

Speaking Truth To Power Gender Advocate Toolkit.



By Hyeladzira James Mshelia

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER GENDER ADVOCATE TOOLKIT.



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Thank you all for your contributions towards developing this gender advocacy toolkit.

ABBREVIATIONS



AU	African Union
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
CBOs	Community-based organizations
CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
NPC	National Population Commission
WHO	World Health Organization
GE	Gender Equality
GFP	The Global Feminisms Project
SGBV	Sexual Gender-Based Violence
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Hyeladzira James Mshelia



Gender Inclusion and Environmental Specialist

Hyeladzira James Mshelia is a Gender Inclusion and Environmental Specialist. As a Programs Manager at Connected Development (CODE), she has gained technical and programmatic management skills in designing and implementing projects that promote gender equality, environmental sustainability, and climate action in Africa. Her work focuses on promoting transparency and accountability in governance, as well as encouraging citizens to track and monitor government projects in their communities

Hyeladzira's campaigns at CODE are geared towards addressing issues affecting women and girls, such as gender-responsive budgeting, girl-child education, and campaigns to eliminate all forms of violence targeted towards women and girls. Her efforts have not gone unnoticed, as she was recently selected as a 2023 Twink Frey Visiting Social Activist at the Center of Education for Women+, the University of Michigan where she began developing this toolkit for all gender advocates, including those who are new to advocacy and those with advanced skills.

She hopes to provide practical guidance and tools for advocacy, allowing advocates to define opportunities, manage risks, and optimize their path towards successful advocacy. Most importantly, Hyeladzira aims to empower gender advocates in influencing decision-making at both sub-national and national levels to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 - gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT



This document highlights ways in which gender advocates can influence decision-making at sub-national (community, local) and National levels to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 which speaks towards achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Gender equality is far beyond a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

This toolkit is designed as a self-guided manual for all Gender Advocates or intending Advocates. Young women and young men who are beginning their journey in advocacy may find it useful to go through the guidance and tools in detail. If you have advanced advocacy skills, you might find value in specific tips and guidance to get more ideas to make your ongoing advocacy more effective. You can use this document to define opportunities and manage risk, optimising your path to successful advocacy.

**Now that you
know what this
toolkit is about,
let's get into it,
shall we?**



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Who Can Be An Advocate For Women's Equity?



Put simply, anyone can be an advocate for women's equity because societies that value women and men as equal are safer and healthier. This includes any young girl/ boy, the young woman/young man, youth-led groups, networks and movements, including youth-focused organizations and other community-based organizations (CBOs) who feel the need to advocate for gender equality, empowerment of young women and end all forms of violence targeted towards women and girls. If you believe in this and want to work actively towards making this.

YOUR ROLE AS AN ADVOCATE



Hooray!!

You are now on a journey to become a catalyst for change!!! You are integral in coming out to support a cause—publicly or in more discreet ways. In this case, it could range from lending your voice to ensuring the leaders of your country listen to the voices of women and girls, especially those facing exploitation, abuse, and violence. Whether you are talking to your friends and family or engaging with an advocacy organization, the most important way to be an advocate is by speaking up. By raising your voice for women's rights and gender equality.

Your role as an advocate is to influence people or organizations that have the power to change things.

Let's Get Inspired.... Some Amazing Advocates



Malala Yousafzai

Malala is a Pakistani activist for girls' education.



Shirin Ebadi Iran

Advocates for gender equality and children's rights.



Aisha Yesufu

Nigerian activist.



Jeannine Mukanirwa

Congolese women's rights activist



Mariam Lamizana

Feminist activist



Tarana Burke

Activist, community organizer of Me Too

YOU!!



Understanding The Terminologies



Advocacy:

Advocacy means targeting decision makers by making a case in support of a particular cause or activity, including raising awareness and moving to persuade, specifically the decision makers to support and act on your advocacy issue.

Gender:

The economic, political, and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. The social definitions of what it means to be male or female vary among cultures and change over time. (UNICEF).

Gender Equality:

Refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of all individuals, regardless of their gender. It involves ensuring that people of all genders have the same access to education, employment, healthcare, and participation in social, economic, and political activities.

Gender Norms:

Gender norms refer to the societal expectations and cultural beliefs regarding the behaviors, attitudes, and roles that are considered appropriate for individuals based on their gender.

Empowerment:

Empowerment refers to increasing the personal, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities.

Gender Discrimination:

Gender discrimination occurs when individuals are treated unfairly or differently because of their gender.

Gender Mainstreaming:

Gender mainstreaming is the process of integrating gender considerations into all policies, programs, and activities, to ensure that they do not reinforce gender inequalities

Sex:

Refers to a set of biological attributes in humans and animals. It is primarily associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy. Sex is usually categorized as female, male or intersex (USAID).

Gender Equity:

means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of women (USAID).

Gender Identity:

This refers to a person's internal sense of their gender, which may be different from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Masculinity:

refers to the perceived ideas about how men and boys should, or are expected to, behave in a given setting. In other words, it refers to the social meaning of manhood, which is constructed and defined socially, historically and politically, rather than being biologically driven

Rape:

Rape is any non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration of another person with any body part or object. This can be by any person known or unknown to the survivor, within marriage and relationships, and during armed conflict. (USAID, 2020)

Community:

A community can be defined as a group of people united by at least one common characteristic such as geography, shared interests, values, experiences, or traditions.

Feminism:

This is a social, political, and cultural movement that advocates for the rights of women and gender equality. Feminists seek to challenge and change the unequal power dynamics between men and women that exist in society.

Patriarchy:

This is a system of social organization in which men hold power and dominate women. Patriarchy is often seen as a root cause of gender inequality.

Intersectionality:

This is the recognition that individuals have multiple social identities (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, class) that intersect and interact with each other, creating unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.



Exercise:



What words come to mind when you hear the term "gender equality"?

When you think of "gender roles," what words come to mind?

When you hear the term "gender pay gap," what words come to mind?

17 Statistics On Violence Against Girls & Women In Africa



Girls has experienced physical, sexual, or psychological violence in their lifetime.

WHO also reports that more than **42%** of women in Ethiopia have experienced physical or sexual violence from a partner in their lifetime.



3hrs

In South Africa, a woman is killed making it one of the most dangerous places in the world for women, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).



86%

of people presenting for medical attention due to sexual assault in healthcare facilities are women and girls.

Women and girls with disabilities are twice as likely to experience violence of any form.

2/3 of the 10.5 million children out of school
38% of Nigerians are illiterate, out of them.
60% are women and girls.



1 in 6

girls who are sexually abused experienced it at school in Nigeria.

18.5%

of girls are married before the age of 15.

50%

of girl children in Nigeria who experienced sexual violence experienced it at home.



50% of all sexual assaults in Africa are committed against girls under the age of 18.

31% of Nigerian women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence, with 6% occurring during pregnancy. (National Population Commission (NPC) and (ICF).

In Egypt, a 2013 survey found

99% of women and girls had experienced sexual harassment

96% had experienced verbal harassment.

42% of women in Ethiopia have experienced physical or sexual violence from a partner in their lifetime. according to WHO.

