SHARE YOUR PEACE

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH

MODULE 7

PEACE ADVOCACY

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I. Introduction

There is a clear evidence that youth participation in peacebuilding have significant, positive impact. Youth generation have the power to break the culture of violence and promote a culture of peace. Young people are essential actors in contributing to peacebuilding processes and they can play important roles as agents of positive change. Moreover, their efforts as agents of peace are reflected through their individual actions and their involvement in peacebuilding initiatives and organizations.

Having the necessary knowledge, skills and motivation, young people can promote awareness and create messages on peacebuilding and issues concerning conflict and violence. Through advocacy activities, youth can shape policies and share good practices in peacebuilding, creating and enabling environment for more peacebuilders working at local, national and international levels. Young people are key stakeholders in development, sustaining peace initiatives, democratic governance, and peacebuilding interventions, so they should be offer an integrated and inclusive approach to continue to participate actively and meaningfully in peace processes that affect their lives.

The following e-learning module aims to give young people the necessary knowledge and understanding of peace advocacy, and to empower them to take an active role in peacebuilding by acquiring competences in peace advocacy. Youth will explore in deep the challenges of peace advocacy as a tool for change, as well as they will learn how to design their own peacebuilding advocacy strategy.

II. Understanding Peace Advocacy

- **Definition of Peace Advocacy**

The previous modules gave you the opportunity to deeply learn about the peace concept, its process and visions, so we will not focus again on the definition of peace. However, in this e-learning part we will focus your attention on what is advocacy and in particular, what does it mean peace advocacy and why it's important.

The term "advocacy" was originally associated with a legal representative who spoke on behalf of a client in a court of law. However, nowadays, advocacy is understood in many different ways by organizations and individuals.

In general, advocacy refers to systematic action for social change and it is the act of pleading or arguing in favour of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy. It is an ongoing dynamic process, which seeks a progressive change in actions. Advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to express their views and concerns, to access information and services, to defend and promote their rights and responsibilities, to explore choices and options.

Advocacy is defined as an activity by an individual or group that aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions. Advocacy includes activities and publications to influence public policy, laws and budgets by using facts, their relationships, the media, and messaging to educate government officials and the public[1]. Advocacy can include many activities that a person or organization undertakes including media campaigns, public speaking, commissioning and publishing research. It can take the form of a single meeting or a series of meetings, confidential or public discussions, direct or indirect communication through intermediaries, written correspondence, public statements or reports, and so on.

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advocacy

However, advocacy is distinct from campaigning, which is raising awareness through gatherings, public activities and public-relations campaigns amongst the general public on issues of concern to the members of the network. But advocacy and campaigning are complementary and cannot succeed without each other.

Depending of the period that the advocacy is running, we can say that it could be identified as a project or a process. If advocacy is carried out over a short period of time it would be a project, while advocacy that is carried out over a longer term would be a process. An advocacy project is something that rides on existing campaign, consisting of a more concrete message and recommendations, while the advocacy process happens when the general campaign becomes more important and the general message is to increase the public awareness of the issue.

Peace advocacy is defined such as “any policy that advocates maintaining peaceful international relations” and “any political orientation favouring compromise to avoid conflict”. Peace advocacy means working toward transforming a culture of violence into a culture of peace, while building partnerships, and making important steps to gaining political support for peace education. Peace advocacy aims to create non-violent alternatives and promote the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour change that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence. Moreover, peace advocacy as a project aims to raise communities’ awareness on education, the culture of peace and dialogue.

According to United Nations, “with the rapid development of information and communications technology, the emergence of new concepts of security and threat, and the largest generation of young people in history, the need for education in disarmament and non-proliferation has never been greater”. Thus, peace education is seen as a new literacy highly needed by people from all ages, because peace and education have been identifying as essential factors for the development of communities as well as for the achievement of fullest potential in any society.

Peace advocacy calls for changes to structures, systems and policies that negatively affect communities, while proposing sustainable alternatives and ways to peacefully settle tensions. Peace advocacy supports peacebuilding initiatives that address the root causes of conflict, promote dialogue, and encourage local, national and international participation.

