

**FULFILLING
THE PROMISES:**
A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR
UN ADVOCACY TO PROMOTE
IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE 2030 AGENDA



FULFILLING THE PROMISES: A PRACTICAL
GUIDE FOR UN ADVOCACY TO PROMOTE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA
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INTRODUCTION

“I see the Secretary-General role and the UN role as instrumental in supporting Member States to make sure that as these recent landmark achievements are implemented they become a true success.”

—
United Nations Secretary-General
António Guterres¹



1. Interview with Time Magazine, July 20, 2016, <http://time.com/4415879/qa-with-un-secretary-general-candidate-antonio-guterres/>

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015, represent a historic milestone, a commitment among nations all across the world to walk together towards the achievement of 17 essential, urgent and measurable advancements for the world's people. From education, to environmental protection, to women's rights, the SDGs represent a progressive, global vision for the future.

However, committing to those goals and actually achieving them by their 2030 deadline is not the same thing. An enormous amount of work must be done to bring the SDGs into reality. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has said that it is up to the Member States of the UN to undertake this work of SDG implementation, but the UN system through all its agencies has a key role to play in supporting Member States as they do so. One key element of that support for implementation will be advocacy.

In the UN system, the word 'advocacy' means many different things all at once. It means conducting research and providing the information needed for governments and other key actors to act based on evidence and fact. It means providing direct support to governments as a partner for policy development and implementation. It also means working with civil society, the media, the corporate sector, social movements and the public to help build the political environment for action. All of these aspects of advocacy will be essential elements of UN advocacy for SDG implementation.

This guide is designed as a practical tool for agencies and staff within the UN system as they plan out their advocacy work on the 2030 Agenda. It applies and promotes the use of 'MAPS', which stands for Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support – the UNDG's approach to supporting Member States achieve the SDGs. More specifically, it builds upon the 'awareness-raising' aspect of the 'Mainstreaming' component, as outlined in the [UNDG Reference Guide for Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). The guide draws on a wide constellation of conversations with UN staff. These include: an intensive two-day UNDG advocacy workshop at UN headquarters in New York in November 2016 with staff from across UN agencies and from all levels of the organization; a week-long mission in March 2017 to Mozambique, leading the UN country team in their country-level SDG advocacy planning process; a set of country-level case studies conducted specifically on UN advocacy lessons for the SDGs; and a separate set of interviews with people throughout the UN system to capture their wisdom on the opportunities and challenges for SDG advocacy.

A key focus of the guide is on how to conduct UN advocacy in a strategic way – an approach that rises above a list of activities and annual deliverables to an overall vision of where each country effort begins, where it aims to go and a plausible path of action to get there.

The guide is divided into three parts. Part One looks at the work of UN advocacy for the 2030 Agenda. Part Two dives into the elements of advocacy strategy and the steps involved in planning an advocacy effort on the SDGs that can be strong and powerful. Part Three offers a collection of specific advocacy resources that UN agencies can use to develop and strengthen their advocacy work. Added to each section are a set of extras such as advocacy planning check lists, words of wisdom from those working on the front line of UN advocacy, and other tools and tips to make the UN's advocacy work on the SDGs as strong as possible.

The work ahead towards 2030 represents a historical commitment not just to those living on our planet today but for the generations that will follow. Advocacy to bring the vision of the SDGs to life is our deep and hopeful contribution to the present, and to the future.

This guide was written by Jim Shultz, the founder and executive director of [The Democracy Center](#), under the guidance of the UNDG Communications and Advocacy Working Group. Functioning between 2015 and 2017, the Working Group was dedicated to joint communications, outreach and advocacy to drive operational effectiveness for results.



THE WORK OF JOINT UN ADVOCACY FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION



UN agencies joining together to promote common goals is not a new idea or a novel one. UN agencies have long seen the value of coordination and collaboration where their goals and objectives intersect. That coordination and collaboration has increased in a more focused way through initiatives such as Delivering as One and, important for advocacy, Communicating as One, as well as strengthening of the Resident Coordinator role at the country level around the world.

The SDGs, however, represent a very different context that calls UN agencies to a much greater level of coordination and in particular towards Advocating as One. Most all of the 17 SDGs involve crossover between UN agencies. Gender equality (SDG 5), for example, touches the mandate of almost all UNDG members. There are similar agency intersections on water and sanitation, no poverty, climate action and other goals. In addition, because the SDGs represent a set of commitments that are bound together, UN missions at the country level are also bound to advocate for their full implementation as a whole package. That makes advocating together essential.

“The Sustainable Development Goals are truly universal and will only be accomplished if we break silos and truly join forces to work together with the private sector, with governments and with committed citizens around the world.”

—
Paloma Escudero,
Director of Communications,
UNICEF



1. THE POWER OF JOINT UN ADVOCACY

In the field at the country level, UN staff point out a set of big advantages to collaborating together in their advocacy on the SDGs.

A. SPEAKING WITH ONE COHERENT VOICE

When all UN agencies at the country level speak in one clear voice, with a coherent and unified message, it amplifies the power of every agency and makes a strong case for SDG implementation. This is far stronger than a set of competing agency voices that make agendas within sustainable development appear as trade-offs rather than synergies.

B. POOLING THE RELATIONSHIPS, CREDIBILITY AND EXPERTISE OF MULTIPLE UN AGENCIES

Like a potluck meal where every guest brings their special dish to the table, joint UN advocacy allows agencies to pool their strengths in common cause. Those strengths include relationships (one agency may have strong connections to the Finance Minister, another to a key daily newspaper, etc.), credibility with different audiences (the public, the government, religious communities, etc.), as well as their expertise in their respective issues.

C. GIVING THE GOVERNMENT ONE CLEAR AND COORDINATED PARTNER

When five different UN agencies approach a Finance Ministry, for example, each asking for competing budgeting considerations, the request of each one is weakened. UN country-level staff have observed that what governments like is a clear point person (or office) through whom they can deal with the UN as a whole. At the same time, it is important to recognize the challenges that exist for joint advocacy. Each UN agency has its own separate mandate and issue focus, which also extends to differing priorities within the SDGs. Each agency also has its own legitimate needs to protect its separate identity and profile, for reasons of fundraising and visibility. A joint UN approach to advocacy means that UN country teams need to think through the intersectoral components of their agendas. They come with one voice for the SDGs, one that repeats and reiterates rather than distracts and fragments; if not, their efforts may not add up to transformative change.