A 2017 survey by the Kenyan government

39% of women in the country had experienced physical or sexual violence

21% had experienced sexual violence



2 in 3

women and girls experience violence from their husbands and boyfriends.

2018 survey by the National Population Commission in Nieria

28% of women have experienced physical violence

13% have experienced sexual violence

By the age of 16

28% of women have experienced physical violence



1 in 5

is either pregnant or has given birth.5 Nigeria has amongst the highest numbers of teenage pregnancies worldwide

According to UNICEF.

43% of girls in the World get married before their 18th



1 in 5

girls is married by the age of 15

In Nigeria

21% of girls are married before the age of 18

4% are married before the age of 15,

International And National Laws That Support G.E (summary)



The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): This is an international treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. It aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and ensure their full and equal participation in all spheres of life. Many African countries have ratified CEDAW, including Angola, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights: This is an African regional human rights treaty adopted by the Organization of African Unity (now known as the African Union) in 1981. The Charter prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender and requires states to take measures to eliminate gender discrimination. Many African countries have ratified the Charter, including Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda.

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa: This is an African regional treaty adopted by the African Union in 2003. It aims to promote and protect women's rights in Africa and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. Many African countries have ratified the Protocol, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

National laws: Many African countries have enacted laws that support gender equality, including laws on gender-based violence, equal pay, and equal access to education and employment. For example, Rwanda has a law requiring women to occupy at least 30% of decision-making positions in public institutions and political parties, and South Africa has a law requiring companies to report on their gender pay gaps.

What African Law Prohibits Gender-Based Violence?



Here are some laws that aim to protect the rights and dignity of women and girls, prevent GBV, and provide justice and support to survivors of GBV.

However, implementation and enforcement of these laws remain a challenge in many African countries due to factors such as weak legal systems, cultural attitudes, and social norms.



In South Africa,

The Domestic Violence Act (DVA) of 1998 criminalizes all forms of GBV, including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse.



In Kenya,

The Sexual Offences Act of 2006 prohibits rape, defilement, and other sexual offenses, including sexual harassment.



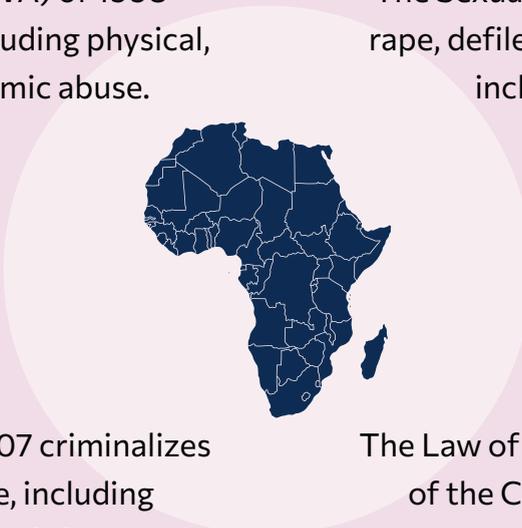
In Ghana,

The Domestic Violence Act of 2007 criminalizes all forms of domestic violence, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.



In Tanzania,

The Law of Marriage Act of 1971 and the Law of the Child Act of 2009 prohibit child marriage and sexual exploitation of children.



What Nigerian Law Prohibits Gender-Based Violence?



01

Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015:

This Act provides for the prohibition of all forms of violence against persons in Nigeria, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence. The Act criminalizes several forms of GBV, such as rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, and female genital mutilation. The VAPP law has been enacted at the federal level and 18 out of 36 states and the FCT have domesticated the law at the state level.

02

Child Rights Act 2003:

This Act prohibits child abuse, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and mandates that every child has the right to protection from all forms of violence.

03

Criminal Code:

The Nigerian Criminal Code prohibits several forms of GBV, including rape, assault, and domestic violence. However, the Code is limited in its coverage and is not comprehensive enough to address all forms of GBV.

04

Violence Against Women (Prohibition) Act 2015:

This Act specifically addresses violence against women and provides for the prohibition of all forms of violence against women in Nigeria. The Act criminalises several forms of GBV, such as rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, and female genital mutilation.

05

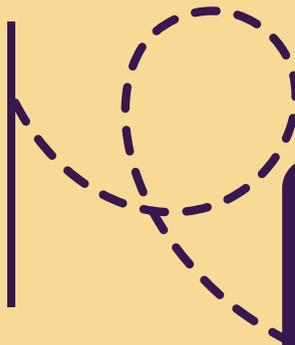
The Penal Code:

The Penal Code is applicable in Northern Nigeria and prohibits several forms of GB, including rape, assault, and domestic violence. However, like the Criminal Code, it is not comprehensive enough to address all forms of GBV.

The Current Gender Challenges In Africa



In Africa, women have continuously been marginalized economically, financially, socially as well as politically. Regardless of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985 and similar local policies, such as the National Gender Policy of 2006, inequality still exists due to increasing cultural and structural challenges.



Nigeria is ranked 123rd out of 146 countries on the 2022 global gender gap index, which considers the gender gap between women and men in four key areas: health, education, economy and politics. Discrimination against young women exists at all levels of society.

Gender Bias in Education



Over the past decades, improving gender equality in education has become a prominent topic in Africa. While progress has been made in recent years, girls in Africa still face significant barriers to accessing education. According to UNICEF, 9.5 million girls in sub-Saharan Africa will never set foot in a classroom, and only 8% of girls complete secondary school.

There are so many disparities between the education that boys and girls receive. Many girls do not have access to education after a certain age. In fact, the Nigerian girl-child faces significant obstacles in accessing proper education because of inherent traditional societal values placed on the boy-child over the girl-child. Most girls are married off or sent to hawk or trade as these are seen as immediate investment returns. As a result, as of 2015, the female adult literacy rate (ages 15 and above) for the country was at 49.68% in comparison to that of males which was at 69.2% with a gender difference of 19.5% according to the World Bank collection of development indicators. Such a gap in literacy was precipitated by differences in education.

Gender Disparities In Politics

Women are underrepresented in political leadership positions in Africa, with only 24% of parliamentarians in sub-Saharan Africa being women, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

In Nigeria, women have been and are still being underrepresented in government even though they make up 50 per cent of Nigeria's population. Even with the affirmative action of 35% representation of women in political and non-elective positions in Nigeria, the number of women in the legislative houses is not encouraging as a result of the patriarchal dominance of men. In the elective positions in Nigeria since 1999, it is evident that women have not reached 10% representation. For example, the number of women elected and appointed to Assemblies continues to decline over the years; with 10 per cent in 2006, 6 per cent in 2010 and 5.4% in 2015.

Female Members of Nigeria Representative in 2023 elections

Senatorial

92
are women
out of **1019**
candidates

House Of Representatives

286
are women
out of **3107**
candidates

Presidential

1
woman out
of **18**
candidates

The importance of women in the scheme of things, governance inclusive, can never be over-emphasised, as witnessed in the many roles they take on at the immediate and extended family levels.

Child Marriage And Other Forms Of Gender-based Violence

Gender-based violence is a serious issue in Africa, with one in three women experiencing physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, according to the World Health Organization. In addition, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) remains a widespread practice in many parts of Africa, with an estimated 24 million girls at risk of being cut by 2030, according to UNICEF.