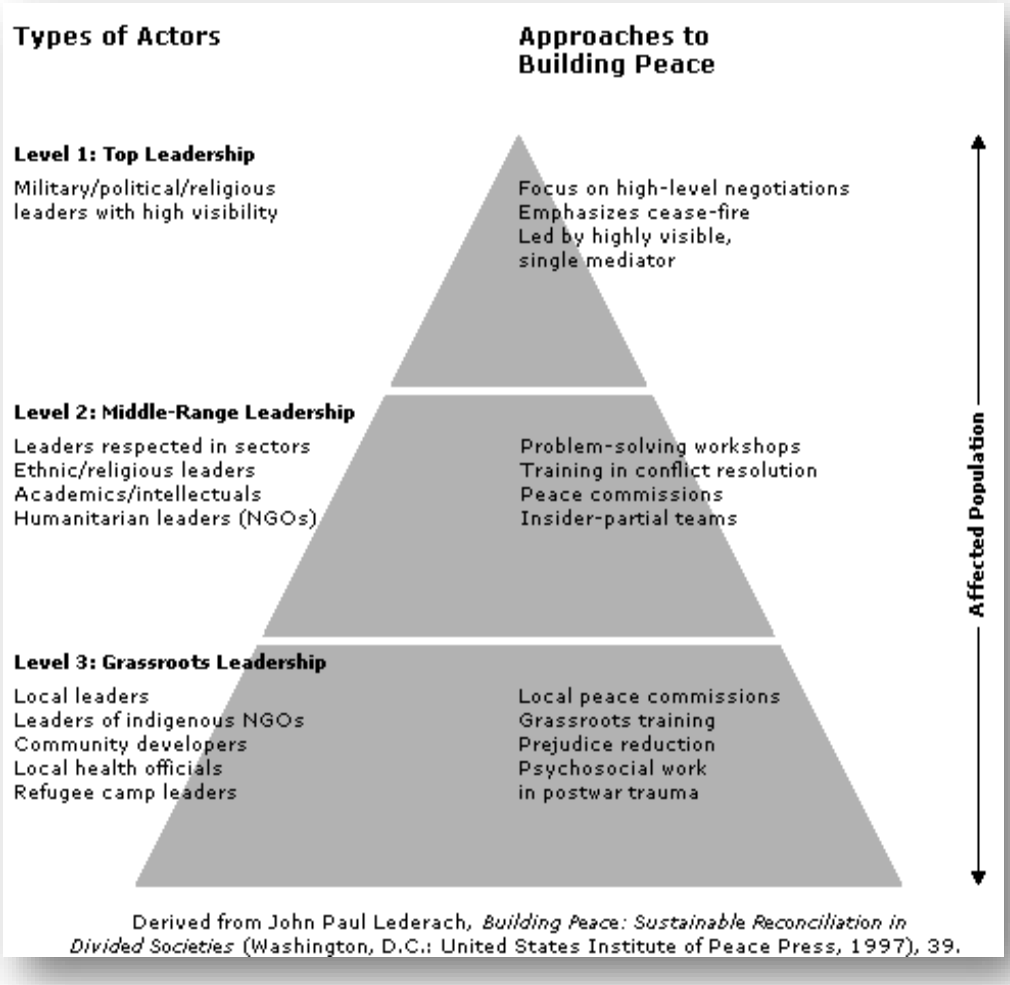
The international community is being urged to increase the role of young people in negotiating and implementing peace agreements, ensuring that young people’s views will be taken into account in security-related discussions, and facilitating their participation at decision-making levels. Moreover, the contribution that young people can make to peace and security has been seen as a great opportunity, if they are actively engaged. Thus, peace advocacy organizations around the world are committed to educate youth, providing platforms for those caught in conflict zones as well as they work to develop resolutions to the most difficult problem facing our world. Such organizations explore the possibilities for youth to play a more dynamic role in conflict

regions in prevention, transformation and solutions of conflicts and train them as peacebuilders. These organizations also aim to create change in their communities and support young people in starting their own projects and foundations. The ultimate goal is to inspire youth to be peacekeepers and to be able to identify those who have the power to make the necessary change because lasting peace can be achieved only through collective action and the engagement of all parties' levels and stakeholders.

- **The different levels of Peace Advocacy**

According to Lederach's peacebuilding pyramid, there are three levels of actors:

1) the top elite (i.e., military, political, and religious leaders with particularly high visibility), 2) the middle range (i.e., academics, intellectuals, NGO officers, and religious and ethnic leaders) and 3) the grassroots (i.e., local leaders, indigenous NGO officers, local health officials, refugee camp leaders, etc.). Consequently, understanding the roles that the different actors should play in each level and what actions are best taken by them, explains what approaches to peacebuilding and advocacy exist.



Derived from John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 39.

Since each of the three levels plays a unique role in peacebuilding, different conflict-handling processes and peace advocacy activities must be adopted at each level of the hierarchy.

