.
  ➢ Insiders to the budget & policy process (e.g., legislators, government officials, auditors, etc.)
  ➢ Outsiders to the budget & policy process (e.g., the media, CSOs, political constituencies, trade unions, etc.)
For further information on advocacy audiences, see Reading 4.4: Stakeholder Analysis, Reading 4.5: Powerbrokers in Aid and Budget Processes, and Reading 4.6: Power Mapping.

3. MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Types of advocacy messages:

- **Core message**: based on your advocacy objective, this is your key advocacy message that serves as a “frame” for your campaign

- **Tailored messages**: based on your core advocacy message but tailored to appeal to the values and interests of specific audiences, so that you can persuade them to take a specific action

**CORE ADVOCACY MESSAGE**

- Draws on your advocacy objective, by setting out the PROBLEM, SOLUTION, and ACTION in general terms
- Must be based on evidence gathered from your research
- Should be clear, compelling, and concise
- Expresses the rationale (or “frame”) that you will use to make your case and communicate your objective
- Distinguishes you from others who are addressing the same issue, since it reflects the particular “frame” that you’re using for your advocacy
- Stimulates the interest of the audience, so they want to find out more
- Changes only when the advocacy objective and strategy changes
- Targets what the audience will listen to:
  - Appeal to **MERITS**: “Access to safe drinking water will improve the health of the people of Kenya...” VS.
  - Appeal to **SELF-INTEREST**: “The building of 10,000 new taps over the next three years will bring international recognition to the Kenyan government for making significant progress towards the country’s achievement of the MDG target on access to safe drinking water...”

**Framing Your Core Message**

- The FRAME = the **rationale** that you will use to make your argument and communicate your advocacy objective.
- It is the **foundation** or overall theme of your advocacy – e.g., human rights, good governance, poverty reduction, etc.
- The frame that you select for your advocacy message should generally reflect the values of your audiences, because you need to ask them to do something in a way that connects with them.

**Example Frames: Advocating for Aid & Budget Transparency**

- Human rights frame: *People have a right to information about all public resources and to participate in the decisions that affect their lives.*
- Good governance frame: *Aid & budget transparency reduces opportunities for corruption and mismanagement, and greater public participation in relevant decision-making processes can lead to better decisions, greater buy-in on these decisions, and better outcomes.*
Poverty reduction frame: Aid & budgets are critical tools for ending poverty, as they translate policy goals into action plans for raising and spending public resources. As such aid & budget systems and processes must be transparent, participatory, and accountable to ensure that public resources are used to achieve the greatest results.

Example 1:

- **Problem:** Many people in rural areas have no access to safe drinking water.
- **Solution:** Safe drinking water must be provided to those in rural areas who have the most need.
- **Action:** The Ministry of Water must build 10,000 new taps over the next three years in the areas where residents have to walk over 2 km to access safe drinking water.
- **Core Advocacy Message:** Easier access to safe drinking water in rural communities will decrease the prevalence of diseases caused by unsafe water, improve sanitation and hygiene, and reduce the amount of time that women spend collecting water, so that they can participate more in economic activities to reduce poverty in their families and communities.

Example 2:

- **Problem:** Many people in peri-urban areas do not have access to housing.
- **Solution:** Adequate and affordable housing must be provided to those in peri-urban areas who do not have housing.
- **Action:** Over the next two years, the Ministry of Housing must build 15,000 new homes in peri-urban areas that conform to basic housing norms and standards and allocate these homes to the most vulnerable households.
- **Core Advocacy Message:** Government provision of adequate and affordable housing in peri-urban areas will reduce the establishment of unplanned settlements, making it easier to build infrastructure and provide essential public services (water, sanitation, health, education) to residents of these communities. This will reduce poverty in peri-urban areas and create safer, more stable, and healthier communities.

Example 3:

- **Problem:** Many people in rural areas do not have access to a health care facility.
- **Solution:** Adequate, affordable, and accessible health care facilities must be provided for people in rural areas.
- **Action:** Over the next five years, the Ministry of Health must build 500 primary health care facilities in rural areas that conform to the government’s own standards and norms for primary health care provision.
- **Core Advocacy Message:** By drastically scaling up the number of primary health care facilities in rural areas over the next 5 years, the government will reduce the burden of preventable diseases, which will reduce maternal and child mortality, increase economic productivity, and decrease the heavy burden placed on secondary hospitals to provide primary health care. It will decrease the cost of accessing health care for the average person, particularly the poor, and lead to long-term cost savings for the government.