Although in Nigeria, the federal Child Rights Act (CRA, 2003) prohibits marriage below the age of 18, the Nigerian constitution contains provisions which appear to conflict with this position. States with Islamic legal systems have also failed to adopt federal law and 18 as the age of majority for marriage. Some southern states which have adopted this position have failed to take adequate steps to carry it out. It is quite sad that Nigeria's rates of child marriage are some of the highest on the African continent.

The Nigerian government has obligations under African and international human rights law to protect children from being forced into marriage. However, Nigeria's federal and state laws hold contradictory positions on protecting children from marriage and violent traditional practices. The federal Child Rights Act adopted in Nigerian law bans child marriage as required under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. But a conflicting clause in Section 29(4)(b) of Nigeria's Constitution defines any married female as having reached the age of majority, regardless of her age at marriage.

Eleven of Nigeria's 36 states have yet to adopt the Child Rights Act. Customary and Islamic laws in several northern states also permit traditional harmful practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation, despite Nigeria's commitment to key international human rights treaties. Recent reports show that in some northern states, 78 per cent of girls marry before the age of 18.

Poor Access to Healthcare



Women and girls in Africa face significant health disparities, including higher rates of maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, and other infectious diseases. For example, according to UNAIDS, young women in sub-Saharan Africa are up to 14 times more likely to be infected with HIV than young men.

According to the Journal of Global Health Reports, 1 in 22 Nigerian women die during pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum, or post-abortion, in contrast to developed countries where the ratio is estimated at 1 in 4,900. Nigeria accounts for nearly 20% of global maternal deaths. It is also among the five countries with the highest number of maternal deaths.

Digging Deeper

Can you think of other challenges women and girls face?

Have you ever witnessed a girl/women being harrassed/bullied or abused?

The 17 Sustainable Development Goal



The 17 Sustainable Development Goals were created in 2015 by the United Nations to end poverty and protect the planet. All 193 United Nations Member States agreed to achieve these goals by 2030. The 17 interdependent goals are broken down into 169 targets. At the global level, progress is monitored and reviewed using a set of 232 indicators.

How Does Sustainable Development Relate To Women's Equality?



The needs and rights of girls are encapsulated in Goal 5: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and cut across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Sustainable Development Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality by 2030 by ending all forms of discrimination and violence targeted towards women and girls both in public and private. It also calls for the full participation of women and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of political and economic decision-making. Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is integral to each of the 17 goals... Only by ensuring the rights of women and girls across all the goals will we get justice and inclusion, economies that work for all, and sustain our shared environment now and for future generations.

**SDG
GOAL 5**



SDG 5.1

End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

SDG 5.2

Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

SDG 5.3

Eliminate all harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

SDG 5.4

Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

SDG 5.5

Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

SDG 5.6

Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

Digging Deeper

How are gender roles and responsibility divided in your family and community?

How are women expected to act, speak, dress and conduct themselves your family and community?

Advocacy Is About



- Amplifying people's voices when they speak about the issues that affect them.
- Building evidence on what needs to change and how that change can happen.
- Changing perceptions, showing people that there are new ways to look at an issue and change is possible.
- Positive change in society toward greater social justice and equality.
- Influencing people with power and changing how they think and act.

Most importantly, Advocacy is about
SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

Essentially, Advocacy is about wanting to **Create policies where they are needed** when none exist, trying to **Reform harmful or ineffective policies** and **Ensuring good policies are implemented and enforced**.

How Do We Advocate

TIPS

- Get informed and stay up-to-date on the issues you want to advocate on.
- Be open to everyone's opinions, even if they are different from your own. Listen and reflect.
- Interrupt sexism when you see it. Speak out and encourage others to do the same.

Levels Of Advocacy



Local Level



Participatory advocacy planning is sometimes easiest at the community, neighbourhood, or city level, where face-to-face interaction is not complicated by distance.

Regional Level



Advocacy planning at the regional level involves communication between participants at different levels, with timelines that allow for cross-border discussions and decision-making. The Internet is often a useful tool for regional advocacy planning, but organizers must ensure that groups without Internet access are adequately informed and able to provide input.

National Level



Advocacy planning at the national level typically involves coordinating with various organizations that act as intermediaries for local and community-based groups. National advocates depend on these allies to stay connected with local groups and engage them in activities such as analysis, planning, and decision-making.

Global Level



Like regional planning, global processes need to coordinate and provide information and feedback to the different players so that the final planning decisions include input from all levels. This input is crucial since some partners will be taking on greater risks than others. Their opinions need to be included to avoid unnecessary danger. Internet access is usually crucial for this level of work.

Story Time

Hyelni's story of being an amazing advocate in Nigeria. Advocating for the rights of women...

Hyelni grew up in a small village in Northern Nigeria where she witnessed firsthand the discrimination and oppression faced by women and girls. Despite the challenges she faced, Hyelni was determined to make a difference and fight for the rights of women and girls in her community.

After completing her education, Hyelni started working with a local non-governmental organization (NGO) that focused on women's rights. She started by organizing community meetings to educate women and girls about their rights and encouraging them to speak out against any form of discrimination or violence.

Hyelni's work soon caught the attention of other NGOs and international organizations, who invited her to speak at conferences and seminars on women's rights. Through her powerful speeches and advocacy work, Hyelni became a well-known advocate for women's rights in Nigeria.

One of Hyelni's most significant achievements was her work to end female genital mutilation (FGM) in her community. Despite facing opposition from traditional leaders and others who believed FGM was a necessary rite of passage, Hyelni continued to raise awareness about the harms of the practice and worked to provide alternative rites of passage that did not involve cutting.

Hyelni's advocacy work has also focused on ending child marriage and promoting access to education for girls. She has worked with community leaders, parents, and teachers to create safe spaces for girls to learn and grow without fear of discrimination or violence.

Today, Hyelni continues to fight for the rights of women and girls in Nigeria and beyond. She believes that every woman and girl deserves the right to live a life free from discrimination, violence, and oppression, and she will stop at nothing to make that a reality.



Hyelni is phenomenal and guess what? you can be like Hyelni..

Story Time

Once upon a time, in Ghana, there was a young man named Kwame who had a passion for advocating for the rights of women and girls in his community. Growing up, he witnessed gender inequality and discrimination that women faced in his community, from limited access to education and healthcare to early marriage and forced labour.

Despite societal norms that discouraged men from advocating for women's rights, Kwame remained committed to his cause. He started by volunteering at a local organization that provided education and healthcare services to women and girls, and soon became a vocal advocate for gender equality in his community.

Kwame worked tirelessly to raise awareness about the importance of education for girls and the dangers of child marriage. He organized community meetings, engaged local leaders, and collaborated with other advocates to push for policy changes that would protect the rights of women and girls.

Despite facing resistance from some members of his community, Kwame remained steadfast in his mission, knowing that change would not come overnight. He continued to educate and empower women and girls and inspire other young men to join him in the fight for gender equality.

Over time, Kwame's efforts began to pay off. More girls were staying in school, fewer were getting married at a young age, and more women were taking on leadership roles in their communities. Kwame's advocacy had a ripple effect, inspiring others to take action and driving meaningful change.

