

**AGENTS FOR CITIZEN-DRIVEN
TRANSFORMATION (ACT)**

**ADVOCACY STRATEGY
DEVELOPMENT**



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PURPOSE

This Toolkit has been developed as a guideline to support CSOs to advocate for the rights of Nigerian civil society. It is relevant to those CSOs that are focusing on a specific advocacy issue and are considering developing an advocacy project, or looking to integrate advocacy activities into a wider development programme. This is not a plan and training manual or handbook, but aims to provide guidance to those CSOs who have some knowledge of advocating for change with their constituent communities.

A CSO may feel nervous about the language surrounding advocacy. It often feels too confrontational, instead it is important to remember that **advocacy is about creating greater impact and influence, by being strategic; it is based on good research and analysis, and building allies through communicating effective and targeted messages to key stakeholders.** In every case local experience and common sense should be applied – advocacy will always be more effective when it is culturally appropriate. Dealing with Government can seem intimidating, but remember that Nigeria is a democracy and citizens are entitled to play a part in the governance of your country – and it is your responsibility as a CSO.

There is often mystique around advocacy, which can lead to unease. Once you start the process this will fade, as effective research will lead to a good strategy. When starting to plan around advocacy, many people go straight to thinking about the actions or tactics, but the most important part of advocacy planning is the actual analysis: how change happens, who is involved, what your CSO's role is, when do you need to act? The diagram of the 'Value of the Advocacy Strategy' provides details of a route-map/tool that can also be used by CSOs to guide the process to develop an Advocacy Strategy.

The additional Tools provided should help to structure discussions and record analysis and learning and should help with critical thinking and planning, through the preparation of a well-considered *Risk Analysis and Stakeholder Analysis* and Mapping.

Following the preparation required in advance as outlined in both Advocacy Cycle and Strategy Tools, the *Advocacy Strategy Template*, for the CSO's completion for each advocacy issue, can help to plan for the Advocacy process.

In line with the ACT's commitment to Human Rights and Gender and Social Inclusion, it is anticipated that CSO's projects and plans demonstrate the mainstreaming of Gender and Social Inclusion and the adoption of a Rights-based Approach.

Definitions

Strategy can be defined as: The outline of Activities to be followed by a CSO in pursuit of its long-term Purpose, eg: where we are now, where we want to go and how we intend to get there.

It requires:

- An understanding of the CSO's resources and capacities
- An understanding of the external environment and the advocacy issue

The term '**advocacy**' is interpreted differently across languages and cultures. One helpful way to look at the concept is that advocacy refers to 'the actions individuals and organisations undertake to influence decision-making at local, state, national and international levels that help to create a desired policy change'.

