

# What is advocacy?

***"Advocacy is a process to bring about change in the policies, laws and practices of influential individuals, groups and institutions."***

Taken from an advocacy skills-building workshop for HIV/AIDS, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Zimbabwe, July 2001.

Advocacy is a process of change – a series of activities linked to a defined goal – and not just a one-off event. To be successful, advocates need to be clear from the beginning what change they want to bring about, what needs to occur to make that change happen, who (which key people) can make that change take place, and how they as advocates can work to influence those key people.

Advocacy encompasses the skills and activities employed by constituency groups to bring about change. It is an important part of the work of civil society as both 'influencer' and 'watchdog', effecting change in programmes and policy and ensuring governments and stakeholders keep to their word. When effectively planned and executed, advocacy can help shape the policy priorities and leverage much greater levels of financial support, in particular public sector finance.

## **Advocacy and ACSM**

To understand advocacy as a means of persuading influential people to change, it is important to make a distinction between advocacy and associated activities. ACSM is a term used frequently by the TB community. It stands for Advocacy, Communication and Social Mobilisation. Another term is IEC which stands for Information, Education and Communication.

IEC and SM are more about working with the general public or specific 'focus' groups of people. IEC's main objective is to raise awareness and change behaviour. The main objective of SM or community mobilisation is to build a community's capacity to identify its needs and take action to fulfil them.

To create a distinction between the three main activities is useful. In brief:

- **Advocacy** aims to secure needed financial resources and change policies, guidelines or procedures by influencing stakeholders such as politicians, decision-makers and journalists.
- **Communication** seeks to increase awareness, influence social behaviour, and create behavioural change among selected individuals, groups or subpopulations in the public. It can also improve interpersonal communication and counselling between people, their families and care providers.
- **Social mobilization** aims to change patterns of behaviour, improve services, expand community support and sometimes even solve social problems. Bringing groups together to act at a community level is a key activity of social mobilisation.

Although in many environments advocacy is not 'professionalised' and any one organisation may not have a person solely dedicated to advocacy work, it is still essential to programme work and to achieving overarching objectives. Many working in the TB field know of its important role in strengthening and invigorating country-responses to TB, in particular MDR-TB and TB/HIV. However, there is also a need to incorporate advocacy right across all TB work.

Advocacy has a key role to play in raising the sense of emergency in the context of MDR-TB; to increase demand for services to tackle TB and MDR-TB (more effective diagnostics, second-line drugs, infection control measures etc.), to ensure respect for human rights in the context of MDR-TB and more generally to accelerate action to deliver the Global Plan to Stop TB.