Through his tireless efforts and dedication to the cause, Kwame became a respected leader and role model in his community. He showed that young men can play a vital role in advocating for women's rights and advancing gender equality. Kwame's legacy continues to inspire others to work towards a more just and equitable world for all.



Kwame is phenomenal and guess what? you can be like Kwame...

How Can You Advocate?



1

Research the issue at hand. What are the key questions, and which answers should be given? As an advocate, you'll need to be passionate about your cause and clear about what you want.

2

Forge and build alliances in the widest sense. There is power in numbers. Working with others who share the same interests and goals as you is an effective way to advocate for your issue. It is also a good strategy for getting key decision-makers to listen to your message – more voices mean a louder message!

3

Set clear goals and expectations. What do you want out of the advocacy, what is the result you want to achieve?

4

Develop an action plan and time schedule.

5

Get Started!!

You Are Not Alone!

TIPS



Collaborative problem-solving leads to better outcomes. Working with others who share the same interests and goals as you is an effective way to advocate for your issue. It is also a good strategy for getting key decision-makers to listen to your message – more voices mean a louder message! You can start by finding out what advocacy groups already exist in your community and joining their campaigns.

Building A Foundation For Your Advocacy



Analyze Policies And Political Institutions

Ask yourself questions like What do you know about policies in your sectors of interest? Who are the key policymakers and where do they work? How does the government view your issue?

Understand The Political Environment

Ask yourself questions like what are some laws/policies concerning your issue? Who are respected or powerful groups in politics? Has news about your issue been featured in the media in the last two years? Are other organizations/interest groups currently conducting advocacy or organizing in support of your issue? Are there active alliances/coalitions that are currently addressing or have the potential to address your issue?

Understand Community Concerns

What are key community policy concerns? Will your intervention be beneficial for the members of the community?

Let's Advocate Now, Shall We...



By now you will have done some research on the situation in your community. You will have an idea of some of the challenges that girls and young women face. Once you have done fact-finding to learn more about the issue, and connected with some like-minded people, it is time to think about how to transform your passion into action and get the ball rolling.

Think about what you want to see change and set a goal for your advocacy work. This way, it will be easier for you to figure out your goal, and develop a plan for reaching it. Here are some ideas for creating a plan of action, or an advocacy campaign, either on your own or with others:

Set S.M.A.R.T Goals



Make a goal and be as specific as possible about it so that you know exactly what you want to achieve, and when. When drafting your goal, try to answer some "W" questions:



Now that you are getting some clarity, ensure that your advocacy goals are S.M.A.R.T

Specific : Be specific about what you want to accomplish with your advocacy campaign. Specific goals help to focus efforts and resources, making it easier to track progress and determine success

Measurable : It is imperative to have measurable goals to track your progress and stay motivated. This way, it is much easier to track progress.

Attainable: It is ok to want to solve the entire problems in the world but remember, you must be realistic and ensure that your goal is within reach.

Relevant: You need to ask yourself if your objective is relevant and whether it will really have an impact.

Time-bound: Set a deadline for your goal!

Exercise:



Can you categorise these goals into SMART and Not SMART goals? What are the reasons for your answer?

- ★ Stop child trafficking
- ★ Get the gender bill signed into law before the 2023 elections
- ★ Set up safe spaces for women in nigeria
- ★ Win Our Fight Against Gender-based Violence

Need Help in Strategic Advocacy Planning?

TIPS

These questions should help..

- What do I want to achieve?
- Who Can help?
- How can I get through to them?
- What do I need to develop?
- How do we begin?
- How will we know if its working or not?
- How do we track our progress and success?

Build Your Advocacy Plan

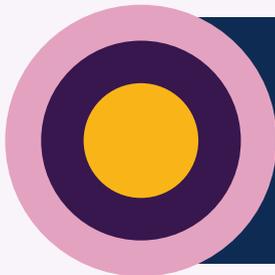


You have to ensure that your advocacy plan is loaded with evidence. This is important because evidence provides legitimacy to advocacy. If your evidence is credible decision-makers take what you have to say seriously. You should gather both qualitative and quantitative information to support your advocacy strategy and its messaging. There are a number of different techniques that you can use to gather evidence, including but not limited to surveys and opinion polls; focus group discussions; key informant interviews; desk research on legal frameworks and key cases; and community consultations. You could talk to the people directly affected by the issue you are working on and gather stories from them to complement the data you've found.

Struggling to find some Gender Equality Issues you can advocate for? **Let's help you...**



Improving Women's Access to Health Care:



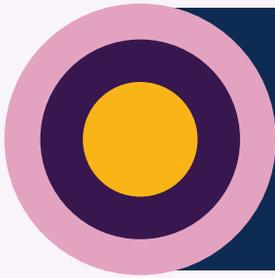
You can campaign for policies that improve women's access to health care, including reproductive health care and family planning services. You can also work to reduce maternal mortality rates and improve access to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment in your respective communities.

Ending Violence Against Women:



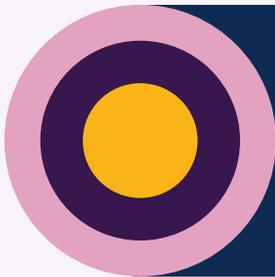
You can campaign for laws and policies that protect women from gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and female genital mutilation. Raising awareness about the issue and providing support services to survivors is also a great way to push for this agenda.

Increasing Women's Access to Education:



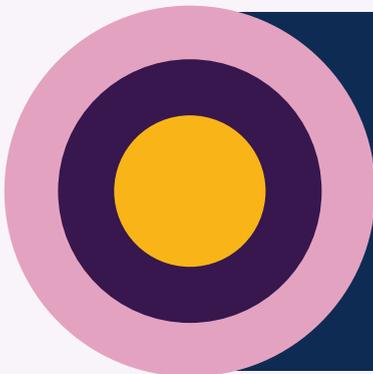
You can campaign for policies that promote girls' education, including free and compulsory education, scholarships, and mentoring programs. You can also work to reduce gender-based discrimination in schools within your community and increase the number of female teachers.

Promoting Women's Political :



You can campaign for laws and policies that promote women's participation in politics, including quotas, equal representation, and support for female candidates. You can also Promote community and sports programs that foster leadership skills for girls and women.

Empowering Women Economically:



As an advocate, you can campaign for policies that promote women's economic empowerment, including access to credit, training, and entrepreneurship programs. You can also start a project to enable girls in senior secondary schools to enhance their vocational skills while involving the girls, their teachers, parents and community leaders in discussions on women's empowerment-related topics.

Addressing Harmful Cultural Practices:



You can campaign to eliminate harmful cultural practices, including child marriage, widowhood rites, and female genital mutilation. Working to promote positive cultural practices that support gender equality and women's rights through sensitization programs while leveraging online and offline media tools is a great way to campaign for women and girls.

Explore Patterns of Influence

Who Can Make Change Happen?

Once you know what you want to see changed, the next step is to assess stakeholder interests in the issue and how it impacts your advocacy. Stakeholders are people or organisations that either stand to be affected by the proposed policy or reform or can influence those who are making the policy. This group of people can make or break your entire process. Gaining the support of groups that influence key decision-makers makes your advocacy effort stronger.