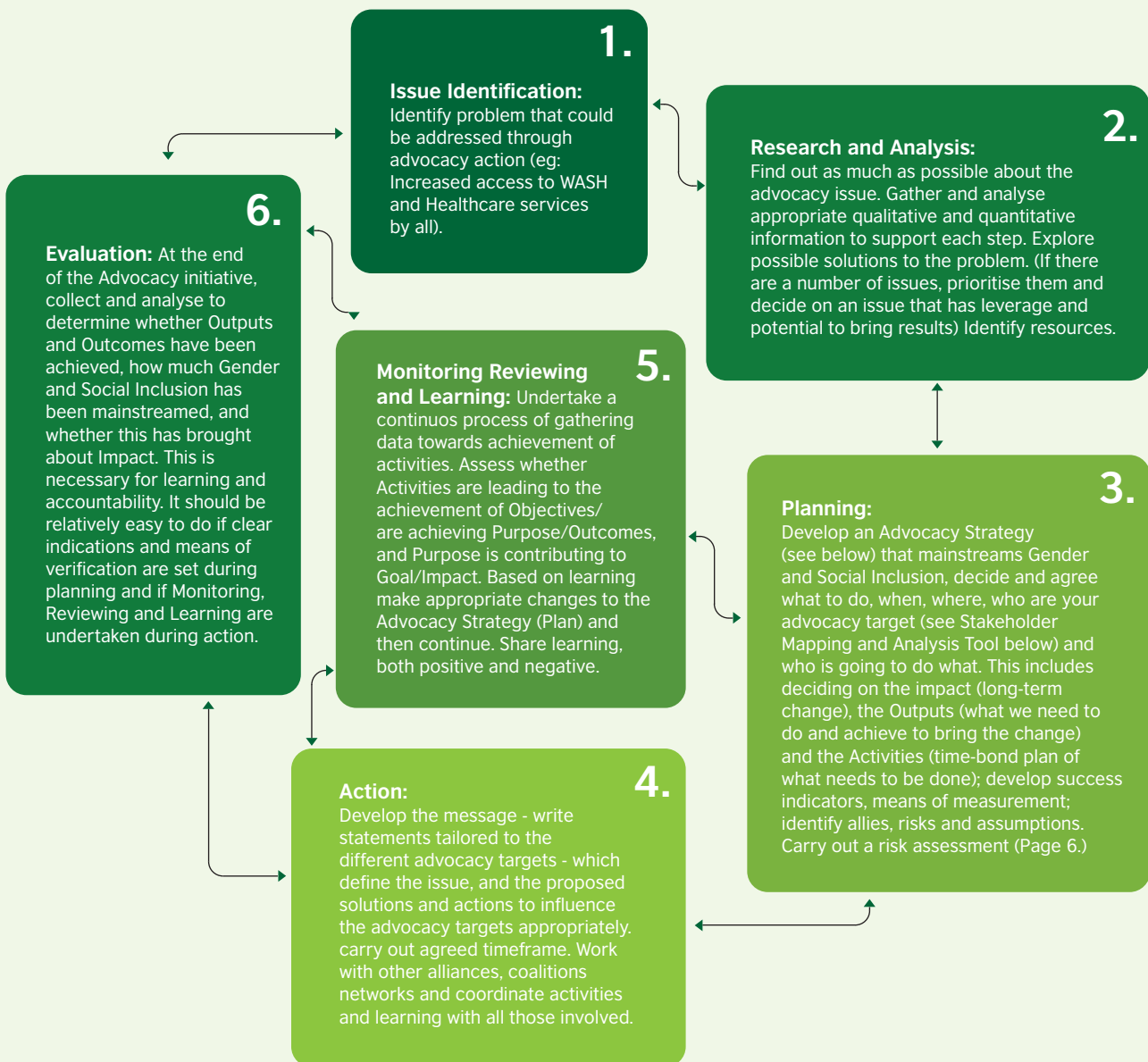
Advocacy can be defined as: Influencing the decisions, policies and practices of decision-makers to address underlying causes of poverty or exclusion within civil society and to bring development to all.

1 The Advocacy Cycle

The chosen advocacy initiative can be divided into stages across a Cycle, although in practice activities often overlap. The time it takes to complete all the stages and the necessary detail will vary greatly, depending on the urgency and complexity of a particular issue, the amount of information needed to be able to act, and the advocacy methods chosen.

The Advocacy Cycle provides an overview of the whole process, and is a useful way of visualising what needs to be done. It takes us step by step through each stage to be followed. The Advocacy Cycle helps CSOs to be systematic, strategic and analytical to avoid getting side-tracked and so to monitor and measure the effectiveness of advocacy action.

The model below provides a visual representation of the Advocacy Cycle, detailing practical steps to be taken, 1 - 6



However, in addition to carrying out these steps in the process, it is important to do a 'reality check' to make sure the action is realistic within the confines of the CSO's skills and resources, and to ensure that it fits with the Constituents' needs, based on their advocacy issue.

