

Choosing the Right Strategy

A lasting solution needs to get to the root causes of a problem. Problems have many causes and many possible solutions. Advocacy strategies attempt to solve a problem step-by-step by getting at its systemic causes and focusing on specific issues. Because of this, advocacy strategies are always multidimensional. They use policy and political change to address the broader socio-economic roots of exclusion and inequality.

For example, if poor healthcare is the problem, one element of your solution may be advocating to increase government resources for clinics and healthcare workers. Would this strategy solve your problem? Perhaps partially, but it is not a complete solution. Poor healthcare can be caused by many things. For example, healthcare for all may not be a national priority. There may be other issues like mismanagement, lack of health education, poor infrastructure, insufficient, expensive medicines, and poverty that are also causes.

No single organization can carry out the complete strategy that addresses all of these factors. Limited resources force a group to choose which aspect to tackle, and then seek alliances with other groups to achieve a broader collective impact.

"Advocacy is a mindset. Certainty is not a given as we all know. Intuition, feel, the senses count, as does the head. . . Standards of performance and accountability should be open to learning from experience. Put another way, learning from mistakes."

David Cohen, Advocacy Institute, USA

Choosing and planning the right strategy involves exploring and comparing the potential impact and feasibility of alternatives. This chapter presents a series of tools and exercises that help to construct and compare strategies, including:

Factors shaping an advocacy strategy

We discuss some basic ingredients, like timing, context, and organizational capacity that are important to consider in designing and comparing alternative strategies.

Mapping alternative strategies

The *Issue Timeline* helps to trace the political history of an issue, and the *Triangle Analysis* helps to understand how policy, institutions, and social values interact to perpetuate problems and, potentially, solve them.

Drafting a first set of advocacy goals and objectives

We offer basic suggestions for drafting goals and objectives to begin developing strategies.

Dimensions of a citizen-centered advocacy strategy

We discuss the key levels of citizen-centered advocacy using the *Advocacy Action and Impact Chart*, which can help with both planning and monitoring results.

After applying these tools, you will have begun to define your goals, objectives, and strategy. This process will surface a new set of questions and will tell you the information you will need to complete your plan. The next chapters will show how to sharpen the strategy's policy and political dimensions.

the visitors about addressing poverty in urban areas.

Collaboration

When there is compatibility and agreement between NGOs, grassroots groups, and government, civil society groups are likely to collaborate directly with government to design and/or implement legislation or state services. Similarly, joint citizen-government monitoring initiatives are becoming increasingly common.

Protest

A demonstration or march relies on numbers and creative messages to gain attention and support. A march of 2,000 people will not usually have the impact of one with 25,000 people. Timing is important. Boycotts are another form of protest often directed at corporations. Vigils and hunger strikes can be less confrontational expressions of protest. Protest is sometimes a tactic of last resort when more conventional strategies of influence fail to open up a policy dialogue.

Litigation

A well-publicized court case can draw public attention to a problem, and sometimes leads to legal reform or fairer enforcement. Some countries have a legal mechanism called “class-action.” Where this exists, groups of people affected by abuses of power can use a court case to fight for justice collectively.

Public Education and Media

Education and media strategies build public support and may influence policymakers. Strategies include providing data, articles, and alternative policies to the media, as well as creative messages using music, videos, and songs. Alternative media strategies using theatre, posters, and pamphlets are especially useful in countries where fewer people have access to radio and television. In some coun-

tries, NGOs organize public dialogues to discuss issues. (See Chapters 13 and 14.)