Stakeholder Analysis

A stakeholder analysis is the process of identifying your project stakeholders and the impact they might have on your project. Simple right? However, Stakeholder analysis may generate a lengthy list of stakeholders. It is now important to prioritise because time may not allow you to work with all stakeholders. As such, it is important to consider who should be the focus of your project. Now the big question is how then can we prioritise?

Stakeholder prioritisation can be achieved by using a key stakeholder prioritisation matrix, as presented below. In using this, first, brainstorm a list of stakeholders by asking who stands to lose or gain significantly from the policy and whose actions could affect the policy's success



- These are the stakeholders who have the greatest interest and influence on the project. You want to keep them abreast and constantly ask for their feedback.
- This group isn't quite as interested, but they're influential. They also need regular updates and you want to get feedback from them before making any final decisions.
- These people tend to be the users of the project and have less influence but are highly interested.
- There is less influence and interest in this group, but keep them on your radar and make sure they don't miss any major changes.

While dealing with Stakeholders, it is important to have it at the back of your mind that corruption is devastating economies in Africa and this is the right time to hold Government Officials to Account. Corruption is indeed a significant challenge for many African economies, with negative impacts on economic growth, social development, and political stability. It undermines the rule of law, erodes public trust in government, and distorts the allocation of resources.

These challenges mostly have to do with political corruption, petty bribery, money laundering schemes, embezzlement, and corruption in development assistance. The list is inexhaustible. Added to this is land corruption which affects women the most. Furthermore, gender-based corruption, usually rooted in culture is hardly ever reported to superiors in the workplace due to fear of retaliation or other consequences. For example, in Zimbabwe, up to 57.5% of surveyed women indicated that they had experienced sextortion in different sectors of the community.

Holding government officials to account is essential for addressing corruption and promoting transparency and accountability in government. It requires a concerted effort from governments, civil society, You as a Gender Advocate, citizens, and the international community to create a culture of transparency, accountability, and good governance.

TIPS



It is important to consider gender equality stakeholders at the local level, including representatives from national and local authorities, civil society organisations and experts.

Exercise:



- Take a moment to think about a specific issue or advocacy goal that you are interested in.
- Using the information provided in the text, identify the stakeholders related to your chosen issue. Think about individuals, organizations, or groups that can either be impacted by the proposed policy/reform or have the ability to influence decision-makers.
- Once you have brainstormed a list of stakeholders, consider their level of interest in the issue and the potential impact they can have on your advocacy efforts.
- Use the stakeholder prioritization above to assess and prioritize the stakeholders.
- Using the stakeholder prioritization matrix, categorize the stakeholders from your list into the respective quadrants based on their level of interest and influence.
- Reflect on the stakeholders in each quadrant and consider the best approach to engage and involve them in your advocacy efforts.

NOTE

Remember that stakeholder prioritization is a dynamic process, and as your advocacy progresses, the level of interest and influence may change. Regularly reassessing and updating your stakeholder analysis is essential for effective advocacy.

Members Of The Community Are Powerful Stakeholders



It is very important to include community knowledge in the design and implementation of your advocacy strategies. By informing the community about your approach and by carrying them along, you are simply encouraging them to get involved and take ownership. Remember, it is the responsibility of everyone to hold the government accountable.

Here Are Some Ways To Engage Community Members:

1. Identify the community's needs and concerns:

Start by identifying the issues that the community cares about. Conduct surveys, hold meetings, and engage in conversations with community members to understand their needs and concerns.

2. Build relationships:

Building relationships with community members is essential for creating trust and building a sense of community. Reach out to local organizations, community leaders, and other groups to establish connections.

3. Communicate effectively:

Use clear, concise, and relatable language when communicating with community members.

4. Empower community members:

Empower community members by giving them the tools and resources they need to take action. Provide training sessions, volunteer opportunities, and educational materials.

5. Organize events:

Organize events such as town hall meetings, rallies, marches, or community forums to bring people together and raise awareness about the issue at hand.

6. Collaborate with other groups:

Collaborate with other community organizations, advocacy groups, and activists to create a stronger and more unified movement.

7. Recognize and appreciate their efforts

Community Dos and Don'ts

- Forge connections within the community.
- Do learn as much as you can about members of the community you are going to work with.
- Dress professionally for the occasion and appropriately to the local culture.
- Be polite and kind. Respect others even if they have a different opinion.
- Don't make promises you can't deliver.
- Request permission to interview, film or photograph a community member, an event, or an edifice.
- Always ask if your interviewee wants his or her name public or anonymous.
- Consult a variety of sources in rural communities - The chief, head of community, traditional ruler peculiar to the community, youth group, women group, head of facility (Principal, Head of Medicals, Contractors).
- Be clear on what we are asking for.
- Keep it simple and focused.
- Use positive language.

TIPS



Effective community engagement is built on trust, respect, integrity and transparency

Working with Media as a powerful tool for advocac

Media can be just the right tool for advocacy, allowing you to spread your messages to a wide audience and raise awareness about important issues. Media can help you create awareness and influence public opinion on the importance of gender equality for everyone in society and the role of young men as gender equality advocates or allies in ending Gender Based Violence.

Media has a way of pressurizing the government to provide and implement laws, policies and practices to achieve gender equality.

Here Are Some Tips For Using Media As A Tool For Advocacy

1. Identify Your Target Audience:



Before using media for advocacy, it's important to identify your target audience. Who are you trying to reach? What message do you want to convey to them? Knowing your audience will help you tailor your message and choose the most effective media channels.

2. Develop A Clear Message:



Your advocacy message should be clear, concise, and compelling. It should convey your message in a way that resonates with your target audience and inspires them to take action.

3. Choose The Right Media Channels:



There are many different types of media channels, including traditional media (such as television, radio, and print), social media, and online platforms. Choose the channels that are most likely to reach your target audience and that align with your message.

4. Use Storytelling:



Stories can be a powerful way to engage people emotionally and make your advocacy message more relatable. Use personal stories, case studies, and testimonials to illustrate your point and make your message more compelling.

Leveraging Community Radio



Community radio promotes communication and information sharing and spurs sustainable social change and development on a local level.

Here are some ways you can use community radio as a tool for advocacy

Create engaging programming in local dialects: Once you know your target audience and understand their preferred language of communication, you can start creating programming that speaks to their concerns and interests in the specific language. This might include interviews with local activists, reports on important issues, or stories that highlight the impact of certain policies or practices on local communities.

Partner with local organizations: To amplify your message and reach a wider audience, consider partnering with local organizations that are also working on the issue you're advocating for. By working together, you can share resources and leverage each other's networks to increase awareness and build momentum.

Encourage listener participation: Community radio is a two-way communication platform, so it's important to encourage listener participation. You can do this by inviting listeners to call in and share their thoughts or experiences, or by hosting events that bring listeners and community leaders together to discuss important issues.

Measure your reach; Finally, it's important to measure the impact of your advocacy efforts on community radio. This can include tracking the number of listeners, monitoring engagement on social media, and tracking any policy changes or community actions that result from your programming.

Define Your Message



A well-formulated message is essential to reaching the right audiences and can be the basis for a successful advocacy campaign. An advocacy message should have an informational component that explains your goals and objectives for your audience. Let your message convince your target audience that your policy issue is important and requires a timely response.