Top-level approaches to peace building aim to achieve a negotiated settlement between the principal high-level leaders of the parties involved in conflict. In these high-level negotiations, elite leaders are brought to a bargaining table and attempt to work toward new solutions. The first goal of these negotiations is typically a cease-fire or cessation of hostilities. This is typically followed by efforts to initiate a national transition, which involve the political leadership in implementing a framework that can allow for democratic elections. Peacebuilding at this level often involves a step-by-step, issue-oriented, and short-term achievement process. Because the negotiation process is usually conducted in the public limelight, top-level leaders face the difficult challenge of maintaining publicly articulated goals while at the same time moving toward compromise[2].

Peace-building efforts among the elite must be accompanied by efforts of mid-level and grassroots leaders. Indeed, many believe that middle-range leaders are the key to creating an infrastructure for achieving and sustaining peace. Because these leaders have low visibility and are often connected to extensive networks that cut across the lines of conflict, they can play a crucial role in establishing productive relationships and working through conflict. Three important mid-level approaches to building peace are problem-solving workshops, conflict-resolution training, and the development of peace commissions. Problem-solving workshops feature informal meetings designed to broaden participation and deepen parties' understanding of their shared problems. They also provide a forum for effective interaction as well as a politically safe space to test new ideas. Conflict-resolution training aims to raise parties' awareness about how conflict operates, and to impart skills for dealing with conflict. Middle-range leaders are often brought together in training sessions to share their perceptions of the conflict, analyse their own roles in it, and develop approaches that will promote reconciliation.

However, these middle-range efforts are all the more effective in light of peacebuilding efforts undertaken at the grassroots level. Leaders at this level can be involved in local peace conferences, peace programs, and local seminars. They might also form part of broader community and public-health programs for dealing with post war trauma, or participate in workshops that aim to reduce prejudice and enhance community decision-making. These grassroots-level programs are crucial in helping people deal with the violence associated with war and repairing damaged relationships. The third level leaders represent the masses, those who often experience a day-to-day struggle to find food, water, shelter, and safety in violence-torn areas. Because local communities are often split into hostile groups, grassroots leaders witness first-hand the deep-rooted hatred and animosity associated with conflict. Indeed, many of the conditions that

[2] https://www-s3-live.kent.edu/s3fs-root/s3fs-public/file/Coy-Conflict%20Res%20Transform%20%26%20Pb%202009.pdf

generate conflict, such as social and economic insecurity, political discrimination, and human rights violations are experienced primarily at the grassroots level.

In many countries the governments, civil societies and local communities often act separately to address problems they face. But to be successful, a peace strategy need to be effective and to fully take into account the views and needs of those who are most affected. The grassroots communities' leaders have to design solutions and support the senior decision-making levels. Different parts of the society should come together in order to identify and harness their common strengths for sustainable peace. An integrated approach can ensure that high-level policies reflect local realities and benefit from local knowledge, and the direct recommendations and multi-stakeholder dialogue can provide a basis for the formulation of more effective laws, policies and other peacebuilding and state building initiatives at the national and regional levels. Grassroots leaders can offer fresh thinking ideas and expert advice about peacebuilding and advocate for peace. Moreover, through holding regular trainings, organising workshops, and encouraging town hall meetings among stakeholders using any possible means, local leaders can contribute to achieve grassroots peace. Grassroots initiatives can be a powerful tool for informally filling the gaps in the "formal" peacebuilding process.

In addition, the Lederach's peacebuilding pyramid helps us to analyse that the key actors present and involved in each of the levels described, have an important role in the process of building peace and a culture of peace. Collective impact approaches and initiatives in the peacebuilding should be implemented because deeper collaboration, share learning and joint measurement frameworks across peacebuilding actors is crucial. The top leaders need to puts local leadership first and change the structures, attitudes, practice, and processes of collaboration between international and local actors working to promote sustainable peace at countries level.

If we look through our history, the list of advocates for peace and activists includes people who have proactively advocated diplomatic, philosophical, and non-military resolution of major territorial or ideological disputes through nonviolent means and methods. They usually work with others in the overall anti-war and peace movements to focus the world's attention on what they perceive to be the irrationality of violent conflicts, decisions, and actions. They thus initiate and facilitate wide public dialogues intended to non-violently alter long-standing societal agreements directly relating to, and held in place by, the various violent, habitual, and historically fearful thought-processes residing at the core of these conflicts, with the intention of peacefully ending the conflicts themselves.