2 The Value of an Advocacy Strategy

Stage 3 of the Advocacy Cycle is the development of an Advocacy Strategy, which is essentially: a plan of what the advocacy will be like, with whom, where and how it will work, and how its results will be measured. The pattern of activities in an advocacy strategy include:

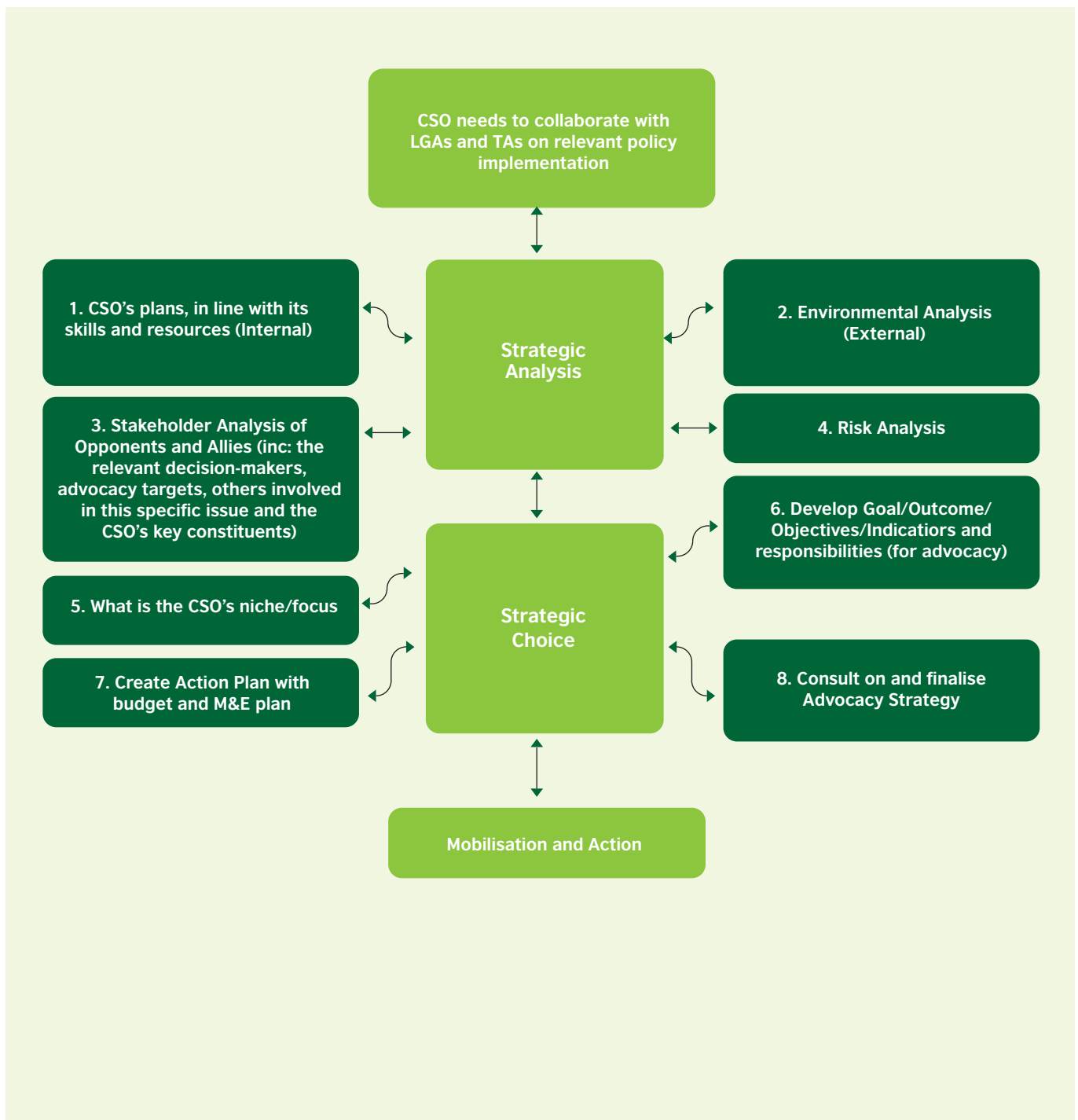
- The CSO's competitive advantage or niche that provides the CSO's direction

- Ways of working effectively, to achieve the Goal, Objectives and Activities, based on the opportunities and challenges of the environment the CSO is working in
- The CSO's available resources
- The agreement of tailored (advocacy) messages to persuade key target audiences
- The agreed means of measuring and monitoring progress and learning from experience

Advocacy can be complicated, but a well-focused and defined strategy can simplify things by providing a route-map. At the heart of successful advocacy is effective planning. It is worth spending time to decide what the CSO wants to achieve, how it will do it, who will be responsible and how the CSO will know whether or not it have been successful

This model below shows the content of an Advocacy Strategy, which is in line with the Advocacy Cycle (Stage 3). It is based on two main phases, firstly, 'strategic analysis' and secondly 'strategic choice'. The model shows key elements of the advocacy strategy. However, it is important to note that each part of the process should be constantly informing and guiding the other parts. All new information is fed into the process and the strategy is revised continually – even after the action has started.