Throughout your advocacy campaign, you will likely meet directly with policymakers to advocate for your cause and deliver recommendations. It is important to note that Policymakers can be busy people with a short attention span. Therefore your message needs to be concise, clear and easy to remember. Note that the SDGs provide an incredible opportunity in itself to advocate with the governments to achieve gender equality by 2030.

A good message is:

Clear | Compelling | To the point | Personal | Easy to remember | Repeated frequently



1.

Strong key messages which describe the issue you are trying to address and the audience you are trying to reach



2.

Suggested solutions to fix the issue.

3.

A personal story to show how people are affected by the issue.

Exercise:

Here are some tips to help you craft effective key messages

Keep it simple: Use clear, concise language that is easy to understand. Avoid technical jargon or complex explanations that might confuse your audience.

Focus on the problem: Your key messages should clearly describe the issue you are trying to address. Use facts, figures, and examples to illustrate the severity of the problem

You can use the lines below to write your problem messages:

1.

2.

TIPS

- Be specific:** Your messages should be specific and targeted to the audience you are trying to reach. Use language that resonates with your audience and reflects their values and concerns.
- Highlight the solution:** Your key messages should also highlight the solution or action you are advocating for. Clearly describe what needs to be done and why it is important.

Exercise:



You can use the lines below to write your solutions:

1.

2.

TIPS



Keep it positive While it's important to highlight the severity of the problem, your key messages should also be positive and hopeful. Focus on the progress that can be made and the benefits of taking action.



Use emotional appeals: Emotions can be a powerful motivator for action. Use stories, personal anecdotes, or other emotional appeals to connect with your audience and help them understand the impact of the issue.

Now Let's Get A Little Personal ...



Sharing personal stories can be a powerful way to raise awareness about an issue and mobilize support for a cause as it can help to humanize an issue and make it more relatable to others.

It is important to be authentic and genuine when sharing personal stories and to focus on how the issue impacts individuals and communities. You can share your own personal story or you can speak about your experience as a friend or family member of someone who was directly impacted. If you don't have a direct connection to the issue, find someone who has and ask them to share their story!

Well, we know how important it is to get inspired and hear personal stories and journeys of other advocates like your selves and so we collected a series of interviews that were conducted by The Global Feminisms Project (GFP) to share with you! The Global Feminisms Project (GFP) collects interviews with women's movement activists and women's studies scholars from sites around the world.



Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi

is a Nigerian lawyer and civil rights activist. She is the founding Director of the Women Advocates Research and Documentation Center (WARDC), a non-governmental maternal and reproductive health advocacy organization whose major objective is to promote women's rights, human rights, governance and rule of law.



Jiling Duan

is a feminist activist and a former editor and journalist whose long-term goal is to promote women's rights and gender equality in China and worldwide through combining academic research with teaching, advocating, and facilitating transnational feminist movements.



Sigrid Metz-Goeckel

is a German sociologist, political scientist and social psychologist specializing in women's and gender studies as well as educational research and university didactics.



Hyeladzira Mshelia

is a Programs Associate at Connected Development (CODE) focusing on gender equality, environmental sustainability, and climate action projects in Africa. She plays a crucial role in promoting transparency and accountability in governance through citizen engagement. With a background in environmental biology, Hyeladzira leads campaigns addressing women and girls' issues and was selected as a Twink Frey Visiting Social Activist at the Center for the Education of Women (CEW+) University of Michigan. She is part of the Climate Reality Leadership Corps and actively engages in policy development as a Global Shaper with the Abuja hub. Hyeladzira has experience in data storytelling and advocacy for non-profit organizations and has been featured on international platforms discussing discrimination and inequality.



Amali Tower

is an experienced humanitarian and human rights professional and Founder of Climate Refugees with experience protecting the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced populations in refugee camps and urban contexts all around the world. She is a skilled advocate and campaigner who has fought for the rights of displaced people, refugee and asylum protections, resettled refugees, written and passed legislation to curb the cruel practice of immigration detention and deployed to hardship and remote field locations.

A Good Advocacy Message For All Stakeholders

TIPS

- Develop diverse messages for your different stakeholders and work to refine them. Know your messages well and how to support them with the evidence you have gathered. Advocacy messages should be clear, consistent and ideally succinct.

Now Let's Convey Our Message...



Having crafted your advocacy message, the next step is to reach out to your audience. Identify which modes of communication would be most effective with each group as there are so many tools available for communicating messages. Let's look at these tools now, shall we...

Elevator Pitch

This is a perfect way of delivering your advocacy message when at a meeting or speaking engagement especially when you only have someone's attention for a minute or two, and you need to be able to share a quick and memorable "pitch" about your advocacy. Keep your elevator speech short and direct, aiming to deliver your message in 60 seconds or less.

Here are some questions to answer that will help you develop your elevator pitch:

Who are you? | What do you do? | What do you want to achieve?

How do you want to address it?

Your goal is to focus on the essentials.

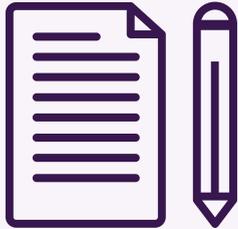
Remember that presentation style matters. Be audible, know your topic, your message, and the arguments for and against the change you want to see.

TIPS



When planning to speak in public, you should practice, and have confidence, know your audience, prepare your message, practice your delivery, use visual aids, and be engaging and respectful. Be brief and to the point, a long, rambling speech will lose your audience. Lastly, find the right flow and speed, and articulate (don't mumble). Breathe!

Petitions.



As simple as this sounds, petitions are highly effective in advocacy. Imagine getting a collection of signatures from people who support a change to bring attention to issues that might not otherwise receive attention. Isn't this a fantastic way to raise awareness about an issue and can generate interest and support from others? The more signatures a petition has, the more attention it will receive, increasing the likelihood of achieving the desired outcome.

Additionally, Petitions can help to build a community of like-minded individuals who are passionate about a specific cause. This can create a sense of solidarity and encourage people to work with you to achieve your goals. For guidance on how to put together an effective petition, visit: www.change.org otherwise use the template below.

Write Your Legislators



Another way to galvanise citizens to lend their voices for a particular cause is to encourage them to write their legislators. Where mail fails, they write, call or send an SMS. Letters should be short and limited to one issue. Legislative aides read many letters on many issues in a day, so your letter should be as concise as possible. It is also important to personalize your letters. Tell your elected official why this legislation matters in his community or state.

ONLINE CAMPAIGNING



This means using web-based tools and approaches to communicate to your target audience. As an advocate, you have one of the most powerful tools at your fingertips. Social media is readily available and an outstanding driving force for advocacy. Remember to use hashtags. It makes it easier to find information with a theme or specific content while helping drive engagement to target audiences.