From long time ago, many young activists and advocates have been leaders and catalysts of important peace movements. Young leaders play a crucial role in preventing and countering violent extremism, peace-building efforts and conflict resolution. Young leaders are demanding changes and they have the power to engage and empower more young people in their communities as well as effectively contribute to the promotion and achievement of sustainable peace across the world. Young people are key stakeholders in development, sustaining peace initiatives, democratic governance, and peacebuilding interventions, so they should be offer an integrated and inclusive approach to continue to participate actively and meaningfully in peace processes that affect their lives. Moreover, young people can be seen as bridges because they play a key role in connecting local actors like civil society organizations, with decision-making actors that are sited at the top leadership level. Consequently, as shown in the Lederach's peacebuilding pyramid, each actors at each level have the power to build peace and advocate for culture of peace. Only the interaction and proper communication and collaboration between these three levels can bring lasting peace and mutual understanding.

- **Challenges in Peace Advocacy**

Many organizations and individuals have extensive experience in grassroots peacebuilding activities, but stepping into advocacy as a peacebuilding approach has its own challenges. While peacebuilding can strive to mend the different dimensions of conflict (personal, relational, structural and cultural) using different strategies, advocacy can particularly be used to transform structural and cultural conflicts. Advocacy and policy engagement, in which peacebuilders call for changes in policy, attitude, laws and procedures, are, therefore, strategies that can lend themselves to effecting change particularly at the structural and cultural levels.

For peacebuilding to be effective, it should be multi-level and multi-sectoral. While bottom up peacebuilding is crucial and the engagement of those who are directly

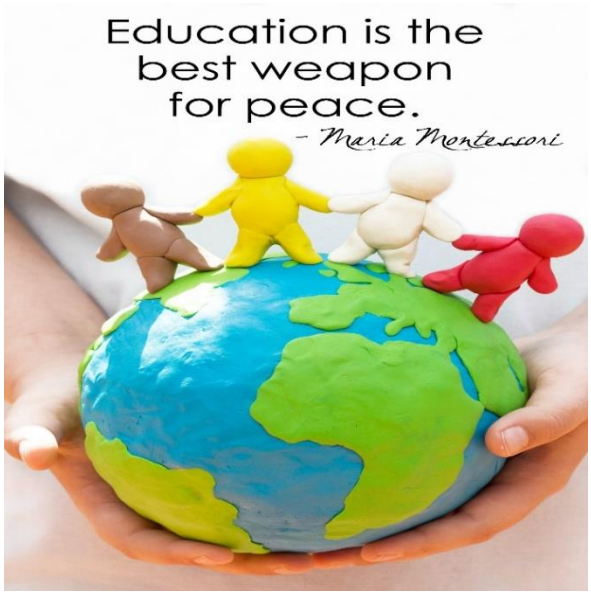
affected by conflict is essential in conflict transformation, their participation alone may not translate into the change needed in the long term. However, the contribution of policies in setting norms and transforming structures, institutions and cultures over time is undeniable, but getting all actors to be involved in the peace process is often times challenging.

In general, peace advocates put their efforts at community level, centred on the priority of peacebuilding and advocacy for culture of peace, and through local partnerships based on expertise and trust, they work toward restoring confidence and social cohesion. They help to build strategic relations to make sure that the agendas for peace are connected to national and international policy levels where decision are taken. However, having influence in a policymaking process normally involves commitment and persistence through a process of mediation and negotiation but such process is very uncertain and not always end successfully. Peace advocates often struggle over ways to access whether their hard work make a meaningful difference, because it can take years to actually change public policy.

From the other hand, peace advocates try to ensure that their advocacy efforts are not only focused on changes in policy and their implementation, but also on strengthening the lobby and advocacy capacity of civil society organizations. For local actors to become social change agents who contribute to the reform of social systems, requires a systemic approach touching all levels of society: local, national and international. To support local stakeholders' efforts to increase institutional legitimacy and accountability peace advocates work through a multi-stakeholder approach, through temporary coalitions of a variety of actors around one issue, and a collective and shared analysis of a problem. Peace advocates use their power in a structured and strategic manner that can results in the development of distinct advocacy pathways. However, documenting the impact in this arena is complex, and it poses unique challenges.

