

Phase 1: Know what you want to change

Analyse the problem

Having identified the problem or issue to work on, you need to analyse the problem. You do this in order to better understand it, identifying the scale and nature of the problem and its causes and effects.

Your analysis should also lead you to identify a range of recommendations for actions that different actors should take to resolve the problem. Your objectives will be selected from these recommendations.

Analysing the problem will also start the process of building your case – a rational argument backed up with solid evidence.

Research

A first stage in analysis is to do some research. It is worth remembering that there are two main purposes to research in advocacy and campaigning:

- To help you understand the situation better in order to improve your analysis
- To gather evidence to help convince others of the validity of your arguments

Ideally the methodologies applied to these purposes would be different – a more open approach to the first and a more narrow focus to the second. However, we may not have the luxury of doing research twice, so we should be aware of both purposes when designing our research approach.

We can do primary or secondary research. Primary research is essentially field research – investigating the reality of the problem by talking directly to those involved. Secondary research is usually desk research – investigating what others have already done and said about the issue. Desk research is clearly cheaper than field research and so will probably be your starting point.

The data that we gather can be either quantitative or qualitative. Both are needed to help you understand the situation and to help convince others of your arguments.

Participatory Research and Analysis

In situations where you have access to people who are affected by the problem or issue, it is always beneficial to involve them in the research and analysis. Not only are they informants to your research, they can also be deployed as gatherers of information (with appropriate support).

More than this, those people provide one of the key voices in the process of analysing the problem. It is too easy to make wrong assumptions about the causes and effects of issues affecting others, and to guard against this we can involve them in the process. There are a range of different participatory tools



and methodologies available, usually involving people in group discussions and activities.

Analysis Tools

Whether you are involving the people affected by the issue, other experts or just your colleagues, there are many analysis tools that you can use to help clarify your thinking and give you a more complete analysis. Most tools are better when used in a small group situation, as the group process helps to challenge our assumptions, pool greater knowledge and create a more robust analysis.

Examples of suitable tools include:

- Problem & Solution Trees
- Force-Field Analysis

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