“The SDGs were a mystery at first but the information we received gave us an understanding of how to talk about the goals and move forward. Turkey has a results group on the SDGs and the UNCG had an internal workshop to talk about why the SDGs are important and how to work together.”

—
Ahmet Parla,
Information Officer
at the UN Information Centre, Ankara, Turkey



2. COORDINATION: THE GLUE THAT MAKES JOINT ADVOCACY POSSIBLE

Collaboration between UN agencies is a great ideal but separate pieces of anything need some form of glue to hold them together. In the UN system that glue is having a serious commitment to coordination. What should that coordination look like and how should it operate? Each country and each context is different and there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

A. MODELS FOR JOINT ADVOCACY

Close joint planning and operations from start to finish: In Montenegro the UN agencies work so closely together that 90 percent of them work in a common building. UN staff plan a variety of projects together, including advocacy, from the start and carry forward that joint effort all the way through. That close coordination helps strengthen the UN mission as a whole, but it is also an easier thing to achieve in a nation with a population of less than a million and a total UN staff of less than a hundred. As a country adopting the Delivering as One approach, Montenegro is then well-placed to conduct joint advocacy on the SDGs, which it has begun to do.

One agency leads and others connect for very specific advocacy activities: In some cases it is clear that one agency should take the lead and that others should connect with the advocacy effort at specific points and with specific reference to their own strengths and expertise. An example of this model was the Pacific Free and Equal Campaign aimed at building general public support for LGBTI adults, youth and children in the region, an effort led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In a region where UN staff are spread out across thousands of miles, and on an issue that is new for the UN to advocate on, the campaign allowed other UN agencies to join in for very specific activities, such as reaching out to potential allies in civil society and government. A less effective version of this model is when agencies rotate that coordination responsibility, for a system with less commitment and accountability overall.

“One major challenge to team cohesion is staff rotation. If people rotate every three to five years and you have 16 agencies that means you have rotation in the team every six months.”

—
Alvaro Rodríguez,
UN Resident Coordinator,
Tanzania

Different UN agencies seek common effort and approaches, within the higher purpose of each one's agenda: A more common approach is where UN agencies carry out their advocacy work separately but seek to harmonize their efforts together around bigger themes and overarching issues that connect them. In Colombia, where 23 UN agencies operate with some 2,000 staff, UN agencies took this approach in the country's highly complex peace process, and particularly through joint work on a national law to bring justice to the victims of conflict.

B. KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL UN COORDINATION

Across the UN there are many strong examples of effective coordination between agencies, at the country, regional and global levels. Based on that experience there are two main elements that contribute to the coordination's success:

It must be a designated and financed function: Effective advocacy coordination, according to UN staff, doesn't happen when it is just added on to someone's other work. It actually has to be someone's central job that they are accountable to carry out.

Coordinators must be seen as honest brokers: Effective coordination relies not only on skill and capacity but on trust. All the agencies must see the office and the people in charge of coordination as being genuinely dedicated to every agency's advocacy interests and work and not tipped towards any one agency.

3. THE CONCRETE WORK OF JOINT UN ADVOCACY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SDGS

The work of advocacy for SDG implementation will be different in every country – different actors, different priorities, different processes, and other factors determined by national context. There are however some common elements of work likely to be a factor in most countries, and some common wisdom about how to undertake that UN advocacy effectively.

A. MIGRATING THE UN'S HISTORIC WORK INTO THE SDG FRAMEWORK

Promoting children's health, fighting poverty, advancing gender equity, supporting action on climate and the environment – while each of these are included in the 2030 Agenda, they are not new advocacy issues for UN agencies. UN agencies around the world have been working towards these goals for decades. In the new environment of the 2030 Agenda the task is to migrate all the important work and UN expertise that has come before into a new global framework. There is advocacy power in that remit. All of these issues and the others included in the 17 SDGs are now connected to something that offers a larger vision and higher level of aspiration. The challenge is to link to the new potency for action that higher aspiration brings – a worldwide global commitment – without losing what has come before.

B. DEVELOPING THE UN COUNTRY TEAM'S ADVOCACY VISION FOR THE 2030 AGENDA

A joint effort at the country level for SDG advocacy requires a joint vision that begins at the strategic level and continues onward to the operational. This includes basic questions about where to prioritize UN action (which goals, which governmental processes, etc.), how to divide the work between agencies, what collaboration will look like and what resources need to be mobilized. Nearly 15 years still lie ahead for the advocacy work towards full implementation of the SDGs and UN country-teams need to develop an approach that is sustainable over the full arc of that time.

For more on advocacy vision and effective messaging, see Chapter 2: Maximizing your effectiveness: undertaking SDG advocacy in a strategic way.

“SDG advocacy in the Pacific is particularly challenging. This is across a huge geographic area, which poses logistical challenges linked to varied income levels and cultural and political differences. We need to build awareness about the SDGs and engage with the media on the goals.”

—
Catherine Phuong,
Former Deputy Regional Representative
with OHCHR, Fiji

C. EFFECTIVE MESSAGING

At advocacy's heart is effective communication. It is communication that can interest and inspire, and also communication that can persuade officials and institutions to take action. Before UN agencies begin their SDG advocacy work in earnest it is important to develop the clear and compelling messages they will use as they speak of the 2030 Agenda, with all the different audiences they will engage.



“In Sierra Leone, the country was still dealing with the Ebola crisis when the SDG agenda was adopted at the global level. The positive aspect of this was the SDGs brought a sense of moving from the devastating impact of Ebola to recovery and hopefulness to the government and the people of Sierra Leone, including civil society actors. The government was very receptive and in the forefront to embark on the SDG agenda.”

—
Mary Okumu,
UN Women Representative,
Sierra Leone

“Private sector involvement and buy-in is critical for UN advocacy work, and this will involve acknowledging how the role of the private sector has changed.”