As mentioned previously, getting all actors to be involved in the peace process is also often times challenging, where one actor could reject the participation of another actor. For example, in some societies, some social groups which yield less power, such as women, youth and minority groups (for example, ethnic, sexual, or religious) can experience some restrictions. The alliance with local organisations and agents, mainly women's organisations, has proved to be the most efficient way to promote and ensure a significant participation by women in the prevention of conflicts and in peace-building, but in many societies the right of women to participate, with equal footing to men, in the achievement and consolidation of peace, is not considered as priority and neither as option[3].

However, some specific measures taken for the involvement of women in the political agenda of international peace and security are: the promotion of leadership of more women at decision-making levels, both domestically and in international organisations; the support to civilian organisations in the field in countries at risk, in conflict and post-conflict involved in peace-building process, particularly to women's rights organisations, through dialogue, enhanced visibility, dialogue and regular interchange with Embassies and other national agencies in the field, as well as technical support and mediation training; support to women mediators in peace process, creating a women mediation network similar to that established in Sweden in cooperation with the Folke Bernadotte Academy, or the network of Nordic Women Mediators (NOREF), to help identify women mediators, enhancing their visibility and training.



The lack of peace education could be also great challenge for peace advocates and activists. Education plays a key role in the ending the cycle of violence and in general, peace education can be seen not only as means to respond to conflict and violence but also a proactive measure to building and keeping peace. Any major societal challenge requires that schools play an important role, as they are a major agent of socialization and mostly, the school education reach a whole segment of the society – the young generation. The objective of peace education is to construct a mindset that includes beliefs, values, motivation and behavioural tendencies among children and

3 http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/ari89-2016-solanascardin-8-recommendations-spain-2-national-action-plan-women-peace-security

adolescents that facilitate conflict resolution and peace process and prepare them to live in an era of peace and reconciliation. Consequently, new education policies need to be introduced where curricula must be developed, teachers trained and experiential programs constructed. Peace education requires a systematic, well planned and holistic approach that comes from top down in the educational system, with ideological and pedagogical preparations of the whole educational staff of the system. However, important to mention is that to be developed such measures, there is the need of public support from the highest educational authority (e.g. Minister of Education), well defined and decisive policy, which includes detailed planning on how to carry the peace education as well as an infrastructure and resources. Consequently, without the proper collaboration between all the actors, peace education in school cannot be implemented correctly and effectively and as discussed previously, it can take years to actually change educational policy.

Apart of the formal education that can have a crucial role in the creation of culture of peace, there is also an urgent need of recognition and more quality work in the field of non-formal peace education. Non-formal education programmes can make a clear contribution in providing access to education for populations who may otherwise not have such an opportunity as well as it can play an important role in fostering processes of social transformation and positive peace. Through non-formal educational trainings, youth educators and youth workers can develop their competences of the topic of peace education, having an opportunity later to engage in constructive dialogue with other peers from their region. Non formal education peace programmes can motivate young people to become active citizens and peace envoys, who can implement different programmes on local level and take actions about promoting peace and non-violence culture. Through peace education and the tools to stand up, young people can make an impact locally and globally and advocates for equality, human rights, and peace.

In addition, many peace advocates and activist are working in the non-formal education field, so their work need to be equal recognized and supported. Educational and other relevant public authorities should recognise and value youth work as important contributors to community cohesion, for example through consulting youth workers on the development and implementation of youth policies of concern to young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods and providing funding to youth organisations through clear and simple procedures. National and local policies should support youth organisations and youth workers and provide sustainable conditions (funding and physical support) to deliver non-formal education and learning programmes in disadvantaged areas. Equally important is the improvement of the working conditions of youth workers and the promoting the value of youth work, as well as, the provision of lifelong learning opportunities for youth workers and the exchange of expertise between youth workers and other professionals working with young people[4].

[4] https://www.coe.int/en/web/enter/supporting-non-formal-education-and-youth-work

III. How to design peacebuilding advocacy strategy?

In general, an advocacy strategy is a combination of approaches, techniques and messages by which the planner seeks to achieve the advocacy goals and objectives. Developing such strategy means to look for the most effective and efficient way, to make things happen and to bring the needed changes.

Peacebuilding advocacy is different from other types of advocacy for several reasons. In the peacebuilding advocacy peace stands first and its seen as the end goal. A good illustration of this point is the difference between peacebuilding advocacy and human right advocacy for example. While human rights advocacy would advocate for 'rights' at all costs, peacebuilding advocacy would call for a more comprehensive approach to the call for rights and justice and question the timing, actors, framing etc., of an advocacy to makes sure the pursuit of justice does not undermine the pursuit of peace.