Some social media platforms are

Facebook | Twitter | LinkedIn | YouTube | Instagram etc

Dos:

Be authentic: Share your personal experiences and connect with others in a genuine way

Stay positive: Focus on the positive aspects of your cause and inspire others to get involved

Use hashtags: Use relevant hashtags to help people find your posts and join the conversation

Engage with others: Respond to comments, share with other people's content, and collaborate with like-minded individuals and organizations

Provide resources: Share helpful resources, such as articles, videos, and infographics, to educate others about your cause

Donts

Use offensive language: Avoid using offensive language or slurs that could offend others and harm your cause

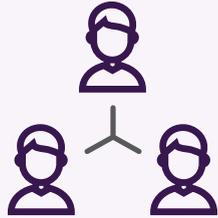
Be too aggressive: Avoid attacking individuals or groups who disagree with you. Instead, focus on engaging in constructive dialogue

Spread false information: Ensure that the information you share is accurate and fact-based

Overwhelm your followers: Avoid posting too frequently, which can lead to followers tuning out or unfollowing you

Ignore feedback: Be open to feedback and criticism, and use it to improve your advocacy efforts

Town Hall Meetings



This is an easy and effective way for people to get face-to-face interaction with decision-makers. This direct access breaks down barriers, builds relationships, and improves transparency. Always remember to invite other key stakeholders during this activity. Stakeholders such as influential members of the community and the media. Lastly, plan to follow a schedule, gather feedback and stay true to your cause.

Lobbying



This is a valuable tool in advocacy that can help to promote change and advance the interests of marginalized communities. It is a way for individuals or organizations to advocate for specific issues or causes and to try to influence the decisions of those who have the power to make changes. When done effectively, lobbying can help to build strong relationships, develop persuasive arguments, and communicate key messages to decision-makers and stakeholders.

Digging Deeper

Through out your advocacy journey, ensure you are reflecting on the following;

- Am I achieving my set objectives?
- What is going on well and what isn't?
- What can I do better?

Following Up On Your Advocacy Message



Monitoring and following up on your advocacy message is an ongoing process that requires regular assessment and adjustment. This process allows you to track the progress of your advocacy efforts, assess the impact of your messages, and adjust your strategy as needed.

What to scrutinize?

- Did my actions get a reaction?
- Did the reaction achieve my desired result?
- What worked and what didn't?
- What should I have done differently?
- Were there unexpected outcomes?

Here are some ways to monitor and follow up on your advocacy message

SET GOALS AND INDICATORS:



It is important to set clear goals and indicators to measure the success of your advocacy efforts. This may involve setting targets for policy changes, shifts in public opinion, or changes in the behaviour of decision-makers. Identify specific indicators that will help you track progress towards your goals, such as the number of meetings with decision-makers, media coverage, or social media engagement.

TRACK MEDIA COVERAGE:



Monitor media coverage of your advocacy message to assess how it is being received by the public and decision-makers. This may involve tracking media mentions, social media posts, and online discussions related to your issue. You can also use media monitoring tools to track sentiment and identify key influencers in your issue area.

ENGAGE DECISION-MAKERS:



Continue to engage decision-makers and stakeholders to assess their understanding of your advocacy message and to identify any barriers to action. This may involve regular meetings with decision-makers, public hearings, or other forums where you can engage decision-makers directly.

EVALUATE THE IMPACT OF YOUR MESSAGE:



Conduct regular evaluations of your advocacy message to assess its impact and identify areas for improvement. This may involve surveys, focus groups, or other forms of feedback from decision-makers, stakeholders, and the public.

COLLECTING STORIES:



Collect personal stories of change in young women's lives through face-to-face feedback or online. Make sure you get consent.

ADJUST YOUR STRATEGY:



Use the information gathered through monitoring and follow-up to adjust your advocacy strategy as needed. This may involve refining your advocacy message, identifying new stakeholders, or adjusting your tactics based on the feedback received.

Partnering With Young Men And Boys For Gender Equality...



Partnering with men and boys for gender equality is crucial in promoting systemic change, creating more inclusive communities, and ensuring that everyone has a stake in creating a more just and equitable world.

Why is this important?

- Men and boys are often the primary beneficiaries of patriarchal structures and traditional gender norms. They are also often the perpetrators of gender-based violence and discrimination. Partnering with men and boys is therefore critical in challenging and transforming these structures and norms.
- Men and boys can be powerful advocates for gender equality. By speaking out against gender-based violence and discrimination, and promoting positive messages about gender equality, men and boys can help to create change within their communities and beyond.
- Partnering with men and boys can also help to create more sustainable and long-lasting change. By engaging men and boys in gender equality initiatives, we can ensure that they are invested in and committed to creating a more equitable and just world and that they will continue to promote gender equality even after specific programs or initiatives have ended.

How can we do this?

- By engaging young men and boys as allies and advocates for gender equality. This can involve educating them about the benefits of gender equality, as well as the negative impacts of gender-based discrimination and violence.
- Provide young men and boys with safe spaces to discuss and explore issues related to gender and equality. This can include workshops, discussion groups, and mentorship programs.
- Encouraging young men and boys to challenge traditional gender norms and roles that reinforce patriarchy and inequality. This can include promoting positive expressions of masculinity that are not based on dominance or aggression and encouraging men to be allies and supporters of women's empowerment.

Let's Take A Break From The World And Focus On Ourselves



Advocacy can be a challenging and often thankless task, and it can be difficult to maintain the motivation and energy required to continue advocating over the long term. While we are trying to change the world, we need to remember the 2-Ss, 2-Fs and 1R.

2-F **ocus on progress**
inding allies

2-S **elf-care in Advocacy**
afety in Advocacy

1-R **emind yourself**
about the Why

F **ocus on the progress...**
You are doing great!

Even if the change is slow, it's important to remember that every small step is still a step ahead. Celebrate the victories, no matter how small they may be. Do not be too hard on yourself, your mistakes are part of your learning. Learn to be resilient in the face of failure.

F **ind and Connect with Allies...**
you are not alone dear Advocate!

Building relationships with individuals or organisations who share your values and goals can help amplify your message and increase your impact like-wise surrounding yourself with like-minded individuals who share your passion and goals can provide a sense of community and support.

Because we know how it feels to connect with other like-minded people. we have some advice/ encouraging words from other advocates/ individuals as you begin your advocacy journey!



Letter From
**Jake Okechukwu Effoduh/
Nigeria.**

You are strong, capable, and valuable beyond measure. You have unique talents, passions, and perspectives that make you an essential part of this world. Please don't let anyone or anything make you feel less than you are. Believe in yourself, love yourself, and chase your dreams with passion and determination. Remember, the journey may not always be easy, but you have what it takes to overcome any obstacles that come your way. You are deserving of respect, kindness, and love, and never let anyone tell you otherwise. Keep shining your light bright, and never let anyone dim it.



Letter From
Liz DeBetta / USA

Advocacy is a refusal of silence. It is speaking into the void created by cultural and social conditioning. It is saying no to the pressure of marginalization. When our individual silences get too loud we find ways to speak. And in speaking truth to power we begin to claim an identity and forge connections with others who can say - "Yes, me too. I see you. I hear you. I am in solidarity with you." Advocacy is the first step in dismantling systems of oppression by saying the things that many would rather not hear.



Letter From
Blessing Tarfa / Nigeria

Your voice is needed if we must build our own Tower of Babel, a vantage point from where women and girls can explore the expanse of their dreams. The success of this is dependent on maintaining one voice in a united front to reach our goal. We are relying on you



Letter From
**Kenechukwu Ben-Umeh/
Nigeria**

When we are able to speak up, things change. There is never a change that is not mediated by people who gave their all to a just cause. Gender advocacy is this just cause and you are changing the narrative, no matter how slow or little it may seem.