—
Jens Wandel,
Chair, UNDG Business Operations
Working Group, 2014-2017

D. GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

The actors who bear primary responsibility for implementation of the 2030 Agenda are the UN Member States and for that reason UN advocacy to support the agenda's implementation will have engaging governments at its centre. This means engaging with governments at all levels, national and subnational, with an understanding of where the key actions must be taken in each nation's political context. It means having a strategy for engagement with multiple actors within government – executive branch, legislative branch, elected officials, administrative arms and others, again dictated by the political context.

Government engagement will be a mix of formal and informal approaches, all of which will play a role in plans for implementation of the SDGs. On the formal side are official processes such as the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the multi-year plan that outlines UN partnerships and commitments in each country. On the informal side, UN country teams will have to promote the 2030 Agenda through overall relationship-building within government, especially finding and supporting key allies with the information and other resources they will need.

E. ENGAGING CIVIL SOCIETY AND OTHER NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS

Outside of government a whole host of actors will have deep influence on the political fortunes of the 2030 Agenda, and UN engagement with these actors is also an essential advocacy element. UN country teams need to take a broad look at the nation's NGOs, social movements, youth movements, private sector, religious leaders and other communities to see where it can find allies for its advocacy work and where it may find winds blowing in the opposite direction that it will need to address (such as religious opposition on gender rights). The following section on advocacy strategy offers a concrete mapping exercise for doing all this.



F. ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

Making the 2030 Agenda something understood by the broader public and something they feel ownership of is a key element of advocacy to support full implementation. The UN began this process even before the SDGs were approved, with a historic global citizen consultation about what the 2030 Agenda should include. In each country that process of engagement and ownership needs to continue as part of an overall advocacy strategy. This includes effective messaging strategies, direct outreach to specific populations such as youth and women, and other methods.

G. ENGAGING UN STAFF

UN staff are both an important target audience and a key relay to external audiences. Particularly at country level, UN staff work on the front-lines interacting with key audiences – the government, civil society and the public – in a variety of fora. It is critical that they are well-informed and engaged in promoting the 2030 Agenda so that they make a commitment to advancing the SDGs and spread the word as advocates of the global goals. They should be supported through training and other means to build their confidence and increase their ability to recognize and clearly articulate and demonstrate the linkages between the work of the United Nations, generally, and their respective agencies, specifically, to the global goals.

“Effective SDG joint advocacy involves the promotion of a common strategy with the national government in jointly addressing various segments of the population, including unions, religious organizations, private sector and, mainly vulnerable groups in order not to leave any one behind.”
—
Jessica Braver,
Coordination Officer in the Office of the Resident Coordinator, Argentina

“Informed and engaged UN staff, who are able to confidently and clearly communicate the global goals with key partners and publics can be our most effective ambassadors and ultimately are able to advance advocacy goals.”
—
Jacqueline Daldin,
UNFPA Internal Communications Specialist





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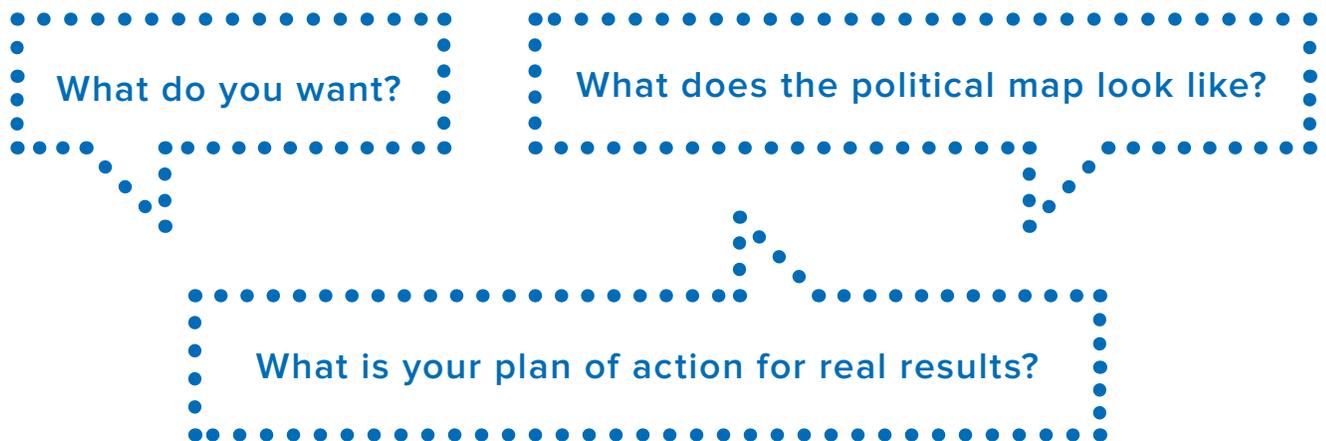
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MAXIMIZING YOUR EFFECTIVENESS: UNDERTAKING SDG ADVOCACY IN A STRATEGIC WAY



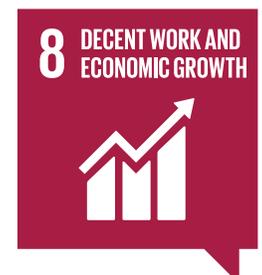
Too often we define our advocacy in terms of our tactics, the specific actions and activities we undertake to move our goals forward and UN advocacy plans are full of such deliverables – a report, public testimony, meetings with officials, a news event, etc. Strategy, however, is something different. Strategy is the wider view that threads all those tactics and activities together into something coherent and powerful. It is a path of action that begins where you actually are, ends where you truly want to be, and has a plausible chance of taking you through the full journey from one to the other.

Many UN offices do not incorporate a genuine process of strategy planning like this into their advocacy work and it loses its potential effectiveness as a result. A thorough strategic planning process for UN advocacy, most especially on the 2030 Agenda, revolves around three basic and essential questions:



“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.”

—
Sun Tzu,
The Art of War



1. What do you want?

The UN's larger advocacy goals for the SDGs need to be clear from the start, internally within the UN country team, among its key advocacy allies, and with those it will seek to influence. Defining and being clear about what you want is about answering three basic questions:

A. WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU ARE TRYING TO SOLVE?

Advocacy is about seeing a problem and setting out to solve it. In the case of the 2030 Agenda, those problems are already laid out at a very high level – gender inequity, environmental degradation, inequalities, etc. The task for UN country teams is to take the problems that the SDGs seek to solve and to articulate them in local terms in compelling ways and in very specific ways. What does gender inequality look like in that country and what are its concrete impacts on the lives of women and girls? What is the impact of climate change in the region and what does that mean in concrete terms such as drought and food access? These problems and impacts must be articulated by UN country teams in ways that are rooted in local facts, data and evidence and made compelling with authentic and specific local stories.

