

How to be an Advocate

Pathfinder International

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is how we draw and sustain the attention of critical decision makers (national, state or local political figures or community leaders) on the issues we care about, with **the goal of getting these issues addressed in a way that benefits all of us**. When advocacy is successful, both the advocate (you!) and policy maker benefit.

Pathfinder practices “SMART advocacy” that focuses on actions that will have the biggest impact, in the near term. It then connects these “Quick Wins” with broader, long-term goals.

How do I become an advocate?

You’ve come to the right place! This is your step-by-step guide to SMART advocacy. We’ll help you get started advocating for issues you care about. For some quick ways to get involved in advocating for sexual and reproductive health and rights today, join us in Pathfinder’s Action Center. This starter guide goes even deeper and will help you build your own advocacy plan from the ground up.

Step 1: Find your Team

You don’t have to do this alone. Find the right organizations and people to work with on your advocacy. The more the merrier! Advocacy partners can come from anywhere to lend their expertise and bring unique perspectives. In general, try to build an advocacy strategy development team that includes:

- People with influence and access to those in power.
- People with a passion for your cause and the motivation to put in the work.
- Professionals with expertise in your issue area. These people can inform the development of policies and guide their implementation.
- Frontline advocates who can motivate champions and implement advocacy strategies.
- A facilitator who can lead positive discussions, mediate disagreement, and keep the group on track.

Set a SMART Objective

Specific	indicates what you will achieve and how
Measurable	framed with quantitative or qualitative descriptions of what success looks like
Attainable	is within reach (remember when we talked about Quick Wins?)
Relevant	contributes to the overall goal of your advocacy efforts – stay focused!
Time-bound	sets a specific date for achievement because you're looking for real change NOW!

Ask yourself:

- What do we hope to achieve in the long term?
- What are the short-term SMART objectives of our advocacy?

Identify the Decisionmaker

It is important to understand the decision-making process within the government or organization you're trying to influence. **Ask:**

- What is the decision-making process around the issue you want addressed?
- Who has the power to help get your issue is addressed?

Step 2: Get Focused

Look Around and Review the Context

- Are there planned events or policy decision points you can build your strategy around? Look for points in time where it makes the most sense to plug in with your advocacy.
- What opposition might you face?
- Is there competition for resources or attention that you might face?

Know your Decisionmakers

Dig in and research the decision maker's priorities. What are they talking about most right now? What types of issues do they generally support?

- What is their background? What are their core concerns?

Have they made any statements for or against your advocacy issue?

- Whose opinion do they seem to care most about?

Are they willing and able to speak up and act on issues they care about?

What's your Ask?

Find your "ask" and define your arguments to support it

- Rational arguments using facts and evidence
- Emotional arguments using evocative stories, videos, quotes, and photos
- Ethical arguments using a rights-based approach

Fatima Mateus Mazoio (left),
Teresa Belezarda (right)
Mozambique



Step 3: Make Change!

Develop a Work Plan

- WHO will take action?
- WHEN will they take action?
- WHAT resources do they need to take the action?

Mark your Milestones: Set Benchmarks for Success

- Outputs—Did you carry out all the advocacy activities in your work plan?
- Outcomes—Did you fulfill your SMART objectives and achieve a Quick Win?
- Impact—Did your Quick Win improve the situation for those who need and want access to sexual and reproductive health and rights?

Keep going! Implement and Assess

- What must happen next to get to your goal?
- Has your landscape changed? Is the next objective still correct?
- Should you reformulate your advocacy strategy?
- Should you add another objective?



Abertina Luis Chissano, Activist
Mozambique

Who is Pathfinder?

We are driven by the conviction that all people, regardless of where they live, have the right to decide whether and when to have children, to exist free from fear and stigma, and to lead the lives they choose. Pathfinder's success is thanks to dedicated advocates pushing for change in the communities where we work. For some effective ways to get involved in advocating for sexual and reproductive health and rights today, join us in Pathfinder's Action Center. Welcome to our community of advocates!