

TOWARDS CLIMATE AND DISASTER RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT

A packing list for your advocacy journey

People in the Global South disproportionately bear the consequences of **climate change and disasters linked to natural hazards**, while their contribution to the underlying causes is marginal. The IPCC Special Report on “Global Warming of 1.5°C”, released in October 2018, highlights that even if global temperature increase is limited to 1.5°C until the end of the century, there will still be severe impacts. They will particularly hit unique and threatened ecosystems and increase the risk of extreme weather events.

This means it is today that we need to **raise ambition for climate change mitigation, adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR)**. Climate and disaster resilient development allows people to live with that change and even thrive in changing conditions.

Civil society has a vital role to play in ensuring that the voices of those affected are being heard and people of the global South become owners of their own stories towards climate and disaster-resilient development.

Planning successful advocacy: focusing on the essentials

Designing and planning good advocacy is a task that many development practitioners struggle with, and CCA and DRR have some **specific challenges** that need to be factored in, related to the global scale of these issues, their connection with other existing problems, and general perceptions of climate change as an abstract and future threat. This often means that CCA and DRR policies are **pushed down on the political agenda** if there are other, more urgent matters.

Planning advocacy is like starting a journey: you need to know your desired destination and sketch your path, and you need to have considered obstacles, challenges and potential encounters. To better prepare for such an advocacy journey, this document aims to provide you with a **packing list** of advocacy essentials. It is the result of the annual workshop of the Swiss NGO DRR Platform in collaboration with the Global Network of Civil Society Organizations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR) held in November 2018 with participants from four continents.



Why do we do Advocacy?

- to bring about **change**
- to **scale** change
- to make change **sustainable**
- to transform **power structures**

THE PACKING LIST

Imagine you have a small suitcase. You travel light. What you can take with you is limited. What are the main things to pack to be well prepared for an advocacy journey?

1. CLARITY Define strategic and context-specific goals

In many cases climate change and disasters aggravate existing problems, so it is not always clear-cut to what extent the issues you are tackling are caused by them and what role other local factors play. Start with a **thorough analysis** of the problem you want to tackle. Ask yourself:

- Do you understand the reality on the ground and the root causes of the problem? Which role do climate change and disasters play?
- Do you know the scale and spread of the problem?
- Are you able to integrate different and diverse perspectives?

Based on the analysis, **define your goal**. This includes checking if the problem you selected really is the problem, i.e. **the most important problem you want and can address**. You also should look at where policies stand because this defines what you can influence. It might be that you need to advocate to introduce a new law or you need to push for a revision of existing laws. **Start with your goal, not with what you want to do**. Plan enough time to define this objective in a participatory way.

Be clear on the **key players you want to influence** with your advocacy campaign. Who are the key decision makers? How do you need to address them? Can you get direct access to them? What is their agenda and how much does it coincide with yours?

2. COLLABORATION Involve allies and opponents

Advocacy is a collaborative effort. Inciting change in power structures needs allies and will meet opposition. It is thus crucial to take your time to identify all potentially involved actors.

- Look at **all possible allies** including those who are out of the range of the «usual suspects». This could be private companies e.g. insurance or renewable energies, religious communities, student groups or farmers associations affected by climate change.
- Have a close look at **opponents**: How strongly are they opposed to your goals? How will they react and how influential are they?
- And don't forget **neutral actors**: Who is neutral and how could they be influenced to support your agenda?

Count in time to **build alliances** and plan your campaign with many different stakeholders. Remember to always be transparent and considerate of different cultures and priorities. Make sure there is a solid buy-in on why working together so that compromises can be reached more easily. Define clear roles and responsibilities.

3. EVIDENCE: Build up credibility

Presenting solid evidence is crucial to support your advocacy goals and **represents the foundation** for your argument. Build the collection of local evidence into the project design of your campaign. Consider the role of allies and opponents in this process.

There are different types of evidence civil society groups can use:

- **Story telling** shows a concrete example of an impact in its complexity and local reality. Case studies can highlight how people are affected by climate change and disaster risks, and how they are adapting to them. Case studies can help raise empathy, key to build up public pressure.
- **Quantitative evidence** can be scientific studies on disaster impacts, statistical data, community perception surveys, or modelling of future climate change and impacts. There is a lack for local evidence, which is where CSOs can play a role. Data can provide a robust and credible basis to support your message and narrative. If you don't have the capacities, it is good to look for allies who are specialised in this field (such research institutes, other NGOs).