B. WHAT IS THE LONG-TERM SOLUTION YOU ARE PROPOSING?

The 2030 Agenda already lays out the solution in the very broadest of terms, for example: *Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large. The strategic work of country teams is to define those broad solutions in a way that is clear and specific and that speaks to the particular national context.

C. WHAT ARE THE SHORTER-TERM OBJECTIVES THAT BUILD TOWARDS THAT VISION?

In advocacy as in life, few big picture goals are won outright or quickly, and that will certainly be the case for the ambitious goals set out in the 2030 Agenda. Their realization will need to be achieved piece-by-piece through a series of concrete and specific objectives that build on one another over time. One of the most essential elements of strategic advocacy is identifying a set of building-block objectives that achieve two things simultaneously: they lay the policy, political and programme groundwork for going further and they also deliver something concrete and valuable in people's day-to-day lives.

EXAMPLES OF SOME SHORT-TERM 2030 AGENDA OBJECTIVES FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION

- Engage political support for embedding the SDGs into national plans and planning.
- Identify a clear and specific policy or budget agenda that takes some first concrete steps towards SDG implementation.
- Establish a monitoring and accountability mechanism with national, regional and local governments, at the start of SDG implementation.
- Identify gaps in data production with a view to data transparency.
- Identify some core allies within the government who will champion SDG implementation.
- Develop a clear joint-UN approach to dealing with government officials (such as the Finance Ministry) that are key to a collection of UN agencies in their advocacy.

ADVOCACY STRATEGY CHECKLIST: WHAT DO YOU WANT?

- A clear statement of the problem each Sustainable Development Goal or target seeks to address, in a form the public and other audiences can understand.
- A clear and understandable vision of what things look like when it is solved.
- Clarity about what kinds of actions (policy and other) that are required to reach that solution.
- Concrete, measurable, and understandable advocacy objectives for a one year time frame, a five-year time frame, etc.

2. Three steps to creating a political map

In an advocacy effort, in between the place where you begin and the goal you are trying to achieve, lies a path filled with obstacles to be overcome, opportunities to be seized and most especially a set of complex actors and institutions you need to engage in different ways. Mapping those actors and those dynamics is a critical step, as is analyzing the key strategy priorities that arise from that map. Taking action in advocacy without doing that mapping is just as foolish as a chess player making a move without looking at the board. In advocacy strategy that analysis comes in three steps:

A. IDENTIFY WHO HAS THE AUTHORITY AND WHO ELSE WIELDS SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE

In almost every instance there will be some person or institution that has the formal authority to do (or not do) the thing you want done. It could be the Minister of Finance or a local official. Knowing who that is, with accuracy and clarity, is vital. Everything you do is ultimately aimed at getting that authority to act in the way needed to achieve your advocacy goals. In turn, that person's or that institution's decision will be heavily influenced by a wide range of other actors – the media, citizen groups, unions, corporations, political donors or others. At the start of their advocacy planning UN country teams need to identify all of these key and specific actors who will affect the success or failure of their efforts.

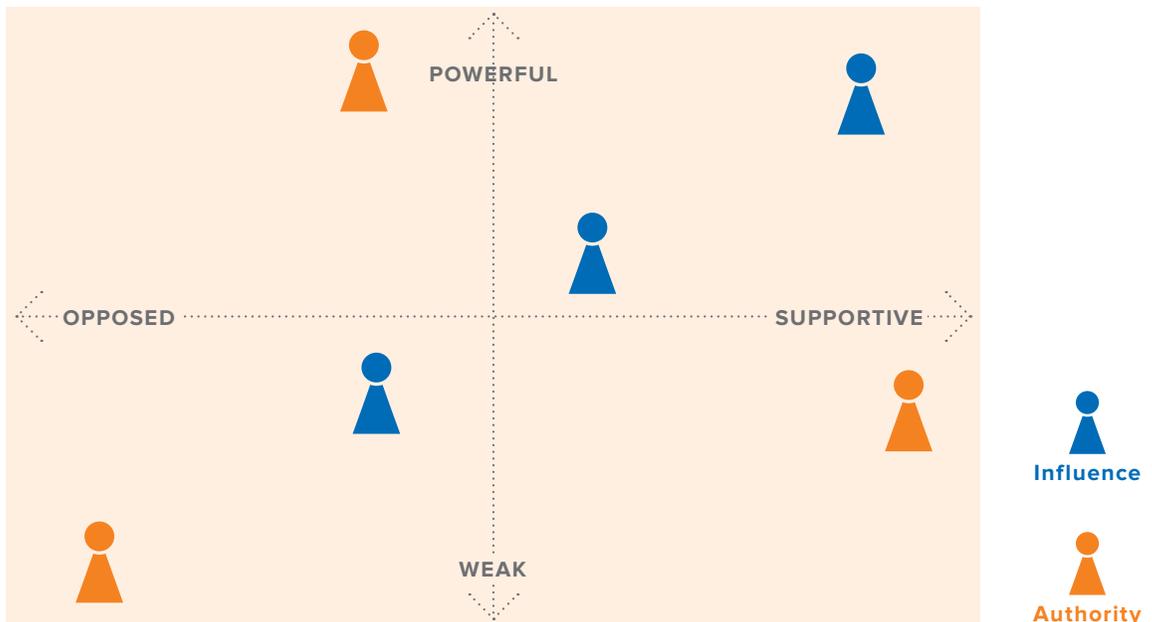
B. DETERMINE WHERE EACH OF THESE ACTORS STANDS IN TERMS OF BOTH THEIR POSITION AND THEIR POWER

With the identification of these different actors in hand, UN country teams should then map out the politics they are dealing with through a grid similar to the one below, looking at where all these actors stand on the issue (supportive or opposed) and how much power they have (powerful or not powerful).