Letter From
Lade Adunbi/ Michigan

The task of accomplishing gender equity in any society cannot be left to women alone. There is a correlation between economic and political prosperity and gender equity. Societies that accord women respect in all facets of life tend to do better than those that relegate women to the background.



Letter From
Udemeokono/ Nigeria

It will never be convenient to make the huge sacrifices that you're making for the sake of our communities. Notwithstanding, stay at it as history will remember you and your generation for it.



Letter From
Chimdi Neliaku/ Nigeria

Keep speaking up for the millions of women and girls who are told that they have nothing meaningful to contribute to national development. You are not just speaking up for them but for our collective future as a race, as we cannot have sustainable development without fully unleashing the power and potential of about half of the world's population.



Letter From
Anarris Monger/ Michigan

Every small step counts



Letter From
Shuwar Damak/ Nigeria

Sometimes, your voice may not seem loud enough but it's important to keep speaking. Every word uttered in favour of a cause matters, keep speaking until you are heard and change is implemented.

Self-care in Advocacy...

You deserve to take care of yourself!

Advocating for a cause can be emotionally and mentally taxing. Advocates often work long hours, face difficult challenges, and encounter resistance from decision-makers or other stakeholders. Without proper self-care, advocates can experience burnout, compassion fatigue, and other negative outcomes that can impact their effectiveness.

Strong, resilient advocates like you need to stop and take a break. Without rest, you will be significantly less effective. With self-care, you will feel better, have more energy, and be a better advocate for those around you. It's not selfish- it is you looking out for yourself!

What then is self-care?



Self-care refers to intentional actions that an individual takes to improve their physical, emotional, and mental well-being. It involves taking care of oneself in ways that promote relaxation, rest, and personal growth. Self-care can take many different forms, and there is no one "right" way to practice it. It is important for individuals to identify what self-care practices work best for them, and to incorporate those practices into their daily routines.

Some common examples of self-care practices include:

- Listen to your favourite music.
- Meditate
- Exercise (Go for a walk/ a run outdoors)
- Eat healthy and hydrate!
- Get adequate sleep and rest
- Engage in hobbies or creative pursuits
- Spend quality time with loved ones
- Seek professional help/ support when needed
- Consistency in self-care will create a cushion to better defend yourself against the chaos/ challenges you may encounter in your advocacy journey

Safety in Advocacy....

Make sure you are doing everything you can to be safe...

There are so many risks involved with being an advocate as such being safe while advocating requires a combination of preparation, awareness, and caution. As an Advocate, you may face physical harm, especially when advocating for sensitive issues such as human rights, Gender Inclusion, political freedom, and environmental protection. You may be threatened, attacked, or even killed for your beliefs and actions. You can also be exposed to legal repercussions, including arrest, imprisonment, or lawsuits, especially when advocating for controversial issues or challenging powerful individuals or institutions.

As Advocates, you may likely experience burnout due to the emotional and physical demands of advocating for a cause. This would cause you to experience frustration and disillusionment especially if you do not see immediate results from your efforts. It is important for you to be aware of the potential risks and to take appropriate steps to protect yourself while pursuing your goals.

TIPS

- **Be aware of your surroundings:** Being aware of your surroundings is crucial when advocating in the community. Always be alert to any potential dangers and stay in well-lit areas. If possible, avoid going alone and try to travel with a colleague or a friend.
- **Trust your instincts:** Trust your instincts and be prepared to act quickly if you feel threatened. If you sense danger, remove yourself from the situation and seek help immediately.
- **Have a backup plan:** Always have a backup plan in case something goes wrong. Let someone know where you are going, who you are meeting, and when you plan to return.
- **Stay up to date with local news:** Stay up to date with local news and events to stay informed about potential dangers and risks in the community.

Remember yourself why you're advocating

Keep the fire burning....

Remember why you started advocating in the first place can help reignite your passion and drive to continue. When you remind yourself of your purpose and why you're passionate about your cause, it can help rekindle your enthusiasm and motivate you to continue your efforts. You may also be able to see the bigger picture and understand the impact your advocacy can have on others. Remind yourself of what advocacy means to you!

We asked around and here is what people said advocacy means to them:

"It is about speaking out for the things that you have passion for and ensuring that things are working the way it is supposed to through your voice"



"Standing up for your rights"



"I see advocacy as an opportunity to stand out and speak up for important issues that are either not being addressed efficiently or totally neglected. Advocacy is simply putting humanity first"

"For me, advocacy is about using my voice and expertise to take action and support the things I believe and know can advance human rights and social justice for others. It is the expression of my deep commitment to human development, not as an expert but as a person willing to serve others, with a willingness to listen and learn, and a strategic approach to achieving a better living for others. Advocacy to me is beyond words and feelings. It takes the investment of time, effort, and resources towards a meaningful and lasting change in society"



"It is the simplest unit of service, yet it lays the strongest foundation"



"Advocacy means being part of a community with shared values. Advocacy is central to the ways in which the actualization of such values become a central goal of the community"



"Advocacy to me implies the use of my voice to fight for a cause in the interest of a marginalised group"



"Advocacy, is about creating positive change in your own little way"



"Advocacy, for me, is about finding and using one's voice to become empowered by breaking silences, establishing healthy boundaries, and learning to say no to systems and institutions of power and oppression that uphold the status quo. Advocacy is about identity, belonging, and acceptance - being heard and valued. It's about no longer being invisible and claiming space"



"Advocacy means using your voice to speak for the voiceless. It means speaking the truth even when it is unfashionable, unpopular or onerous"



"Advocacy means going beyond what you are expected to do to help someone else"



"Fighting to make a better tomorrow"

You Too Can Be An Advocate In Your Way!



While organizations and dedicated activists may be at the forefront of advocacy efforts, everyone can play a role in promoting causes they care about. There are several ways you can stand up for women and girls in small ways without necessarily going to the field to run a campaign. Here is some suggestion

EDUCATE YOURSELF:



One of the most important things you can do to stand up for women and girls is to educate yourself about the issues they face. This can involve reading books, watching documentaries, or following news outlets that focus on women's issues. By staying informed, you'll be better equipped to advocate for change

SPEAK UP:



If you hear someone making sexist or misogynistic comments, speak up and let them know that it's not acceptable. By calling out these behaviours, you're sending a message that you won't tolerate discrimination against women and girls

SUPPORT WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES:



By supporting women-owned businesses, you're helping to empower women economically. This can involve shopping at women-owned stores, buying products from women-owned brands, or supporting women entrepreneurs through crowdfunding platforms

MENTOR WOMEN AND GIRLS:



If you have expertise in a particular field, consider mentoring women and girls who are interested in pursuing similar careers. This can involve volunteering with organizations that support girls' education or simply reaching out to young women in your community who could benefit from your guidance

DONATE TO ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT WOMEN AND GIRLS:



Many organizations work to empower women and girls around the world, and donating to these organizations is a great way to make a difference. Do your research to find organizations that align with your values and goals, and consider making a recurring donation to support their work.

These are just a few examples of how you can stand up for women and girls in small ways.

Remember that every action counts and even small steps can make a big difference over time.

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