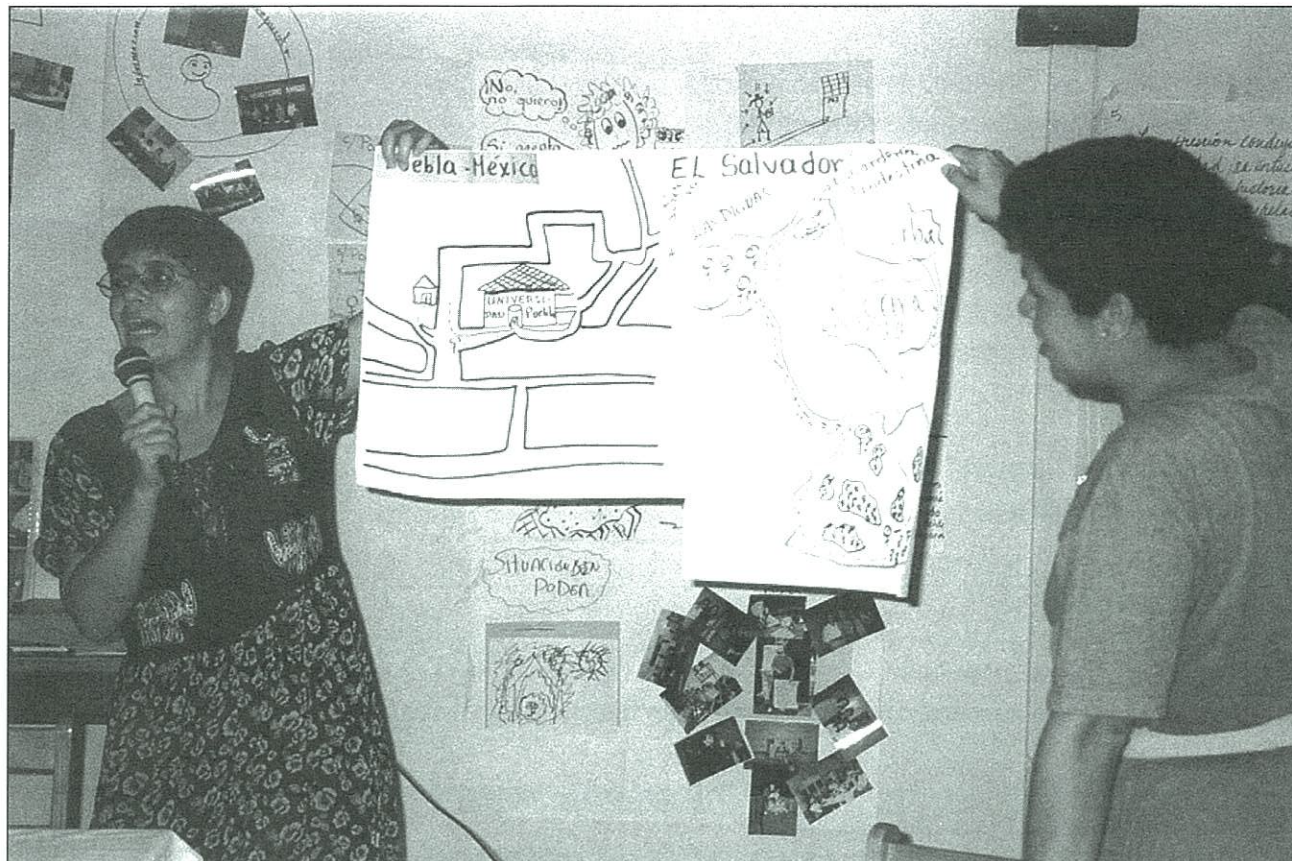
Research

Positions and proposals based on solid information increase the credibility of advocacy. Research provides the necessary information for planning, message development, policy alternatives, and lobbying. Depending on the methodology used, research can also strengthen alliances, build constituencies, and help develop citizenship skills. (See Chapter 8.) Where information is hard to get, research efforts can evolve into “right to know” advocacy campaigns. Advocacy usually benefits from close ties with sympathetic researchers and policy analysts that give advocates speedy access to facts and analysis in the midst of political battles.

Persuasion

All advocacy must be persuasive to a wide range of people. Persuasion has three main ingredients:

- *lobbying* — involves attempts to meet face-to-face with decisionmakers to persuade them to support an advocacy issue or proposal;
- *clout* — gained by the credibility and legitimacy of demands; by showing strength through mobilizing popular support; by working in coalitions and with many diverse allies; by using the media to inform, educate, and be visible;
- *negotiation* — involves bargaining to seek common ground or, minimally, respect for disagreement. It happens among allies, advocates, and constituents as well as across the table with those in power. To bargain with decisionmakers you need to know your own power and your opponent’s, as well as what is negotiable, what is not, and what you will do if negotiations fall apart. (See Chapter 15.)