This 'power grid' with all the relevant actors mapped offers a potent visual image of the advocacy context and serves as an indispensable tool for planning strategy.

THE ART OF ADVOCACY STRATEGY

Where do these actors stand in terms of both their position and their power?



C. BASED ON THAT MAP, DEFINE YOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

As you look at that mapping, what does it tell you about the strategic priorities for advancing your objectives? Who has power that you most need to convince to take your side? Who is on your side that you need to help make more powerful? With whom do you need to develop a deeper working alliance? Who is powerful and against you that you most need to deal with in a strategic way?

For example, the Finance Minister might be very powerful in terms of its authority but not supportive of your advocacy objective because of her need to balance many competing demands. Your advocacy mission will be to persuade the Minister towards your side. A youth organization might be strongly supportive but weak in its influence, in which case the work will be to help them become more influential.

Strategic activism is also about setting priorities and a mapping exercise like this helps offer a clear-eyed view of what you are dealing with so that you can set your priorities based on that insight.



ADVOCACY STRATEGY CHECKLIST: THE POLITICAL MAP

- A clear analysis of where the official authority resides to deliver your advocacy objectives
- Solid political intelligence about where those key actors stand on the issue.
- A clear analysis of the other actors who will or could have influence over those with authority, and intelligence about where they stand
- An analysis of what groups and actors you need to help develop more power and influence in order to win
- A clear sense of what actors might constitute a counter-force in opposition to your objective

FIVE KEY IDEAS FOR PARTNER ENGAGEMENT FOR THE 2030 AGENDA

1. Convene an SDG alliance (e.g. civil society, private sector, media, community organizations, new allies) and as a start co-create benchmarks for progress on advocacy for the SDGs.
2. Help build the capacity of other allied actors by giving them tools, support, political cover and concrete and effective ways to be involved in advocacy for the 2030 Agenda.
3. Create a domino effect by helping civil society allies engage and involve other groups and communities with whom they have strong connections (e.g. youth, rural people, women).
4. Engage partners in advocacy for implementation and also in monitoring efforts to track progress.
5. Empower UN partners by letting them take credit for advances rather than having the UN always dominant in terms of visibility.

3. What is your plan of action to win?

With a clear sense of their objectives and a careful analysis of the political complexities their advocacy needs to navigate, UN country teams are positioned to plan out their advocacy plans and actions in a thoughtful and well-grounded way. Three other planning questions sit at the centre as you plan your way forward:

ADVOCACY STRATEGY CHECKLIST: PLAN OF ACTION

- A set of clear and powerful messages aimed at policymakers and the public that the entire UN team is ready to repeat often
- A plan for engaging the government
- A plan for engaging civil society, private sector and other actors
- A plan for engaging the media
- A plan for engaging the public
- An evaluation plan for measuring your advocacy's effectiveness

“UN country teams are crying out for messages on the SDGs and those messages then need to be localized to context.”

—
Madeline Eisner,
UNICEF Senior Advisor



A. MESSAGING: HOW WILL YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR ISSUE?

Few things are as central to the UN's efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda than effective messaging, and yet effective messaging is also something that many UN offices and staff around the world struggle with. UN agencies and staff operate in a world of deep expertise, where issues such as those contained in the SDGs are discussed in significant complexity and often in technical language and acronyms that few outside the UN system would ever understand, especially the public. In the same way that someone multilingual in English, French and Spanish knows which of those languages to speak in any given context, UN country teams and staff undertaking advocacy work need to be able to switch back and forth with fluency between 'technical speak' and the clear and compelling language of advocacy, matched appropriately to each audience (expert, policy-maker or public).

Effective advocacy messaging, especially UN advocacy for the SDGs, is about narrative, about telling a story. This is the problem and this is the solution, for example: *One hundred thousand children in Thailand live in abject poverty and with a modest monthly support grant from the Thai Government to their families we can at least be certain they will have the chance of a basic healthy diet.* Effective advocacy messages and narratives from the UN blend information and human stories together into something genuinely compelling. They steer clear of acronyms. An advocacy effort's messages and narrative is its sheet music to be repeated over and over again in every opportunity possible.

It is also important for UN teams to structure their advocacy messages in an effective way (per the illustration below). Effective SDG messaging has to operate at three different levels at once. The first level is about the aspirations of the SDGs, why they are historic and what they seek to achieve. Then the messaging needs to get into the arguments for each goal, for example, why education for girls benefits both the girls and the nation as a whole. But then these universal messages must be 'contextualized' and made directly relevant to the contexts and situations that are distinct to each country. Again, the task of strategic advocacy is to have mastery of each of these levels of messaging and to know how deep or not deep to go with any given audience.

THE MESSAGE PYRAMID



Finally, it should be clear that it isn't always the UN that should be delivering that message. The power of the SDGs will depend on how deeply they are owned by the public as a whole and by specific constituencies such as young people, women, poor people and others who are their chief beneficiaries and need to also become their visible advocates. Thinking strategically about who is the best messenger is as important as strategically crafting the message.

B. ACTIVITIES AND ACTIONS: WHAT WILL YOU DO TO ADVANCE YOUR OBJECTIVE?

In many ways, picking your actions and activities strategically is like going to a restaurant and choosing what to eat. First you look at your options: What's on the menu (what are all actions possible to do)? What matches your tastes of the moment (which actions do you think will have the most impact)? How much have you got in your wallet (what activities do you actually have the capacity to carry out)? Just as you wouldn't order lunch without seeing what your choices are, it doesn't make sense to set your plan of action without evaluating all your options and picking the mix that makes the most sense in the situation you are in.

It is important that UN country teams don't just fall back on the actions that are institutionally familiar, as in another report, for example. The trap of staying in your comfort zone is like an old saying: *If you have a hammer everything looks like a nail*. What is familiar may not necessarily be the thing that makes most sense to do. This very much includes identifying and working with advocacy partners who add diversity, rootedness and power, including some partners who may be very non-traditional for the UN.

Effective UN advocacy actions to promote the 2030 Agenda can take many forms: public forums to build public interest, awareness and support; meetings with government officials to identify potential first steps towards SDG implementation that can win quick political support; research and analysis that provides power behind the UN team's policy objectives; helping catalyze a civil society coalition that will take the lead on the SDG agenda; approaching television stations to offer a special broadcast on the SDGs and what they mean to people in the country.