**Tailored Advocacy Messages**

- When developing a tailored advocacy message, it is important to keep in mind your audience’s values.
- Just communicating information is not enough to convince someone to do what you want.
- Think about WHY it would be in the audience’s interest to take the action that you want them to take.
- You need to present the information and call for action in a way that:
connects to what is important to the audience; and

Addresses any barriers that prevent them from taking the action that is needed to achieve your objective.

To create a tailored advocacy message, you should:

- Reflect the audience’s values & interests in order to present a vision that connects with what is important to them;
- Try to overcome any barrier(s) that prevent them from taking action; and
- Ask the audience to take the action needed to achieve your objective.

Example 1:

- Core Message: Easier access to safe drinking water in rural communities will decrease the prevalence of diseases caused by unsafe water, improve sanitation and hygiene, and reduce the amount of time that women spend collecting water, so that they can participate more in economic activities to reduce poverty in their families and communities.
- Audience: Ministry of Water
- Tailored Message: Building 10,000 taps in rural communities over the next three years will mean that 85% of the population will have access to safe drinking water, which meets both the MDG target and the government’s own target for provision of safe drinking water in its 5-year national development strategy. We call on the Ministry of Water and Irrigation to prioritize the provision of safe drinking water in rural areas in its annual plans and to allocate sufficient funds in its budget over the next three years to meet this target.

Example 2:

- Core Message: Government provision of adequate and affordable housing in peri-urban areas will reduce the establishment of unplanned settlements, making it easier to build infrastructure and provide essential public services (water, sanitation, health, education) to residents of these communities. This will reduce poverty in peri-urban areas and create safer, more stable, and healthier communities.
- Audience: Members of Parliament
- Tailored Message: Next year is an election year, and currently 20% of the electorate is living in unplanned, peri-urban settlements with little or no access to water, sanitation, health, and education services. We call on you, our elected representatives, to ensure that sufficient funds are allocated in the Ministry of Public Works and Housing’s budget to construct 15,000 affordable homes that meet government standards for public housing, to monitor the proper use of these funds, and to ensure that these homes are provided to the most vulnerable households in your constituencies.

Example 3:

- Core Message: By drastically scaling up the number of primary health care facilities in rural areas over the next 5 years, the government will reduce the burden of preventable diseases, which will reduce maternal and child mortality, increase economic productivity, and decrease the heavy burden placed on secondary hospitals to provide primary health care. It will decrease the cost of accessing health care for the average person, particularly the poor, and lead to long-term cost savings for the government.
- Audience: The Media
- Tailored Message: Our research in 4 rural districts has shown that nearly 80% of maternal deaths resulted from the lack of access to skilled birth attendants and medicines that are normally available at primary health clinics. And nearly 65% of child deaths were caused by treatable illnesses such as diarrhea, malaria, and post-natal infections. In its election platform, the current government committed to providing health care for all, yet after three years, it has failed to construct a single primary health clinic in the rural districts with the poorest health
outcomes. The government must live up to its promise of health care for all, before more lives are needlessly lost, by building 500 PHCs in these rural districts over the next 5 years.

4. MESSAGE DELIVERY

MESSENGER

- The messenger should be familiar with the advocacy objectives and the message.
- Even when there are different messengers, there should always be one unified message.
- Groups conducting budget advocacy have used legal, economic, and media experts as messengers in their campaigns. In many countries, economists carry weight on the issue of the public budget, and some groups have used them as messengers for their campaigns.
- The campaign can create and build the messengers; the more public exposure they receive, the more they will be recognized as experts and public figures.

THE MEDIUM/MEDIA

- Conducting budget advocacy demands reaching a diverse audience. This requires strategic thinking about how the message will be delivered. Some ways to reach a wide range of people include: print, electronic, and social media; grassroots media, such as community theatre, puppetry, visual arts, and songs; public meetings/discussions; workshops; public hearings; rallies; protests; boycotts; strikes; etc.
- The choice of media should take into consideration the experience of staff members within the organization, the audience, the political environment, and the opportunities presented.
- Organizations conducting advocacy also need to think about public messaging versus private messaging, i.e., what you state publicly and the way that you state it may differ from what you state privately to your advocacy target. Both public and private messaging can be done at the same time and with success. For example, a civil society organization may criticize a donor harshly in public and to the media, while at the same time they are holding more specific, constructive meetings in private with the donor to address the issue. (Remember that sometimes effective advocacy is done behind closed doors!)