It is when these two forms of evidence are combined that they have the biggest impact. **But beware:** It is not always easy to make the **link between climate change impacts and a local problem** you are presenting. Make sure you have the link and narrative soundly developed and backed up by data. A whole campaign can be negatively affected if the credibility of your statement is questioned.

Make sure your data is robust and credible. A good way to ensure this is through **triangulation of information** by consulting different sources that come to the same conclusion and by checking if there are other sources which claim the opposite. It is also crucial to **verify the source** of your information and find out if it is reliable.

4. FOCUS Define specific action and communication

Focus your activities on the selected goals and **define a strategy** which achieves your objectives. It is very easy to get excited about an advocacy activity without realizing that it might not help to achieve your specific goal.

Campaigning can bring together many people and groups to create public pressure on an issue. **Lobbying** can help to move a specific issue forward within political bodies. Stay flexible in the implementation of your advocacy campaign, so that you can use the **right window of opportunity** to create momentum.

Make sure your goal is clear enough so you can **translate it into a message** that follows the K-I-S-S principle: **Keep it short and simple!** Plan or develop a **communication strategy** with clear answers to: What are we trying to say? How? Through which channels? This communications strategy should be developed and implemented in cooperation with your allies.

But be aware of the **hazards of advocacy:** Putting yourself in a political context marked by shrinking space for civil society or sending the wrong message can put organizations or individuals in danger. Make sure you have analyzed the context well enough to know which strategies are safe and effective, and listen to your local partners if they are raising concerns.

5. FLEXIBILITY Review, reflect, learn

Advocacy campaigns need persistence, because many goals cannot be achieved in the timespan of one project phase. Plan incremental steps for your campaign.

Define milestones for different actions at different timelines (short, medium, long) to keep the momentum going, and to check that your activities are going in the right direction.

Plan regular calls or meet-ups to re-energize the campaign. Also include **feedback loops** where you review the campaign, your successes and setbacks, and adjust your strategy if necessary.

CASE STUDY

There are many encouraging case studies of successful advocacy for CCA and DRR from around the world. Below is one example that highlights the advocacy packing list in action.

Linking impacts in developing countries to a national campaign in industrialized countries: Trocaire divestment campaign

The call for divestment aims at getting individuals and institutions to withdraw their investments from oil, gas and coal corporations because they directly contribute to climate change. The divestment campaign in Ireland started in late 2015 when politicians, media and public seemed to consider Paris Agreement as having 'solved' climate change.

Clarity

The campaign focused on getting the Parliament to divest the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) from fossil fuels. This is a national fund overseen by the Parliament and funded by tax payer money.

Collaboration

The campaign worked with existing allies like the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition and international divest-invest contacts for technical support. But it also cooperated with new allies like the student divestment campaigners or supportive individuals from the finance sector. The Trocaire Bishops were supportive from the outset and the campaign managed to win the support of the Parliament.

Evidence

The campaign used the assessment of fossil fuel holdings of the Fund by Irish researchers. Trocaire also conducted research on climate impacts in their programme countries ('Feeling the Heat' report).

Focus

Trocaire launched a public campaign, with on- and offline campaign materials establishing the link between investments in fossil fuels and climate change impacts in developing countries, and presented divestment as a powerful tool. It also supported student divestment campaigners in their initiatives. This was combined with a lobbying strategy in which Trocaire approached a parliamentarian to introduce a bill to divest ISIF and engaged directly with relevant Ministers and ISIF.

Flexibility

Starting in February 2016, the campaign managed to have the bill introduced in Parliament in November 2017. After that the campaign gained momentum and created more public pressure. The bill passed in Parliament in November 2018 and now needs to be implemented. The combination of an NGO experienced in leading such a campaign and strong local activism were key success factors.

<https://www.trocaire.org/news/divestment>

FURTHER RESOURCES

There are many good **toolkits on advocacy** in the field of climate change and DRR. Here are a few examples:

- Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR): National Advocacy Toolkit: A guide for civil society organisations working together to advocate resilience issues at the country level
- Act Alliance: Towards the Ambitious Implementation of the Paris Agreement – A Toolkit for National Level Advocacy
- International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC): Disaster risk reduction: a global advocacy guide
- GNDR: Views from the Frontline 2019

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