Advocacy strategies designed to create peace need to navigate complex conflict systems which include political, social and economic relationships of power and grievance. Peace processes do not progress steadily in straight lines from cause to effect, but ebb, flow and deviate. Peace deals between leaders are often an essential element of bringing about change, but seldom fully address the factors driving conflict on their own. Peace strategies need to anticipate and adapt to shocks and new threats. Conflicts need to be tackled by including diverse perspectives, and through approaches that connect the grassroots with the national and international. Different initiatives to build peace need to be better aligned.

When we plan an advocacy strategy we need to follow an advocacy strategy format that will guide us through the creation of our plan.

Firstly, we need to define clearly our problems and for what exactly we are advocating:

- What are the key problems?
- What are the goals and objectives for advocacy to resolve the problem(s)?
- What are the target audiences at the local, national and international levels that have the power to resolve the problem(s)?
- What are the key messages for concrete action by the target audiences, as well as the tools and strategies for delivering these messages?

Once we define the problem(s), we need to set our goals and main objectives. The objectives formulated should, as much as possible, be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART), and should indicate:

- Whose opinion do we want to change, and why?
- How should their opinion or behaviour be changed?
- What actions or steps do we want them to take?
- What is the time frame?
- How will we recognise if our efforts have had an impact on opinions and or actions?

The core elements of advocacy strategy are the vision, goals and objectives. Example of peace advocacy strategy goals could be the overcomes of barriers to creating peaceful societies; people centred policy; more coherent initiatives that help prevent and reduce violent conflicts; dialogue and collaboration processes at local, regional and national levels that inform and complement one another; the strengthening of international and regional peacebuilding networks; collaborative peace learning networks and activities drawing on evidence and guidance for effective peace support for policy impact; recommendations and initiatives suggested by marginalised groups, such as women and youth, that emerge from the peace process, are supported by decision-makers, etc.

Later, we need to identify our stakeholders and categorize them. Some questions that can guide us to identify them:

- Who is directly affected by the problem(s)?
- What are the actors whose positions we want to change or who we want to take action?
- Who are the beneficiaries (the stakeholders that would feel a positive change due to a change in policies)?
- Who are the opponents (those who are also engaged in the issue but resist the change)?
- Who are our allies (those who share our vision)?

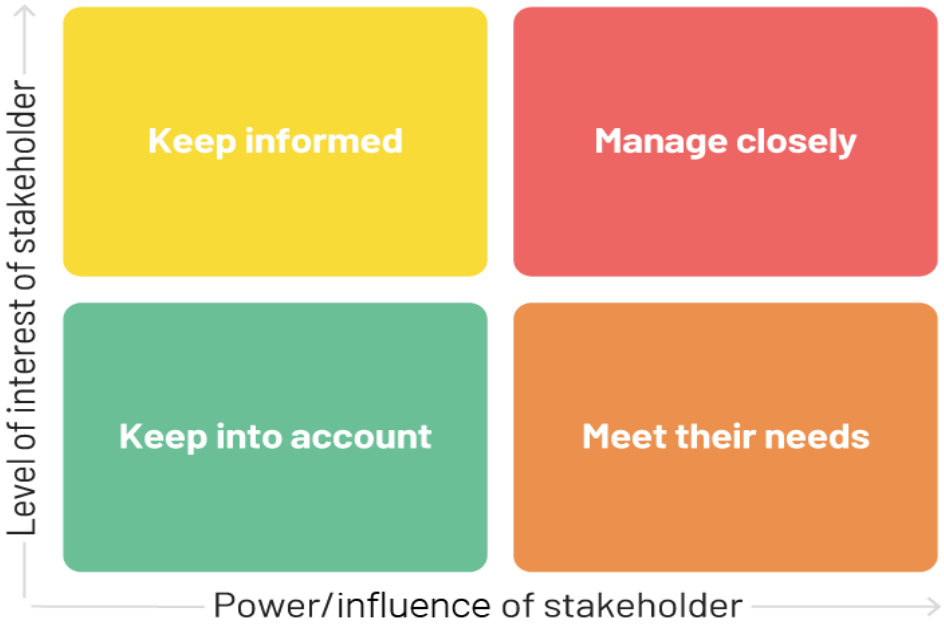
The idea behind stakeholder mapping and understanding the positions and interests of stakeholders is to know beforehand how each actor might react to our proposal and to respond to that in an appropriate manner. It will help us in packaging, framing and communicating parts of the processes. In peacebuilding this is very important, because those who feel excluded from the process or who have a strong opposing position and who also have power can use this as a pretext to “spoil” or work against our proposals. We do not want to disenfranchise, especially when we advocate for inclusive peacebuilding[5].