Mapping strategies during an advocacy workshop in Nicaragua, 1998

International events and policy meetings, such as UN conferences, World Trade Organization, and G8 meetings, provide opportunities for transnational advocacy and high level dialogue with policymakers that can boost national advocacy. The events can give visibility to alternative perspectives about the impact and process of international policies and demonstrate broad public support for reforms.

Different stages of law or policy formulation provide groups an opportunity to voice positions and propose alternatives. But knowing the timeline for review is essential for effective intervention. Some governments have institutionalized their consultations with civil society on particular issues. While this presents important opportunities, over time it can become exclusive of other issues and people. Similarly, when a policy is debated in Parliament or when a new policy is announced, there

are opportunities for people to express support or opposition. (See Chapter 11.)

A crime or other highly visible tragedy can personalize a political problem and thus generate public attention and demand for a solution. Such tragedies can reveal that marginalized people are more vulnerable to disasters, violence, and exploitation, and force decisionmakers to explore solutions.

Mapping Alternative Strategies

One of the important pieces of background information for developing your strategy is the political history of an issue. The following exercise traces when the issue came to the attention of civil society actors or powerful interests, and what, if anything, they have done to solve it.

Discussion

Once the timelines have been completed, discuss what the results mean for advocacy planning. Here are some questions to guide discussion:

- What has worked and what has failed to achieve an impact on this issue?
- Does the timeline help identify forces for and against us? If so, what are they?
- What does the timeline tell us about legislation and policy strategies?
- How can we build on past successes and avoid previous failures?

Example

The following example comes from *Naming the Moment* and the Canadian Jesuit Justice and Peace Center. The Center developed this timeline with a broad-based coalition working on a collective advocacy strategy on legislation affecting refugees.

Reviewing 10 Years

Government bureaucrats informed, not public	Unemployment ("They're stealing our jobs.")	Media campaign against refugees	McLean announced intended restrictions	New law proposed	Implemented Passed
1978	1982	1985	1986	1987	1988
Boat People	Recession	Refugees from C. Am., Iran, Afgan.	Singh Case	Tamil Boat	

Close-up 2 Years

Government introduces interim measures	C-55 introduced	National state of emergency declared	C-84 introduced	Turks deported	Bills passed	Elections	Bills implemented			
Jan '87	Feb '87	Mar '87	May '87	July '87	Aug '87	Sept '87	Oct '87	July '88	Nov '88	Jan '89
			Sikh Boat							
Hawkes proposal rejected in cabinet	Formation of National Coalition for a Just Refugee/Immig. Policy				Bills stalled in Senate				VIGIL and court action	

Projecting 2 Years into Future

Government working out the wrinkles of the new system-few deportations		Once public attention has waned, more deportations		Court action decision
Jan '89	April '89	May '89	June '89	1990
Court action launched, VIGIL network formed	Refugee Rights Day	VIGIL conference	Canadian Council on Refugees conference	
				1991

Purpose

- To identify how laws and policies contribute to a problem/issue and, potentially, to its solution.
- To understand the legal-political system as a three-dimensional arena where rights, roles, and choices are shaped by the interplay between formal rules and structures of government, social values, and political power dynamics.
- To identify information gaps to complete the analysis and mapping.

Facilitator's Tips

Since this exercise has two steps, it may be easier to break up the steps with a discussion of the analysis before moving on to the strategies. If you choose to do the exercise this way, explain only the analysis task at the beginning. Once the analysis is completed, explain the strategy task. This avoids confusion.

Process

This exercise has two connected parts: (A) analysis and (B) strategy development. Each step will take from 30 minutes to 2 hours depending on how much information is available.

Part A: Analysis

1. Explain the triangle. Hand out written definitions of each of the sides of the triangle (Content - Structure - Culture). Remember that the descriptions for the analysis are different than for the strategy development.
2. Use Example #1 on the next page to illustrate how the exercise works. This example is not an exhaustive analysis of the issue, but it gives an idea of what the framework can produce. Every context would produce a different analysis, although there are some universal obstacles facing some groups.

