

Lobbying and Advocacy Mechanisms: Mobilising and Empowering Young Women around HIV/AIDS and Human Rights.

**Tsakane Mangwane-Bok -
Advocacy Officer,
Southern African Catholic
Bishops' Conference,
AIDS Office.**



The Issue: Why Lobbying And Advocacy

- ❖ The objective of this paper is to look at advocacy skills as a tool for women to use when advocating for women's human rights.
- ✧ Women suffer violation of their human rights for many different reasons and in many ways. Domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse are not only violations of human rights but also opportunities for HIV transmission. Women and children are the most vulnerable groups in our society.
- ✧ Most women are vulnerable because they have limited opportunity to protect themselves; and many men are at risk because they refuse to protect themselves so. Women are the ones mainly affected and infected by HIV/AIDS.

The Issue: Why Lobbying And Advocacy

- ✧ *In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, prevalence among teenage girls in some countries is five times higher than for teenage boys. Because women have an unequal position in society and are seen as inferior to men, many women do not have much control over their lives and bodies. Young women are especially at risk of being infected with HIV and AIDS.*
- ✧ *Women normally carry the burden of looking after those who are sick and dying. By participating in advocacy workshops women are better able to take up leadership roles, raise awareness around missed opportunities and create a voice for themselves. The training aims to equip young women with skills in advocacy, so that they can develop strategies and support mechanisms for themselves.*

Description of how advocacy training is done

This Programme targets women's groups and women working with children. The programme also focuses on decision-making processes. The training is conducted in all dioceses, using structures that reach women's groups. A group of 25 women will be trained in each Diocese during the year 2003, over a period of six months.

The manual has three modules; one on what Advocacy and Policy is. A second on how to use a constitution as an advocacy tool. We are very fortunate in South Africa because our constitution recognises socio – economic rights. These are important rights, which can help to improve the everyday living conditions of women who are both affected and infected by HIV/ AIDS.




Description of how advocacy training is done

The last module is on communication skills working with the media. Media coverage is the most effective means to get the attention of politicians and decision- makers and to reach public opinion. Media coverage can help with real issues, so it is important to include an effective media strategy as part of an issue campaign.



Case Study

How an advocacy workshop helped Dudu?



Recommendations: The importance of advocacy

We need to create a safe environment so that women can speak for themselves and others. We can make this possible by providing a platform for the women to start talking about this openly.

- We need to build a network of women to support each other's development.
- Policy makers should learn from the women themselves; and women should advocate for policies that will reduce their vulnerability and make it easier for them to choose safer behaviours vital for an effective AIDS response

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Recommendations: The importance of advocacy

Women need to develop strategies that can help them to engage men in these issues.

Women need to create shifts in public policy and law and create a high level of visibility, through media and public relations

Conclusion and lessons learned

- ✦ The training manual is based on the premise that advocacy strategies and methods can be learned. Advocacy is about lobbying, changing legislation and challenging the injustice in our society.
- ✦ It is very important for local communities to be equipped with skills so that they will be able to start lobbying around specific policy issues that affect them at local and provincial levels.
- ✦ I have learned as an advocacy officer that for effective advocacy or lobbying to take place one needs to work with other sectors that share the same passion for change to take place.

Conclusion and lessons learned

- ✦ Networking is very important when one is involved in a campaign. The art of advocacy cannot be taught through a training workshop; rather it emerges from within networks among members themselves. The training provides the tools, but participants must add the spark.
- ✦ The manual also addresses other topics such as: How to develop a policy. Why is networking imported in coalitions or campaigns? And childrens' rights
- ✦ We cannot address women's issues in isolation from children's issues. Women and Children are at special risk of HIV/ AIDS for physical and social reasons.



Conclusion and lessons learned

- ✦ Worldwide, women are contracting HIV at a faster rate than men. Some will pass it to their newborn children. The fight against HIV and AIDS can only be successful if women's rights are respected and the position of women in society is made stronger. Lastly in the context of HIV/AIDS, governments have the obligation to recognise, respect, protect and fulfil human rights

Reference

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Contact Details

- ✦ Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) AIDS Office
- ✦ PO Box 941 Pretoria 0001
- ✦ Tel: 012-3236458
- ✦ Fax: 012-3266218
- ✦ E-mail: tmangwane-bok@sacbc.org.za