[5] https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Policy-Advocacy-for-Peacebuilding.pdf

Once actors are identified, it is important to study the interests of each actor and understand their position on the issue as well as consider what their position on our proposed policy message/proposal could be.

The following questions will help us analyse the actors:

- Of the actors identified, who are the most influential?
- Who, if supportive of our initiative, can help us effect a greater change?
- Who are those that could react negatively to our initiative?
- How do we account for the concerns and interests of those that may not be supportive?



Once we know what are the key actors or stakeholders for our peace advocacy strategy we need to rank them according Interest/Influence axes (using the figure above). We can also measure interest and influence in various ways, such as with three levels (Low, Medium and High). In an ideal situation, we would have in-depth knowledge of each key stakeholder and its importance for our strategy as well as the location of each stakeholder in the stakeholder map will determine the intensity, the frequency, and the types of engagement.

Within the planning stage we need to consider also the external realities. It involves assessing the policy environment to see upcoming opportunities or challenges that would be relevant for the advocacy initiative. Some questions to consider are:

- Will we launch the initiative as soon as we have enough evidence and resources, or we will wait for a “window of opportunity”?
- How will we communicate our message to whom (through which channels): media, face to face meetings, publications?
- Format: what ways will we use, letter, speech, policy brief, informal meeting, etc.?

- Risk analysis and management – what are the risks and what will we do to prevent, manage or mitigate them?
- Is the advocacy initiative a short term or long term endeavour? Will there be different phases? What are the activities anticipated and who is responsible for which activity? What is the time line, budget, etc.?

A good tool often used for planning an advocacy strategy is the framework above. It helps us decide, and agree, what we are going to do, when we are going to do it and who is going to do what. This includes deciding on the impact (the end result we hope advocacy will contribute towards), the Outcome (the change that is possible within the lifetime of the plan), Outputs (what we need to deliver to bring the change we hope to make), susses indicators, means of measurement, targets, allies, methods and activities.

It's important to identify who are the different types of audience in the diagram and what change they can bring. For example, the public are the people who are agents of their own and can affect change by themselves or by influencing the decision makers that represent them. While policy advocacy seems to target social or political decision makers only, peacebuilding often entails empowering people. Therefore, peacebuilding advocacy, unlike other types of advocacy, should not just look into who currently has the power to effect change (which would reinforce asymmetric power relations), but

also interrogate how to alter prevailing power dynamics, so that those without power are empowered to yield influence on matters that concern their lives.

Following, influencers are the people or institutions that do not have the final say on the matter but because of their connection or nature/role can influence the thoughts and actions of decision makers. Political advisors, opinion leaders, religious leaders and media are examples of influencers. And the last one are the decision makers. Those are the people and institutions that have the final say on the matter. They are the government officials, judges, elected administrators, community elders, religious leaders, etc.

When we plan all our strategy, we need to develop the message and the means of communication. We need to write statements tailored to different target audiences, which define the issue, state proposed solutions and describe the actions that need to be taken. We need to communicate the message and influence the target audiences, in whatever way is most appropriate.

There are plenty of tools and actions to convey advocacy messages. Some of them includes:

- releasing position statements through the media
- writing letters to policymakers, thus articulating key messages
- negotiating with policymakers in formal and informal meetings
- working with coalitions and local partners
- organising public briefing events or forums, and inviting policymakers to attend
- dedicate advocacy webpage
- create audio visual production such as documentary videos, etc.

In general, the methods can be identified as networking, lobbying, raising awareness and mobilising. The principle for mobilization include those who are affected by the problem. Remember that the most powerful advocates are those experiencing the consequences! Moreover, we need to clarify what we want to achieve by mobilising

people, making it a strategic action, and choose our methods very carefully. They should be effective, appropriate and realistic as well as encourage easy actions, so people can join and take action.

Another important tool for communication is the media. A vibrant media gives people free flowing access to information, enables dialogue, encourages people to express their views, prompts greater political participation and encourages accountability. The media can be an effective tool to build relationships. It can support greater understanding and cohesion between people who consider themselves different from one another. It can give voice to the most marginalized in society. It can serve as a mediator between political parties especially in situations where there is no other means of communication particularly during conflict and post-conflict reconciliation. Media can provide early warning of potential conflicts and possibly create pressure to address the conflict. Moreover, it can allow people to express their fears and frustrations and share experiences and advice with others. It can also link people with power holders, enabling open communication and dialogue.

