

USING EVIDENCE FOR POLICY ADVOCACY

Mary Assunta
**Consumers Association of Penang/
University of Sydney (2002)**

INVOLVEMENT IN POLICY ADVOCACY

Raising the issue to the national agenda

1. Need to create public awareness, media coverage,
climate for debate

- Surveys, collect samples, etc
- literature research
- Memorandum
- Press Statements/Conferences
- Report/Publication/Consumer magazine
- Educational materials

POLICY PROCESS

1. Determine political hierarchy of issue: Health Vs Trade
2. Public Input: limited space and opportunity for public (NGO) participation
3. Opportunity for public participation must be created or utilise existing ones effectively
 - Controversy, tragedy
 - Persuasion - work with officials in government
 - Elections, change in leadership

POLICY PROCESS

4. Governments function in compartmentalised manner
5. Governments tend to look for solutions without hurting the private sector/foreign investments

WHAT EVIDENCE DO POLICY MAKERS LOOK FOR

1. Some details & basic facts:

- Who does it affect - is it sector specific such as children, women, poor, rural, urban, etc
- How many people are affected: morbidity & mortality
- How much are consumers losing, does it increase/decrease govt revenue
- Is the law being violated/circumvented
- Loss in productivity, loss to property, insurance
- Are there alternatives: viable alternative crops, income
- Can the problem be solved without loss to the private sector, employment, foreign investment, etc
- How does it help the overall economy

WHAT EVIDENCE DO POLICY MAKERS LOOK FOR

2. For tobacco the governments are not interested in only health effects but they want to see how these facts play out in the overall running of government and country and their own political survival

- FRAME THE FACTS APPROPRIATELY

PRACTICAL ADVOCACY

1. Framing the issue appropriately

- Children and tobacco?- Tobacco industry's argument
- Losses in dollars & cents, eg: sugar and the economic crisis

2. Make the issue visible/demonstrative - pictures, actual samples, etc

3. Persuasion Vs Confrontation

PRACTICAL ADVOCACY

4. Supply information to government departments/prepare arguments for them for debate
5. Wide and consistent media coverage
6. Endorsement by Minister: organise events which can be converted into platforms for leaders/policy makers to address issues, make a stand

PRACTICAL ADVOCACY

7. Request meeting with the minister in charge -technical briefing

8. Avoid sensitive issues - human rights?

9. Know the law

10. Timing is Crucial

PRACTICAL ADVOCACY

11. Get ready to counter industry myths & misinformation with facts & figures
12. Maintain constant communication with the government/officials
13. Credibility of Organisation- Consistency, accuracy, reliability and facts

INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC POLICY

2. Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

National Level:

- Memorandum to the Ministry of Health - crucial issues
- Formal meeting
- Informal meetings and discussions
- Report on positions of other governments in the region
- Press publicity

INVOLVEMENT IN POLICY ADVOCACY

2. FCTC

Regional /International Level: ASEAN ISM

- Come prepared with NGO positions
- Follow the procedure and observe protocol for meetings
- Frame positions in line with overall government policy - can a compromise be reached
- Cite examples of measures successfully implemented in other countries, e.g.: total ban on adverts in Thailand and Singapore, 50% of cover of cig packs with pictogram health warning in Canada, no duty free tobacco for European Union, licensing of retailers in Singapore