Meaning of the Sides of the Triangle for Analysis

Content refers to written laws, policies, and budgets relevant to a specific issue. For example, if there is no law to criminalize domestic violence, one part of a solution may be introducing a law. Also, even if a law or policy exist, unless there is funding and institutional mechanisms for enforcement, it will not be effective.

Structure refers to state and non-state mechanisms for implementing a law or policy. This would include, for example, the police, the courts, hospitals, credit unions, ministries, and agricultural and health care programs. Structure can refer to institutions and programs run by government, NGOs or businesses at the local, national and international levels.

Culture refers to the values and behavior that shape how people deal with and understand an issue. Values and behavior are influenced by, among other things, religion, custom, class, gender, ethnicity, and age. Lack of information about laws and policies is part of the cultural dimension. Similarly, when people have internalized a sense of worthlessness or, conversely, entitlement, this shapes their attitudes about and degree of benefit from laws and policies.

Discussion

- *Guiding questions for analysis of content*
 - Is there a law or policy that contributes to the problem by protecting the interests of some people over others?
 - Is there a law or policy that helps address the particular issue you have chosen?
 - Is adequate government money budgeted to implement the policy or law?

Example #2

Problem / Issue - Domestic Violence: Women are mistreated by partners with whom they have intimate and dependent relationships. They suffer from physical, emotional, and psychological abuse ranging from slaps and threats to severe physical violence.

STEP 1: ANALYSIS		
CONTENT	STRUCTURE	CULTURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This problem falls between the family and criminal codes because there are no explicit laws applying to abuse within the home between husband and wife or unmarried partners. - A law against domestic violence exists but there are no emergency procedures such as restraining orders to offer immediate protection to women in danger. - The law regards what happens in the "home" as a private matter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The law may be adequate but judges and police see domestic disputes as a private matter and do not intervene. - Police and courts encourage couples to stay together even when a woman's life is in danger. The family and children are valued more than women's rights. - There are no alternatives for women to seek protection, for example, safe houses, hotlines, etc. - Hospitals do not report cases of domestic violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women blame themselves for the abuse and feel ashamed. - The public sees "wife beating" as a problem of poor, uneducated people (they do not see that it also happens among upper classes). Some believe it is caused by alcohol abuse. - Family violence is part of a cycle of violence where power is used to exert control rather than to seek peaceful resolutions. So, men beat women, women beat children, children beat each other and animals, employers abuse employees. - "Minor" abuse is seen as normal or sign of love. - It is believed that men have the right to beat their wives to "keep them in line."

STEP 2: MAPPING STRATEGIES		
CONTENT	STRUCTURE	CULTURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reform criminal and family codes to make domestic violence a crime punishable by law. Ensure that the definition includes non-marital relationships. - Define a punishment that dissuades men from using force but does not deprive a woman of economic support unless the problem is severe. (This is a difficult task.) - Make domestic abuse a public crime but give women the right to decide what happens to the perpetrator. - Provide for emergency protection measures such as restraint orders, etc. - Allocate budget funds for legal aid, family dispute centers, safe houses, public education, hotlines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Train police and judges about the nature of domestic abuse. - Establish a women's wing at local police stations with trained personnel to deal with psychological aspects of the crime. - Set up safe houses and hotlines for emergency protection. - Train hospital personnel to identify and handle cases of abuse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media campaigns, theatre, demonstrating the impact on women, men, children, and society. Make people see domestic violence as a public concern and a crime. (NOTE: If you denounce domestic violence publicly, make sure that there are support services for women to seek help. Awareness-raising without support for those in need is dangerous.) - Have prominent men speak out against it publicly. Establish men's groups. - Run workshops to teach conflict resolution, confidence-building, etc. - Create community support groups and women's counseling initiatives.

Composite of analysis from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and USA.

Comparing and Selecting Strategies

Once you have mapped an array of responses to an issue, you can compare your options and choose the best combination of actions to build your strategy while staying true to your mission and vision.

For example, if your NGO decides to improve girls' attendance in primary school, you could:

- carry out a public education campaign about the importance of sending girls to school;
- work with Parent Teacher Associations to monitor school attendance, and educate communities;

- launch an advocacy initiative to persuade the national government to place more resources in girls' education.