5. SCHEDULE/ACTION PLAN

- Budget advocacy is directly linked to the stages of the budget process and aid cycles. Different decisions are made at different stages of these processes, and it is important to intervene before the decisions you want to change are made.
- Budget advocacy requires year-round commitment. There will always be more than one stage of the budget process being implemented at any given time. In addition, the aid cycles of donors occur at different times. Knowing when these different stages are taking place will help you to plan strategically and make decisions about when to intervene, which staff members will intervene, whom they will target, what messages they will deliver, and how these messages will be delivered.
- Advocacy action plans must not only include your communications strategy for delivering your advocacy message, but also the research & analysis and review of research that produces the evidence that supports your advocacy message. Monitoring and evaluation should also be incorporated into schedules and action plans.
The experience of organizations has shown that generally finance officials and donor agencies disregard the budget work produced by civil society. Convincing government officials and donors of the seriousness of your work demands that research and information are produced in a credible, accessible, and timely manner.

Successful budget work requires:

- Access to credible and timely information
- Persistent, dedicated, year-round work
- An understanding of how to navigate the political terrain, as budgets can be highly political
- An awareness of the social, economic, and political environment and the ability to take advantage of the opportunities that emerge along the way to achieving your objective
- Connecting local advocacy efforts with national-level processes and vice versa
- A strong coalition: this a is strategic tactic to gain support from constituencies affected by the advocacy issue, which thereby gives legitimacy to both the advocacy campaign and the issue itself
STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Your advocacy efforts don't happen in a vacuum. They are defined by:

- Different stakeholders who will work for or against your advocacy campaign or initiative
- Their position in the political environment
- Specific windows of opportunity

There are many stakeholders, but they can be classified into 2 broad categories:

- **Primary audience**: the individual(s) or institution that has the authority to make your desired change happen (decision makers); and
- **Secondary audience**: those who can influence or put pressure on the primary audience, by raising the profile of the issue, demanding action, publicly shaming the government, or quietly speaking behind closed doors about the merits of your proposed solution (influencers, who can be both insiders or outsiders to the budget and policy process).
  - *Insiders* include legislators, government officials, auditors, etc. and *outsiders* include CSOs, the media, trade unions, etc.

To design an advocacy strategy that maximizes possibilities for collaboration and minimizes opposition to your advocacy objective, you need to know:

- Who your primary and secondary audiences are (in as much detail as possible)
- What they support and what they oppose (i.e., who are allies, soft supporters, fence-sitters, and opponents?)
- What power these audiences have to help you to achieve – or to prevent you from achieving – your advocacy objective
- What opportunities (and risks) exist for collaboration with them

It is necessary to analyze primary & secondary audiences to understand who is who in your advocacy environment

You need to identify, for each stakeholder, the following characteristics:

- Political party, as well as groups/organizations/associations that they belong to
- Likes and dislikes; friends and foes
- Specific interest in/knowledge about your advocacy objective
- The way they are affected by the problem that your advocacy objective tries to solve
- The way they will be affected by the changes that you propose
- Their capacity to make that change (or parts of it) happen
- Their motivation/self-interest to contribute to it
- The actions you can develop to spur their interest
Some of the key stakeholders that exert influence over aid and budget processes are bilateral & multilateral donor agencies and international financial institutions (IFIs), the ministry of finance (or treasury), politicians, the legislature (parliament), and the private sector. These stakeholders act as powerbrokers who shape budget decisions in more and less overt ways.

Bilateral & Multilateral Donors and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) exert power in the areas of fiscal policy, the size of expenditure envelopes, and financial management legislation. Their power is limited by the diversity of contesting donor agendas and also when there are clearly formulated public policy goals in place.

The Ministry of Finance has power in the areas of fiscal policy, determining expenditure envelopes, arbitration, virement\(^3\), roll-overs, and financial management. Its power is limited in that its ability to influence high-level decisions depends on its relationship with the president or prime minister. The Ministry of Finance’s power is also closely linked to the extent of its technical capacity.

Politicians have power over executive decisions, including the formulation and the implementation of the budget. Their power is limited when policy goals have been made public, and they are under public scrutiny to follow through on their promises. The power of politicians in the executive is also ideally kept in check by financial management legislation and the relative power of the legislature and the Ministry of Finance.

The legislature (parliament) has power over the approval of budget and should have oversight over the implementation and audit stages of the budget. Its power is limited by the nature of the political system in which it functions, and the party rules that govern its relationship with the executive. Its ability to help shape the budget is also determined by whether or not it has formal amendment powers when it comes to the budget. The legislature’s power to exercise effective oversight over budget implementation also depends on the capacity and role of legislative committees in the budget process.