There are dozens of possible actions. Generate possibilities with brainstorming, analyse the potential value of each according to your strategic analysis of the

“Elections offer a special opportunity to raise issues such as the 2030 Agenda, to transmit the spirit of the SDGs to the candidates.”

—
Isabel Iturralde,
Communications Officer,
UN Women Ecuador

STRATEGIES FOR ACTION: ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

- Let people know what their governments signed up to deliver. Educate the public about how the SDGs are aimed to impact their lives in concrete ways and how the future of the SDGs is tied to their government’s public policies.
- Help create a sense of public ownership of the SDGs. Let the public know that the goals were created out of a set of global consultations with the people and that it is up to them to push their implementation forward and monitor the progress by their governments (national and subnational) and other key actors such as the private sector.
- Create mechanisms for public engagement. Encourage and create opportunities for people to be engaged directly through action campaigns, public-to-public educational activities and by creating SDG champions among key groups such as women, youth and low-income people.

political map, and look at each through the lens of the capacity of the UN country team. Also take careful stock of special opportunities. The UN teams and individual agencies have made enormous advocacy progress by taking advantage of everything from international summits to national elections as opportunities to raise their advocacy priorities and make them more potent.

C. EVALUATION: HOW CAN YOU TELL IF YOUR STRATEGY IS ACTUALLY WORKING?

In the end even the most adept advocacy strategy is not a guarantee of success. It is an educated guess and along the way that guess needs to be evaluated continually to see if it can be made better based on its encounters with reality. Did you hit a wall that you didn’t anticipate in advance? Has some new opportunity presented itself that is a surprise? Does your strategy still hold? Are your tactics having the impact you hoped? What are the mid-course corrections that make sense along the way?

Evaluation is already an important element of UN work, as it should be for UN advocacy as well. But it is important that UN country teams understand that evaluation of advocacy is a very different thing than evaluation of programmes.

If one’s aim is to evaluate a child vaccination programme, for example, the parameters of that evaluation are relatively clear. Estimates are made in advance about how many newly vaccinated children will come from a set number of doses of vaccine, the number of health workers deployed to the task and the promotion activities designed to motivate parents to have their children inoculated. Then those numbers are checked against results – it’s a math equation.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Advocacy in motion is a trickier thing to evaluate because its progress comes in fits and starts, not a slow and steady rise. It is also hard to assign direct credit to the UN's work in an advocacy context where many other actors (NGOs, etc.) are also working towards the same objectives. Nevertheless, there are all kinds of inputs to advocacy success that can be identified, measured, and used to track your progress.

For example, before government officials formally adopt a change in policy, there are important precursors that can be tracked and measured – private statements of support, public statements of support, introduction of specific proposals in the legislative or executive branches, advancement of those proposals through the process, etc. If public attention has been deemed key to winning, then you can measure media attention, social media attention and other measures of a growing audience and interest. If advocacy alliances are something that is key in your political context you can measure if your support coalition is growing and diversifying.

In the end what makes sense to measure has a good deal with the 'theory of change' upon which your advocacy rests – the political inputs that you believe are key to building power and winning the day.



EVALUATING ADVOCACY PROGRESS: WHAT CAN YOU COUNT?

- Statements of support (private and public)
- Introduction of legislation or budget proposals
- Increased public attention reflected in news articles and stories and social media
- An increased number of allies
- Activities that fit with your 'theory of change'
- Government approval of new laws or programmes



ADVOCACY RESOURCES



3. Advocacy Planning Template for the 2030 Agenda

PART ONE: WHAT DO YOU WANT? (THE ADVOCACY OBJECTIVE)

1. What SDG is involved and what is the nature of the problem it seeks to address? (What are the root causes? Who is affected and how? What are the implications for the country as a whole?)

2. What long-term changes must be sought to address the problem and fully meet that Sustainable Development Goal? (This may include policy changes, budget allocations, administrative actions, private sector efforts and initiatives at national and regional levels, among other changes.)

3. What advocacy objective with a one- to two-year time frame will advance the country towards that larger goal? This may include a process or policy change, for example.

PART TWO: THE POLITICAL MAP

1. Who has the authority?

Analysis of their power and position, what might win their support if you don't have it, and what you need them to do if you do have their support

2. Who has influence?

Analysis of their power and position, what might win their support if you don't have it, and what you need them to do if you do have their support

3. Advocacy partners: Who can help boost your credibility?

Next steps, by whom and when?

4. Advocacy partners: Who can help you with political knowledge or influence?

Next steps, by whom and when?

5. Advocacy partners: Who can help you with having a constituency?

Next steps, by whom and when?

A. Your advocacy messages

Advocacy Message #1

Why it's right, based on the evidence.

To whom and how?

Advocacy Message #2

Why it's good politics or business.

To whom and how?

Advocacy Message #3

Other key points

To whom and how?

B. Your action plan

1. Research and policy developments

What, by when, by whom?

2. Messages, communication and materials

What, by when, by whom?

3. Partner outreach

What, by when, by whom?

4. Outreach to policymakers

What, by when, by whom?

5. Other activities

What, by when, by whom?

6. Resources required

By whom, when?

7. Coordination

Who will oversee and how?

C. Evaluation

1. Key progress indicators and how they will be measured

By whom, how and when?

2. Integrating information from the evaluation into revised strategic plan

By whom, how and when?

Sample Workshop Agenda for the 2030 Agenda

[Note: This agenda is for two days. The workshop can be reduced, expanded and customized based on the needs of the UN team.]

DAY ONE

Morning

1. Opening and introductions
2. Introduction to Advocacy Strategy (overview of planning questions and process)
3. Planning Question One: What do you want?

In either small groups or plenary the UN team looks at the SDGs and identifies those that are priorities for action. Then the participants analyse what types of actions in the longer-term are required to fully implement each goal (e.g. policy change, budgetary allocation, change in public behaviour, etc.). Based on that analysis the group identifies a set of clear advocacy objectives (with a one- to two-year timeframe) that build towards those longer goals. If done in small groups time is allocated for report-backs.