The *best* strategy will use your organization's strengths and take advantage of external opportunities. In the next chapter we introduce tools for identifying external constraints and opportunities.

Strategies vary according to the issue, context, and moment. Those that do not address systemic causes may alleviate some symptoms, but are unlikely to significantly address the problem. At the same time, improving the material well-being of people who are suffering from a problem by addressing the symptoms is an important element of a political solution and key to sustaining constituency involvement.

What Good Strategies Should Be

Appropriate	Will the strategy further your group's vision and mission? Will it make good use of your organization's strengths? Will it fit the community conditions where your group operates? Will your constituency be able to participate? Will it exacerbate or reduce social tensions within the community?
Adequate	Will the strategy be sufficient to address the problem given its magnitude? Does the problem justify the effort and resources you will expend?
Effective	Will the strategy achieve the stated objective? Will the strategy further your mission <i>and</i> address the problem in a reasonable timeframe?
Efficient	Will the strategy make optimum use of the organization's material and human resources? What are the strategy's costs in terms of people's time, energy, and materials in relation to benefits?
Sensitive to side effects	Will the strategy increase demand for basic services or resources? Will the strategy generate resistance due to traditions, religion, etc? How can this resistance be minimized? How will those in power respond to shifts in social relationships, demands for change, etc? What will happen if violence breaks out? Will the negative consequences be counterbalanced by the positive benefits?

Adapted from the Institute for Development Research's *Strategic Thinking: Formulating Organizational Strategy. Facilitator's Guide*, 1998, pp. 48-49.

Timebound

- Although social change objectives are often impossible to predict in terms of timing, be as precise as possible about your timeline. When do you hope to accomplish your aim?

Tips about Advocacy Goals and Objectives

Long-term goals are more abstract and tend to not change much over time. Short-term goals and objectives are always refined. The more information you have about your political context, target, issue, organization, etc., the more you can sharpen your objectives.

Since effective advocacy demands multi-dimensional strategies, it may be useful to develop objectives and activities for different levels of impact (e.g., policy, public institutions, etc.).

The *Advocacy Action and Impact Chart* on page 181 is a guide to the different layers of influence and change.

Although objectives evolve, it helps to formulate them as clearly as possible from the start. The SMART Framework is useful for formulating objectives, but is not the only one. People have different preferences for formulating objectives. For example, some people prefer a declarative sentence like, “10 citizen monitoring groups created,” to one that begins with a verb like, “*To create* 10 citizen monitoring groups.”

Objective setting is an important decision-making moment. Participation by the key groups involved generates buy-in and strengthens commitment, and can also be empowering. Participatory objective-setting involves dialogue, debate and negotiation.

Examples of Ways to Sharpen Objectives

A group in Southern Africa defined a multidimensional strategy to combat domestic violence. The strategy included policy reform, establishing support centers, and public education. Their public education objective was not specific or measurable.

Original Objective

To mobilize and educate women and law enforcement agencies by the year 2001.

Can you see from this objective what the group will do? Which women? Which law enforcement agencies? For what purpose? The group reformulated their education objective as follows:

SMART Objective

To educate rural women involved in savings clubs in three villages about domestic violence and their rights with regard to family law, and to assist them in forming violence prevention groups at the community level within thirty months.

A consumer rights group in India went through a similar process to improve their advocacy objectives.

Original Objective

To create awareness among consumers of the measures they have available to redress grievances.

SMART Objective

To increase the number of disadvantaged people who can effectively use the consumer redress laws and measures in Tamil Nadu to 1,000 by the year 2000.

A fourth arena of activity and impact entails changes in **political space and culture**. These actions and outcomes help create an atmosphere in which political participation by disenfranchised groups can be effective and carried out, at a minimum, without fear of violence or repression. Possible impacts include increased governmental respect for people's right to participate in decisionmaking as well as increased transparency and accountability on the part of institutions of the State and the media. Other changes might involve shifts in the way society views women's and men's roles, accepting women as legitimate political actors.