The private sector typically exerts power in the areas of taxation and tax policy, the formulation of the budget, and in the procurement of government contracts. Their power is limited by a rule-based system that governs taxation and procurement.

### Allies, Soft Supporters, Fence Sitters, and Opponents of Your Advocacy

Allies are those who support your work and are usually able to advocate on your behalf from within the government, the legislature, or another power base. Allies can sometimes be found in surprising places. It can be short-sighted to assume that everyone “on the other side of the fence” is an enemy.

Soft supporters are those who are marginally on your side, but not in an overt, outspoken way. For various reasons, it may be difficult for them to openly support you. However, relationships with soft supporters can be crucial in providing you with access to both information and people that may otherwise be hard to come by. When soft supporters give you “inside information,” be sure not to jeopardize them by revealing your sources.

Fence sitters are those who are undecided about your advocacy objective and neither support nor undermine it very strongly. In the case of fence-sitters, it is a useful to identify why they do not support the solution or

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\(^3\) The process of shifting an expenditure from one budget line item to another during the budget year. To prevent misuse of funds, spending agencies must normally go through approved administrative procedures to obtain permission to make such a transfer.
change that you are advocating for, so that you can determine how to convince them. Remember that a logical argument with compelling evidence is more likely to win them over than moral appeals and strong opinions.

- **Opponents** are those who are openly or even secretly against your advocacy position. They are often those who would stand to lose if the change you are proposing were to be implemented. One way to try and counteract the negative impact of opponents is to seek out support among your opponents’ friends and allies. Another strategy is to shift the focal point of your advocacy strategy away from their sphere of influence or decision-making, although this may not always be possible.

**PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING WITH POWERBROKERS**

- Develop and maintain long-term relationships
- Invite them to join an advisory group for one your projects
- Ask your own well-connected board members for help
- Connect with politicians through their constituencies
- Regular meetings and visits to their offices
- Maintain relationships after working on projects with government
- Host meetings (public or closed) to bridge the divide between civil society and government
- Invite them to present at your training events
While you’re conducting your advocacy campaign, the balance of power in the political landscape can change frequently. You need a tool to be able to assess these changes, as they will have an impact on your advocacy strategy and messages.

Power mapping helps you to define strategies to:
- build connections and coalitions among those who support your goals
- identify uninvolved stakeholders that can be mobilized for your cause
- neutralize or win over those who oppose your advocacy objective and the change it seeks to trigger

**POWER MAPPING: RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM (EXAMPLE)**

Notes:
- This example is taken from an advocacy campaign conducted by the Mexican civil society organization *Fundar*. Their advocacy objective, as shown in the middle of the circle, was to get an earmarked budget for HIV/AIDS in 2008.
- The size of the stakeholder (i.e., their box or circle in the diagram) indicates their relative power to influence the advocacy objective in the center of the diagram. Thus, the bigger the box or circle, the more powerful the stakeholder.
The distance of the stakeholder from the advocacy issue (in the center) depicts the degree of support that the stakeholder has for the advocacy issue (e.g., the farther away from the center, the less support the stakeholder has).
The above example is also taken from Fundar’s advocacy campaign to get an earmarked budget for HIV/AIDS in 2008. It is just a different way of power mapping. As you’ll notice, it shows many of the same actors/stakeholders as in the previous power-mapping example.

This matrix helps you to define the following in relation to your advocacy objective:

- Degrees of support and opposition for the advocacy objective (column headings)
- Degrees of power with regard to the advocacy objective (intensity of colors) – e.g., the darker the color, the more powerful
- Shifts in positions (arrows) – the arrows indicate how the stakeholders’ positions need to be moved in order to achieve your advocacy objective

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### POWER MAPPING: MATRIX (EXAMPLE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High support</th>
<th>Medium support</th>
<th>Low support</th>
<th>Unmobilized</th>
<th>Low opposition</th>
<th>Medium opposition</th>
<th>High opposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS Program</td>
<td>MoH</td>
<td>Institute for Access to Information</td>
<td>Budget Committee</td>
<td>Conservative Party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSOs of PLWHAs</td>
<td>Gender Committee</td>
<td>Health Committee</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
READING 4.7 ■ FRAMING YOUR ADVOCACY