3 The key elements of the Advocacy Strategy



Developing an Advocacy Strategy can be thought of as both a process (like strategic planning) and a skill (like strategic thinking).

The strategic thinking can involve:

- Seeing the bigger picture – understanding the CSO’s mission and the advocacy issue in the context of the external environment (and from the perspective of the CSO’s constituent group)
- Communication – facilitating discussions about high level issues with both colleagues and key external stakeholders
- Analysis and interpretation – assessing what external drivers mean for the CSO and its advocacy issue
- Critical thinking – questioning, challenging any assumptions and existing practices
- Creative thinking – inspiring new ideas and suggestions
- Flexibility – adapting planning and resource allocation to account for changing circumstances that may be arising
- Leadership – building a common sense of mission and purpose, proactively managing change and strengthening motivation

The policy changes that the CSO wishes to advocate for have been defined with the CSO’s constituency group. The CSO has limited resources, especially when compared to Government and others they are trying to influence. Therefore, it needs to harness the resources required – strategic advocacy planning helps the CSO to identify the resource requirements and to plan to achieve its aims.

One of the key success factors to advocacy is to have widespread support and participation, and not to try to go it alone. Planning strategically is a systematic approach that makes it possible to raise the awareness of others to our plans so they can become involved and collaboration develops. Strategic messages are communicated to relevant audiences, and this requires the CSO to prepare focused communication/advocacy messages as appropriate to each of the defined audiences (advocacy targets).

Advocacy planning also helps to break down broad aims into manageable chunks. This needs a coordinated and considered approach to put the journey into steps, eg: the achievement of Y1 Objectives which feed into Y2 Objectives, which feed into Y3 Objectives, which should realise the Outcome and contribute to the achievement of the Goal. This stepped approach helps the CSO to leverage resources and stakeholders and to incrementally achieve its aim. Because advocacy is usually undertaken at many levels at the same time, by many actors, this Advocacy Strategy provides a helpful roadmap to make sense of all the strategies and their hoped-for results.

Advocacy action can take time, so CSOs shouldn’t be overly ambitious by expecting to influence too much too quickly. Influencing policy change can just be the start of the journey; once a policy is adopted, it may be necessary for more advocacy efforts to influence the implementation of that policy!

4 Assessing Advocacy Risk

An Advocacy Risk Analysis is a tool that illustrates how to examine the risks that the CSO might face when doing advocacy activities. It forms the basis for risk management and helps to prevent potential crises. It is based on a structured approach to thinking through threats, which is followed by assessing the likelihood that those events could occur, and the creation of a mitigation plan to manage them. It requires careful design to fit with the CSO’s constituents’ needs, their sector, their location and the specific agreed advocacy focus.



Step 1: Identify Threats

The first step is to identify potential threats relating to the planned Advocacy activities, making sure that none of them is overlooked. Brainstorm with others with different perspectives the likely impact of particular threats.

Step 2: Estimate Risks

The second step is to work out the likelihood of each threat actually coming to fruition, and to assess its potential impact if it does. The CSO should estimate the probability of the event occurring (High/Medium/Low) and work out how much it would cost to set things right if it occurs, in terms of finance and relationships. This provides the estimated value against each risk.