The fifth and final arena involves changes at the **individual** level. These actions and changes refer to improvements in a person's physical living conditions such as better access to water or wages. They also include personal changes that are necessary for the development of a sense of citizenship, self-worth, and solidarity.

Drafting objectives for each of the five dimensions can guide planners to think through a comprehensive strategy for change. The following questions can help planners use the chart for developing objectives and activities and identifying areas for further research.

Government

- What needs to be changed in a law or policy to make it more effective, inclusive, and fair?
 - What institutional reforms will be necessary for the law/policy to be enforced/implemented fairly and effectively?
 - What are the budget implications of implementation?
 - What will be needed at different levels of government to ensure accountability?
- What structural reforms are needed to promote transparency and increase people's access to justice?

Private sector

- What kind of corporate policy will help to address this issue?
- What reforms in business practice and behavior are necessary?
- Will training and monitoring be necessary to prevent the issue from recurring?
- How can dialogue and joint problem-solving among government, civil society, and the private sector address diverse interests and needs?

Civil society

- How can education and organizing teach people about government, politics, and rights?
- How can citizens and groups engage constructively and critically with decisionmakers to promote accountability?
- What types of leadership and organization can be developed that foster inclusion and represent a broad range of constituents while retaining political agility and power?
- How can the strategy promote communication, dialogue, and horizontal networks?

Political space and culture

- What can be done to expand the role of citizens' groups in the formal political process? How can governments, corporations, and civil society work together to address injustice and poverty?
- What must be changed about policy formulation or enforcement to create more transparent, accountable decisionmaking?
- What information needs to be made public and accessible? What are the roles of civil society, government, and the private sector in ensuring that people know about things that affect them?

Advocacy Action and Impact Chart	
ARENA	IMPACT
1. State / Government Sector	Support for or change in a law, policy, program, practices, person, decisionmaking process, budget, enforcement, access, etc.
<i>National</i> -Executive -Agencies / Ministries -Legislative / Parliament -Military / Police -Courts -Other <i>Provincial Government</i> <i>Local Government</i> <i>International Bodies</i> -UN -IMF / World Bank -Multilateral Development Banks <i>Other</i>	<i>Actions and impacts that advance human rights, foster more equitable sustainable development, and promote greater voice and power of excluded populations in public decisionmaking (e.g., women, indigenous groups, the poor, and religious, racial or ethnic minorities, etc.)</i>
2. Private Sector	Support for or change in policy, program, practices, behavior, etc.
Local / National / Multinational	<i>See actions and impacts under State / Government sector</i>
3. Civil Society	Strengthen and expand civil society's capacity, organization, accountability, and power; expand knowledge; and increase overall social reciprocity, trust, and tolerance.
-NGOs -Membership Organizations -Community-based Organizations -Ally Organizations / Coalitions -Other	<i>Actions and impacts that fortify groups and alliances working to advance the rights and improve the living conditions of marginalized peoples to protect the health of societies and the planet overall.</i>
4. Political Space and Culture	Increase democratic space, expand participation and political legitimacy of civil society, and increase accountability / transparency of public institutions and media; transform norms and customs that lead to intolerance, subordination, and exclusion.
-Political -Social / Cultural -Other	<i>Actions and impacts that enhance the political and social dimensions of culture in ways that promote the voice and vote of the marginalized in decisionmaking and encourage behaviors and values of cooperation, collaboration, trust, inclusion, reciprocity, and equity.</i>
5. Individual	Improve concrete living conditions and opportunities for health, education, and livelihood; promote beliefs and awareness of self as protagonist / citizen with rights and responsibilities to participate in change.
-Living Conditions / Opportunities -Attitudes / Awareness -Personal Relationships, etc.	<i>Actions and impacts that improve the lives and expand the knowledge, political analysis / consciousness, confidence, solidarity, skills, and vision of marginalized populations and their allies; actions and impacts that challenge discrimination / subordination in personal and family relations.</i>

The Advocacy Debate: Changing Policy, Changing People

Why will policy change in itself not bring about social change? Policy change can set up new rules of engagement, shift priorities and resources, or codify rights and commitments. This is significant, but advocacy concerned with social justice, basic rights, and participation has to also address values and behavior that do not change simply because law changes. Changing policy is about changing people — in civil society, government, and in the private sector. Unless strategies are aimed at people explicitly, political decisions will often not be realized on the ground. The case from Zimbabwe below may help groups understand the importance of the different dimensions of advocacy strategies.