A frame for an advocacy initiative is the rationale that you will use to make your arguments and communicate your objective. The frame that you select for communicating your core message (i.e., your advocacy objective, or what you want people to do) should reflect the values of your decision makers in that you are asking them to do something in a way that resonates with them. It differs from the tailored messages that you will develop for your target audiences in that it is the overall theme, or the big picture of your advocacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE MESSAGE</th>
<th>TAILORED MESSAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sets out the problem, solution, and action in general terms.</td>
<td>Sets out the problem, solution, and action in a specific manner so that it resonates with the values of the audience that you’re targeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is the frame you put around your issue and advocacy initiative.</td>
<td>Incorporates the frame of your advocacy initiative, but the message is adjusted to appeal to the specific audience that you’re targeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be clear, compelling, and concise, and use language that can be tailored for different audiences.</td>
<td>Should be clear and compelling, although the length varies depending on the audience and the media channel used to deliver the message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguishes you from others who are addressing the same issue, since it reflects the particular frame that you’re using for your advocacy.</td>
<td>Distinguishes you from others addressing the same issue, since it reflects your particular advocacy frame, but is adjusted to suit the target audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulates the interest of the audience, making them want to find out more about the issue.</td>
<td>Provides clear guidance on understanding the problem, the solution, and the specific action (“the ask”) that you want the audience to take.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes only when the advocacy objective and strategy is adjusted.</td>
<td>Keeps the core message at the center, but changes to appeal to different target audiences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your objective is to convince people of the importance of access to aid & budget information, you might frame your advocacy in any of the following ways:

- Access to aid & budget information is a human right
- Access to aid & budget information helps to prevent the misuse and abuse of public resources
- Access to aid & budget information promotes good governance
• Access to aid & budget information **empowers the individual**

Once you select a frame, you will develop your messages based on this frame and target it to specific audiences. Using the education sector as an example, here are some sample messages to encourage different audiences to take action toward accomplishing your budget advocacy objective using the “good governance” frame:

• Members of the school governing body: “As a member of the school governing body you are committed to fulfilling your responsibility to ensure that your school is providing the best educational opportunities for your students. Without complete information about the financial resources available to your school, it is almost impossible for you to make the best decisions about how to meet your students’ needs. Having access to budget information will enable you to make better decisions about school services and programs, exercise oversight of how your school is implementing these decisions, and ensure that resources budgeted for your district actually reach the children.”

• Parents: “Your child’s education is very important to you, but you know that a poorly managed school without adequate funds will not provide your child with the education she needs for her future. You could hold your school accountable for providing the right books, well-trained teachers, and clean and safe rooms if you knew what money they have to provide these things and what the school board, administrators, and educational staff members do with these funds. To do this, you need to join us in demanding access to key government budget information pertaining to your school and timely reports from the School Governing Body!”

Some examples of potential frames for your budget advocacy include a **human rights frame** (people have a right to public information and to participate in the decisions that affect their lives), a **good governance frame** (aid and budget transparency reduces the opportunities for corruption and mismanagement and greater participation can lead to better decisions, greater buy-in on these decisions, and better outcomes), or a **poverty reduction frame** (aid and budgets are critical tools for ending poverty as they translate the government’s policy goals into action plans for raising and spending public resources. As such, systems and process for both aid and budgets must be transparent, participatory, and accountable to ensure that public resources are used to achieve the greatest results.).
When developing an advocacy message, it is important to keep your audience’s values in mind. Just communicating information will not always be enough to convince someone to do what you want; you need to present the information and call for action in a way that connects to what is important to the audience and that addresses any barriers that prevent them for taking that action.

To create a strong advocacy message you need to:
1) Reflect the audience’s values in order to present a vision that connects with what is important to them;
2) Overcome the audience’s barriers to taking action (i.e., what is preventing them from taking action on your issue);
3) Ask the audience to take the action needed to achieve your objective; and
4) Restate the vision, for emphasis.

For example, if your objective is to improve budget transparency and participation in the budget process, and your audience is the head of your national government (president or prime minister), who values being seen as a successful and effective leader but who is nervous about how greater transparency and participation in the budget process will impact his/her re-election prospects, you might come up with the following message:

“Successful policies are based on information and buy in – the best source for both of these is the public. Governments that achieve their policy goals, attract investment, and get re-elected make good decisions about what to do — and then do it (reflect your audience’s values in order to present a vision that they can connect with).

The people helped you get into office and want you to realize your promises; now, let them help you accomplish your goals (overcome any barrier that prevents them from taking action).

To do this, the public needs to know what you are planning to do, are doing, and have done in your budgets. The easiest first step is for you to post on the government website all the budget information that you are already producing (ask the audience to take a specific action).

If you really know what your people need and the best way to provide it to them, you will succeed in achieving your goals for your country.” (Restate the vision)