In addition, the media can motivate people to take action and to participate in community events, but the media's impact on behaviour change is complex. It is more likely to work on attitudes and opinions that shape behaviours rather than directly affecting people's actions.

However, there is no doubt that the mass media of communication have had successively greater impact on people's lives, their ways of thinking and of viewing the world. Digital technologies and social networks have enabled many people around the world to establish virtual networks and online communities. Social media are a key dimension of the way computers and digital technologies are revolutionizing how people create, store, transmit and consume information and knowledge. These new media and ways of networking have important implications for society, culture, and politics. Besides offering alternative means of consuming news, information and entertainment, social media sites present opportunities for establishing and building virtual networks both within countries and across national borders. Social media have embraced peace awareness campaigns which have impacted greatly many societies and create a powerful space to share information about events, protests, social movements that traditional media do not show or support. New media and new media tools have created spaces for more people than at any time previously in history to become engaged with the important issues of our time, and they are great tool for peace advocates and their communication strategies.

Apart of evaluating our communication campaign, the last part of our peace advocacy strategy is its own monitoring and evaluation. We need to monitor and measure regularly and objectively what has been accomplished and what more remains to be done.

Monitoring is the measurement of progress towards the achievement of set objectives, noting which activities are going well and which are not. Evaluation is about judging the

quality and impact of activities. Evaluation asks why some actions went well and others did not, and why some activities had the desired impact while others did not. Both process evaluation (how you worked) and impact evaluation (what changed) need to be considered.

There are numerous ways of monitoring and evaluating advocacy work. Methods can be:

- qualitative (e.g. case studies, stories, opinions, survey questionnaires);
- quantitative (e.g. statistics or trends that indicate a change over time).

Monitoring methods should be chosen according to the indicators that we have selected to evaluate the impact of our work. Monitoring methods may include:

- keeping records of meetings, correspondence or conversations with target audiences and the responses elicited;
- tracking when our key messages or briefing notes are used by elected officials, other key influencers or the media;
- carrying out surveys and interviews to determine the impact your actions have had and the recognition they have received;
- monitoring the media and keeping track of coverage of your topic in the media.

If we look again to our advocacy strategy framework, we can start evaluating the outcomes in each part of the figure. For example, looking the first part where we have the public as an audience and awareness as expected change, we can evaluate if the knowledge of the public increased and if they changed attitudes or beliefs. Going up, we can evaluate if they increased their advocacy capacity and if so, if we manage to successfully mobilize the public voices, which means public took action and supported our advocacy project. After, we can do the same outcome evaluation for the influencers, if we managed to build with them stronger coalitions, and increased or improved media coverage. Moreover, it's important to see if through our mobilization we managed to ensure collaborative action among the different partners. And the last outcomes to evaluate is if we managed to increase political support, and if our advocacy strategy managed to change policy, thanks to the support of the decision makers.

In the last evaluation part, we need to evaluate:

- if the desired policy changes occur
- if the desired policy changes do not occur

If we didn't have changes, we need to revise the strategy again, learn from good practice examples that had positive results, enact a new advocacy process or identify other actions to be taken. It's important to don't give up and keep developing plans that will help you to bring the desired change.

However, keep in mind that advocacy initiatives are typically complex and involve a number of players, often working in coalition. The policy process is influenced by many factors, a large number of which are beyond our control. Advocacy strategies and objectives are rarely static and typically evolve over time, so they can shift quickly depending on changes in political opportunities.

Moreover, policy change is also a long-term process. Accordingly, advocacy initiatives often take place over long periods of time, and policy changes may only become apparent after an advocacy initiative has ended.

Are you ready to advocate for Peace? ☺

IV. Conclusion

At the heart of many violent conflicts lie issues of inequality, injustice and exclusion. Inequalities in human development persist and are likely to increase also because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated vulnerabilities with particularly devastating consequences in developing and conflict-affected countries. Also, the indirect effects of COVID-19 and the actions taken in response can contribute to rising tensions, violence and hate speech, exacerbate existing drivers of conflict and undermine social and economic resilience. Consequently, there is an urgent need of action for collective efforts to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

Peace advocacy has never been more important as well as the promotion of equal participation and full involvement of youth. Young people are key players in the maintenance and promotion of peace, so we need to work towards a strengthened policy framework in support of young people's roles in preventing and transforming conflict, countering violent extremism and building peace. Through advocacy, young people can sustainably contribute to building peace and reach the local, national, and international actors who can create the required change.