Afternoon

4. Planning Question Two: What does the political map look like?

Participants identify the key actors of authority and influence related to the team's SDG advocacy objectives from the morning and then map them according to their support/opposition and their political power. Then based on that mapping the team analyses the scenario involved to identify a set of strategic advocacy priorities (who to move and how). See Strategy Planning Activity One.

5. 'Take aways' from the day: a quick round of comments by the participants

DAY TWO

Morning

1. Planning Question Three: What will you do? A review of the first day provides answers to this question.
2. Message Development: Exercise, roll play and feedback on video recordings. See Strategy Planning Activity Two.

Afternoon

3. Activities and Actions: In small groups participants develop a list of key activities and actions to be undertaken in a set of key advocacy areas identified in plenary, e.g.: engagement with government, engaging civil society and other actors, engaging the public, etc. Those activities are then laid out on a one-year timeline with responsibilities assigned to each one. See Advocacy Planning Template.
4. Evaluating SDG Advocacy: In plenary participants identify a set of key, measurable indicators of advocacy progress and how data related to those indicators can be collected from the start.
5. Taking an Inventory of Resources: What resources do the UN country teams already have, and what will they need? Participants identify the required advocacy resources. See Strategy Planning Activity Three.
6. 'Take-aways' from the workshop: a quick round of comments by the participants

Strategy Planning Activity One: Developing Your Political Map

PURPOSE AND GOAL

To create, in a clear and visual way, the political map of the actors of authority and influence who will shape the fortunes of what you are advocating for. To have, on the basis of that shared image, a clear analysis of your strategic priorities for advocacy.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. A large sheet of paper (at least a square metre or larger) that recreates the grid structure below:
2. Cards of two different colours, sufficient in number for each participant to have 5 to 10 cards of each of the two colours.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE ACTORS

Organize the group into pairings of two to three people. Pass around two stacks of cards (each stack a separate colour) big enough for people to write 3 to 4 words on. There should be a sufficient number for each pairing to have 5 to 10 cards of each colour. Explain that on the cards of the first colour participants should identify and write down a specific actor who will wield 'authority' over the advocacy objective involved – a lawmaker, a minister, etc. (just one actor per card). Then explain that on the other colour participants should identify a specific actor who will wield 'influence' over the advocacy objective involved – a newspaper, a lobby group, a community organization, etc. (again just one actor per card).

When participants have completed their cards ask the pairing to read aloud just the actors of authority written on the cards and then tape those cards in no particular order onto a large blank piece of paper on the wall (separate from the grid above). Soon into this reading of the cards they will become repetitive so ask if there are any different ones and then stop the exercise when you no longer have new ones. The goal is to have a solid and complete list of those actors. Afterwards repeat the same process with the actors of influence, also aimed at developing a solid and complete list, on cards taped to the large blank sheet.



STEP 2: MAP THE ACTORS

Continuing in plenary, take each actor identified (authority first, then influence) and ask the group to analyse where each belongs on the grid above, based on how much power they have over the advocacy objective (a little or a lot) and where they stand on the issue (supportive, opposed, or in the middle, with unknown being in the middle). Continue to do this process with all the key actors involved until you have a map that resembles the one below, but with specific actors.

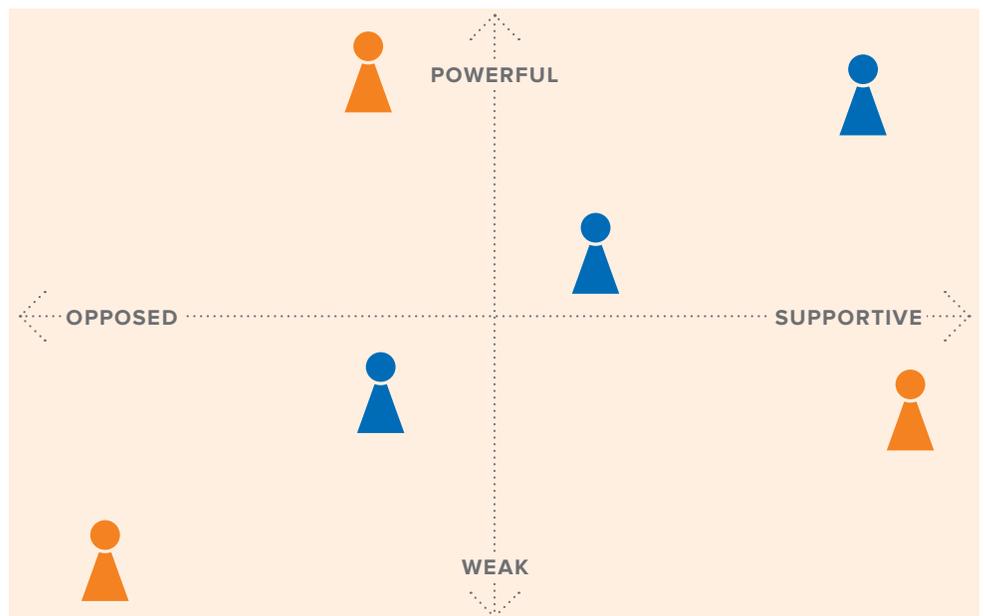


STEP 3: IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In either plenary or in small groups, participants should take time to observe the political map created in the previous step and discuss these questions:

1. Which actors with significant power are not on your side and need to be brought to your side (i.e. a key government minister)?
2. Which actors who are strongly on your side need to be made more powerful (i.e. a parents organization)?
3. Which actors who are resolutely opposed to your objectives and potentially powerful most need to be responded to?
4. Which actors are both strong in support and potentially powerful are most important to mobilize into action?
5. Looking at your answers to the questions above, what are the key priorities for action, i.e. who do you need to approach for support, who do you need to work with more closely, etc.?

If the analysis is done in small groups then their analyses should be shared, discussed and combined in plenary. The end result should be, in plenary, a clear mapping of the politics at hand and a clear analysis about the strategic priorities for advocacy.



Strategy Planning Activity Two: What's Your Message?