Step 3: Manage/Mitigate against Risks

The third step is to work out ways of managing or mitigating against the risks you’ve identified. However, sometimes it may be better to accept a risk than to use excessive resources to eliminate it. Risks may be managed in a number of ways:

- By using existing resources to improve systems, change responsibilities, improve accountability, internal controls, etc
- Contingency planning – by deciding to accept the risk, but develop a way to minimise the effects of the risks, if it happens
- Invest new resources – to counter the risk

Step 4: Regular Reviews

This should involve regularly reviewing the risk analysis each time there is a change in circumstances – and may involve adapting the plans or allocating additional budget

5 Risk Analysis Matrix (sample)

RISK	PROBABILITY OF THE RISK OCCURRING (HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW)	MITIGATION ACTIONS	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE
Reputational – lack of evidence available	High	Verify and triangulate your information	Specify person who is responsible
Legitimacy - speaking on behalf of people	High	Regular consultation with the group affected from the planning stage; get the communities involved in the advocacy action where possible	
People - potential intimidation/danger	High	Treat opponents with respect; develop a clear Stakeholder Mapping with appropriate messages for each group; build relationships/alliances with those in power; work in Coalitions/Networks – strength in numbers	
Political - change in Government or policy related to the advocacy issue	Medium	Be collaborative and avoid confrontation; prepare focused approaches and messages for policy and political level advocacy activities; undertake contingency planning; encourage communities who fully understand their context to advocate at local level	
Operational - disruption to advocacy and other activity plans	Low	Prepare realistic plans and budgets; consider potential delays and other CSO responsibilities/demands	
Disillusionment in the affected communities because of length of time taken to achieve change	High	Be clear about what you think you will do, when, and what is likely to be achieved, by when. Manage expectations from the outset. Provide regular updates.	
Financial - fraud, access to necessary funding	Medium	Establish systems and responsibilities to reduce opportunities for the mismanagement of funds. Prepare a realistic budget and monitor it closely.	
Technical capacity - inability to access the required technology	Medium	Work in collaboration with others and delegate tasks to those with the appropriate skills and technology in place	
Natural - weather, illness	Low	Consider how best the activities could be carried out given an unavoidable change in circumstances (eg: Covid-19 and necessity for virtual communication/advocacy action)	

6 Stakeholder Analysis (Allies and Opponents Matrix)

This is a tool designed to present all relevant stakeholders in one diagram – to make it easy to see who is supporting the CSO’s views (allies) and who is opposing their views (opponents). The Matrix will enable you to focus key advocacy messages, in the right way - to the right people.

Carry out a Stakeholder Mapping:

1. Brainstorm a list of all the stakeholders (allies and opponents)

Draw a matrix, divided into four equal squares:

1. Place the stakeholders into the matrix below. Opponents on the left and allies on the right side. The more influence they have, the higher up the matrix they should be placed.
2. Then analyse the approach to be taken with each section of the stakeholder matrix – target and develop the appropriate message to each group, or even within the groups as required (eg: there may be a Traditional Leader and a the Health Commission who both feature at a high level in the ‘High Influence on the issue, but are opposed to our position, top left box’. You are likely to need different messages for each one to influence their change in attitude and behaviour.



7 Advocacy Strategy Template

Background

- Brief context and situational analysis – what's the problem? Why advocate on the issue? Human rights, commitments, accountability, outcomes...

Aim

- Long-term Goal (of the advocacy initiative)

Purpose

What will you see that has changed as a direct result of your advocacy action

Objectives

- Objectives (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound - including Indicators of change and Means of verifying change)
- Do these contribute to the realisation of the advocacy aim?

Targets (Taken from the left boxes of the Stakeholder Mapping/Analysis – the Opponents)

- Who has the power to make the necessary changes?
- Think about 'Who influences those people' – who does the CSO need to build alliances with?
- Details of the advocacy approach to be used and the focused messages for Opponents

Allies/Partners (Taken from the right boxes of the Stakeholder Mapping/Analysis – the Allies)

- Who can the CSO work with to support it to build momentum and support?
- Who does the CSO need to keep informed of progress and how will this be done

Activities (To achieve the Objectives above)

- Policy and Research (gather empirical evidence)
- Advocacy (list of planned advocacy activities)
- Engagement of key stakeholders (opponents and allies)
- List the planned Advocacy Activities in order to achieve the Objectives above, with Timings and Milestones

Timeline

- Moments/opportunities for influencing and understanding, attitudes and commitment? How can the CSO prepare for these opportunities - is the evidence that supports the advocacy action in place?