In the early 1980s, soon after the Rhodesian apartheid state was dismantled, the new government of Zimbabwe embarked on a number of important legal and policy changes. Influenced by leading human rights lawyers, the country passed the Legal Age of Majority Act which made all women legal adults at the age of 18. Prior to that time, women were perpetual legal minors, unable to have a bank account, get a license, have custody of their children, or make any other legal decision without approval from their husbands or fathers.

The passing of the Act was mired in controversy. By the time news of the new law reached villages, especially in rural areas, many men and women rejected it outright. Many mothers (and fathers) were angry because the law meant their daughters could get married at 18 with or without their permission and whether or not lobola (brideprice) was paid to the girl's family. There was very little public consultation about the Act outside of the main urban areas before it was passed. Rural people felt this was yet another imposition from city folk who did not respect custom and family. Few people — women particularly — understood the law's benefits.

Part of the reason the Act was passed quickly was that the party in power wanted to expand the number of voters; including women and men between the ages of 18 and 21 (before the law men were legal majors only at 21). Unfortunately, the opposition to the new law deepened resistance by women and men to all subsequent women's legal rights-related reforms. This became a serious obstacle to further progress on women's rights for the following two decades. Some people said that the law aggravated the generation gap among women and contributed to conflicts within families. Others argued that these tensions were inevitable, and that legal change was needed sooner rather than later for such an urgent human rights matter.

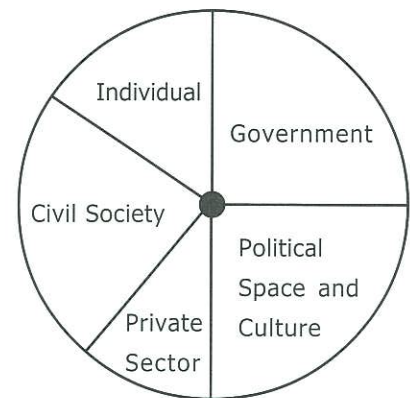
The following questions provide some ideas on how to conduct discussion on this case as it relates to policy and social change.

- What does this story tell us about social values and legal change?
- What does this story tell us about the impact of legal change on the public? On custom and cultural beliefs?
- What alternative legal reform strategy might lessen the possibility of backlash and resistance?

Examples

The following examples were developed during a Latin American training workshop and are illustrative of how different groups divide their resources. The analysis of this exercise will involve much more in-depth questioning and detail than is shown here.

This chart was made by a group in El Salvador addressing the problem of sexist education in the school system. The impact chart shows a relative balance of activities in the five areas.



Government: Research on sexism in education; public debate with the Ministry of education; development of an urban model and materials for non-sexist education; distribution of publications and stories; mobilization and pressure.

Political Space / Culture: Public debates; group reflections; interviews on radio stations, TV, and in newspapers; course on feminist debates; public campaigns; marches; parties; video fora.

Private Sector: Public and video fora; seek support for information campaigns.

Civil Society: Alliances with teachers' organizations; establishment of a documentation, information, and communication center for communities and teachers; activities to encourage rural women to organize themselves.

Individual: Group reflection based on personal experiences; different kinds of impact on education for girls and boys.

The chart below reflects the advocacy work of a group from Honduras. In their case, the National Health Secretariat had approved a policy on sexual and reproductive health. However, the policy was in danger of being overturned by powerful opponents and the group was advocating to protect it. After making the chart, the group recognized that none of their activities targeted the private sector, an important potential ally, and that most of their advocacy concentrated on the government.

Government (particularly the National Health Secretariat): Participation on a commission of "dignitaries;" preparing information for the government to use to support the new policy; lobbying and awareness-raising activities.

Political Space / Culture: Participation in radio and TV programs; distribution of information.

Civil Society: Coordination and alliances with other organizations; fora for debate and discussion; conferences; information dissemination.

Individual: provision of information to individual women and spaces for reflection and analysis.