PURPOSE AND GOAL

To develop a set of clear and compelling advocacy messages towards advancing your objectives for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda — messages that respond directly to your strategic priorities and to the key arguments involved.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- A video recording camera capable of recording reasonable quality image and sound (a smart phone may also work).
- A quiet and private place to record, away from the general meeting space
- Playback equipment sufficient for all participants to see and hear well



STEP 1: THE ASSIGNMENT

Divide participants into small groups of 4 to 8 people. Half of the groups should be given the following assignment: Prepare a News Conference: You and your UN colleagues are going to conduct a news conference aimed at promoting your advocacy objectives for implementation of the SDGs. Prepare a 2 to 3 minute news conference, with no more than two speakers. Be sure to include your basic message, any details or facts (but not too many) that are relevant and useful, and a brief response to any argument that you think has impact in opposition to your advocacy objectives. Be prepared to answer a brief question or two at the end.

The other half of the groups should be given this assignment: Prepare to Meet the Minister: You and your UN colleagues are going to carry out an advocacy meeting with a minister in the government who is key to your strategy for achieving your advocacy objective for implementation of the SDGs. Prepare a 2 to 3 minute presentation with no more than two speakers. Be sure to include your basic message, any details or facts (but not too many) that are relevant and useful, and a brief response to any argument that you think has impact in opposition to your advocacy objectives. Be prepared to answer a brief question or two at the end.

[Note: Since three to four report-backs from this assignment is about the limit for the plenary session to follow, be sure to only have that number of small groups, even if it requires them to be of a larger size.]

STEP 2: THE RECORDING

The workshop facilitator should set up a mini-studio in a quiet room away from the plenary space. It is useful to have a small table behind which the participants can sit and also some sort of visual background such as a UN banner, etc.

As each group finishes its preparations, no more than two members of the group (just those speaking) should be ushered to the recording space. To save time and stay organized it is useful for a different person to be responsible for shepherding those participants to the recording space and to be sure that the next group is ready and waiting just outside the door as the prior group finishes.

The speakers should be briefed by the person doing the recording that he/she will make a rolling sign to indicate when to begin and offer time signals at one minute and two minutes as well as a wrap-up signal at two and a half minutes with the aim of limiting the speakers to three minutes total. The speakers should be allowed to continue uninterrupted until three minutes and then the recorder/facilitator should pose a question or two, a critical one that forces the speakers to deal directly with a counter argument (i.e. "How is it that you expect the government to finance this effort; is there something else you would cut funds from?"). Each group should only be offered one take.

As efficiently as possible, once the recording is complete, the recorder/facilitator should transfer the recordings to the laptop or whatever device will be used for playback. The recording should take place during a coffee or lunch break in the workshop session.

STEP 3: THE PLAYBACK AND DISCUSSION

In plenary, each recording should be played back uninterrupted one at a time. After each the facilitator should ask a series of questions to provoke discussion:

1. What worked best in this recording?
2. What could have worked better?
3. Was the message clear?
4. What part of the message was most memorable or compelling?
5. How did the participants do in responding to the questions that raised the counter arguments?

The goal of this discussion is for participants to look together and how to craft effective messages in general and effective UN messages on the 2030 Agenda specifically. The facilitator should also offer his/her own observations and suggestions. The focus of the conversation should be on the content of the messages not on the appearance of those being recorded. Training about how to be a presenter is an important topic, but a different one. Discussion time should be allowed at the end, separate for feedback on the specific recordings, to discuss overarching take-aways that come from the exercise as a whole.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



Strategy Planning Activity Three: Building the Wall of Resources for Action

PURPOSE AND GOAL

To carry out an inventory of existing and needed resources for effective UN advocacy on the 2030 Agenda and to identify the gaps that need to be filled and strategies for filling those gaps.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Two sets of differently coloured cards large enough for writing a full sentence, sufficient in number for each participant to have at least 10 cards.
- A blank wall where the cards can be posted with sufficient space in front for the entire plenary group to stand in front of it comfortably.

STEP 1: THE ASSIGNMENT

In plenary give each of the participants about five cards of each of the two colours. Designate one colour as 'got it' and the other as 'need it'. Ask participants, working on their own, to write down a set of key advocacy resources required for effective UN advocacy on the SDGs. Those that the participants believe the UN already has in hand go on the 'got it' cards and those that the UN lacks on the 'need it' cards (just one thing only per card). The facilitator should prime the groups thinking with suggestions such as: the right relationships with government, clear messages, the needed research, etc.

STEP 2: BUILDING THE WALL

After the participants have had time (about 5 minutes) to write their ideas on the cards the facilitator should invite them up to 'the wall' and ask them to fasten their cards to the appropriate side ('got it' or 'need it'). This will produce a scattered collection of cards divided into the two categories. Invite the participants to study the wall together for a few minutes, reading the two sets of posted cards. Then ask participants to step towards the wall and to work together in an ad hoc way to put like cards with like cards until they start to be assembled in clear categories. Still standing at the wall together the facilitator should ask the group to discuss what they see. What are the key resources the UN country team already has for its SDG advocacy and what is lacking? Then the group should be asked to say what things are the priorities under what is missing until there is a consensus around 3 to 4 key resources.

STEP 3: SMALL GROUPS AND REPORT BACKS

The plenary group should then divide into 3 to 4 small groups, each one focusing on one of the priority advocacy resources that is needed (for example, a closer relationship with the Finance Ministry, or clearer data on girls' educational access in the country). The groups should be assembled based on people's interest. The task for these groups is to come back with 2 to 3 concrete ideas of how the UN country team could secure the resource that is needed. The groups should be given about 20 minutes to do their work then be invited back into plenary for a brief round of report backs and plenary discussion.

17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS







UNITED
NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT
GROUP

The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) unites the 32 UN funds, programmes, specialized agencies, departments, and offices that play a role in development. Since 2008, the UNDG has been one of the three pillars of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the highest-level coordination forum of the United Nations system.

At the regional level, six Regional UNDG Teams play a critical role in driving UNDG priorities by supporting UN country teams with strategic priority setting, analysis and advice.

At the country level, 131 UN country teams serving 165 countries and territories work together to increase the synergies and joint impact of the UN system.

The UN Development Operations Coordination Office (UN DOCO) is the secretariat of the UNDG, bringing together the UN development system to promote change and innovation to deliver together on sustainable development.

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