Roles & Responsibilities and Budget

- What gaps (including capacity) within the CSO? How can they be filled?
- Details of who is responsible for what, where and when?

ME&L (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning)

- Is there an ME&L Plan with Indicators and Milestones to measure progress?
- How will learning be gathered and used?

Hold regular meetings with team and constituents, to reflect and learn from what works and what doesn't work (and re-design approach and Stakeholder Analysis, based on this on-going learning and evidence of change).

GLOSSARY

Advocacy	Advocacy is any action that speaks in favour of, or recommends, or argues for a cause on behalf of others.
Advocacy Cycle	The advocacy cycle is a tool that takes the CSO through a process of identifying an advocacy issue, to action and identifying key learning from that action.
Programme	A group of related projects managed in a coordinated way to obtain agreed benefits (outlined in the Programme document).
Project	A set of activities to meeting agreed objectives, within a specific timeframe and agreed resources.
Risk Analysis	Risk Analysis is a task to identify and assess potential risks that may jeopardise the success of a project; the risks are categorised according to the likelihood of them occurring and the effect of the outcome should they occur. An Advocacy Risk Analysis is a tool that illustrates how to examine the risks that the CSO might face when doing advocacy activities specifically.
Risk Management	Risk management is a process which allows the CSO to manage the risks identified, by deciding in advance how to mitigate against the threat of the risks, in order to maximise the relevant outcome.
Stakeholder Analysis	At the stage of developing a project or an advocacy plan, the CSO should identify all of those people/organisations who have an interest in, or can influence, or be a threat to the project. These people are known as project stakeholders. The stakeholders are grouped, according to their levels of participation, interest or influence over the project and the CSO will determine at this stage how best to involve and communicate with each group. A template is used to make this exercise straight-forward.
Rights-based Approach	A rights-based approach to development (or a human rights based approach to development) means that all forms of discrimination, based on human rights, must be prevented. It also means that priority should be given to people who are often the most marginalised or excluded from development, and who face the biggest barriers to realising their rights.
G&SI	Gender and Social Inclusion (G&SI) is a concept that addresses improved equal access for all, including women, girls, youth, poor people, people with disabilities, ethnic minority groups, older people, children, LGBTQI+, etc – those people who are traditionally excluded from development initiatives. It supports more inclusive policies and mindsets and increases voice and influence by all.
Strategic Analysis	Strategic analysis involves researching the environment within which a CSO or project operates. It is necessary to gather and analyse the essential information necessary to formulate a strategy for decision-making and the smooth working of the CSO or Project. It often involves an in-depth study of its political, economic and social environments and to analyse the issues and problems faced by its specific constituent group within that.
Strategic Choice	The strategic choice is made by the decision-making group of the CSO, based on the analysis of the strategic analysis for the specific project or programme being planned, outlining the objectives and approach of the project. The strategic choice can change in response to learning and experience during a project's lifespan. The strategic choice is a framework for communication and collaboration across the project; it is interactive, not just for use by senior management.

References/Sources of Information

Global Libraries Advocacy Guide:

<https://onedrive.live.com/?authkey=!AE7zcm5eCCcPauk&cid=69D9A1EBADFCA884&id=69D9A1EBADFCA884!321&parId=69D9A1EBADFCA884!118&o=OneUp>

INTRAC Peer Learning Programme (2001-12): <http://www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/674/Participatory-Advocacy-A-toolkit-for-VSO-staff-volunteers-and-partners.pdf> or http://www.vsointernational.org/Images/advocacy-toolkit_tcm76-25498.pdf

Tearfund Roots 1 and 2 (2015):

<https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/series/roots-guides>

VSO Participatory Advocacy:

<https://namati.org/resources/participatory-advocacy-toolkit-for-vso-staff-volunteers-partners/>

Worldanimal.net:

<https://worldanimal.net/our-programs/strategic-advocacy-course-new/module-2/strategic-planning-for-advocacy/what-is-advocacy-strategy>

Find out more

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