A CIVIL SOCIETY ADVOCACY GUIDE

AFGHANISTAN

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June 2024

To develop this guide, RTC conducted interviews with various Afghan CSO representatives, HRDs, and journalists both in Afghanistan and in exile. We developed this guide in response to the numerous challenges faced by Afghan CSOs, HRDs, and journalists in their professional environments and while in exile. RTC does not assume responsibility for any technical guidance provided herein. The guidelines are helpful if you are working in Afghanistan. With these guidelines, you are well-positioned to understand the situation more accurately.

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Acronyms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CSO	Civil Society Organization
HRD	Human Rights Defender
ITA	Interim Taliban Authorities
IDP	Internal Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SMT	Senior Management Team
2FA	Two-Factor Authentication
UN	United Nations

PART ONE: ADVOCACY

1. What is civic space?

Civic space refers to the setting where people can actively participate in shaping the political, economic, and social aspects of their communities. Essentially, it provides a platform for individuals and organizations to have a voice in decisions that impact their daily lives. This includes being able to access information, engage in conversations, voice objections or differing opinions and unite with others to share their perspectives.

An inclusive and diverse civic space allows people to freely express their thoughts and beliefs, gather, and form associations. This environment is vital for fostering long-lasting development and harmony across societies. It encourages the exchange of ideas, promotes accountability, and enables communities to advocate for their rights and interests. Such a space supports the democratic process, drives social change, and empowers citizens to contribute meaningfully to the progression of their societies. In essence, a healthy civic space is the cornerstone of a vibrant and dynamic society, ensuring that all voices are heard and respected, thus paving the way for equitable and sustainable development.[1]

2. What is civic engagement?

Civic engagement is the active participation of individuals and communities in the governance of their society, including in decision-making processes, public affairs, and community initiatives. It involves people coming together to address societal issues, promote social change, and contribute to the common good through actions such as volunteering, voting, advocacy, and community development.

3. What is public policy?

Public policy refers to the decisions, actions, and laws adopted by governments at various levels (national and subnational) to address societal issues and achieve public goals. These policies are designed to guide and regulate various aspects of public life, such as healthcare, education, the environment, economic development, social welfare, and more.

Public policy formulation involves a complex process that includes identifying problems, analyzing potential solutions, consulting stakeholders, making decisions, and implementing and evaluating the chosen course of action. Public policies aim to serve the public interest, uphold social values, and promote the overall welfare of society.

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[1] https://www.ohchr.org/en/civic-space

Examples of public policies include regulations on environmental protection, tax laws, healthcare reform, education funding, and social assistance programs. These policies are essential in shaping the way societies operate and addressing challenges to ensure the well-being of their citizens.

4. What is advocacy?

Advocacy is an act of supporting a cause, idea, or group of people with the goal of influencing decision-making, promoting change, or raising awareness about a particular issue in a policy at the national and subnational levels. Advocacy involves speaking up on behalf of one or a group of people to bring attention to a problem, push for policy changes, or defend a specific perspective.

The advocacy campaigners try to educate others, mobilize support, and drive action to address social, political, or economic issues. They may engage in activities such as lobbying government officials, organizing campaigns, creating educational materials, conducting research, or using social media to spread information and rally support for their cause.

Advocacy plays a critical role in democratic societies by giving a voice to marginalized groups, promoting social justice, and holding decision-makers accountable. It empowers individuals and communities to work towards positive change and make a difference in important areas like human rights, environmental protection, healthcare access, and more.

5. What is the current perception of advocacy under the ITA's regulatory framework?

On April 28, 2022, the ITA Ministry of Economy introduced "The Procedure on Controlling and Regulating Activities of Domestic and International Organizations," partially replacing the NGO Law of 2005 and introducing new mechanisms and procedures for NGOs. The Procedure grants extensive authority to regulators over NGOs. Article 5 restricts NGOs to activities related to health, humanitarian aid, refugees and IDPs, agriculture, irrigation and livestock, rural rehabilitation and development, emergency and urgent assistance, education, higher education, and technical and professional projects. This article explicitly prohibits activities not listed, including advocacy. As a result, Afghanistan prohibits NGOs from initiating any advocacy campaigns. According to our findings, Afghan local NGOs are involved in advocacy campaigns, either operating in exile or conducting their work strategically to avoid exposure.

Typically, most NGOs refrain from participating in advocacy campaigns. Advocacy efforts in Afghanistan hinge on an NGO's ability to communicate effectively with authorities, establish strong networks, conduct precise risk assessments, and develop robust strategies and tactics. If you choose to engage in advocacy campaigns with the aim of driving positive changes, it is crucial that you diligently follow the planning stages outlined to achieve your goals. We provide some

recommendations without assuming any responsibility for their outcomes. The situation in Afghanistan is rapidly evolving, so it is essential to stay informed about any new regulatory changes or developments relevant to your work.

PART TWO: THE PLANNING STAGES

1. What are the planning stages?

Figure 1: Planning Stages Cycle

1.1. Problem identification

Problem identification in an advocacy campaign in a restrictive area like Afghanistan involves identifying and defining the key issues or challenges that the campaign aims to address while considering the unique constraints of the environment. Problem identification sets the foundation for an effective advocacy campaign in Afghanistan by ensuring that the issues chosen are relevant, feasible, and impactful within the challenging and restrictive context of the region. In Afghanistan,

do not touch the major problems that are much under ITA's attention; instead, start with a narrowed-down problem and identify achievable goals that enhance advocacy success.

1.1.1. *The problem identification process:*

Observation and Research

Gather information or conduct research to understand the context and identify potential issues.

Define the Situation

Clearly describe the current situtaion and explain why it is a concern.

Identify Challenges

Pinpoint specific obstacles and barriers.

Stakeholder Input

Engage stakeholders to gather diverse perspectives on the issues and their impacts.

Data Analysis

Examine the data to identify patterns, trends, and discrepancies that highlight underlying problems.

Root Cause Analysis

Dig deeper to undercover the root causes behind the surface level.

Prioritization

Determine the significance and urgency of identified problems to decide which to address first.

Goal Alignment

Ensure the identified problems align with your overall objectives.

Feedback and Validation

Seek input to validate your findings and gain additional insights.

Refinement

Based on feedback and further analysis, refine your problem statement for clarity and precision.

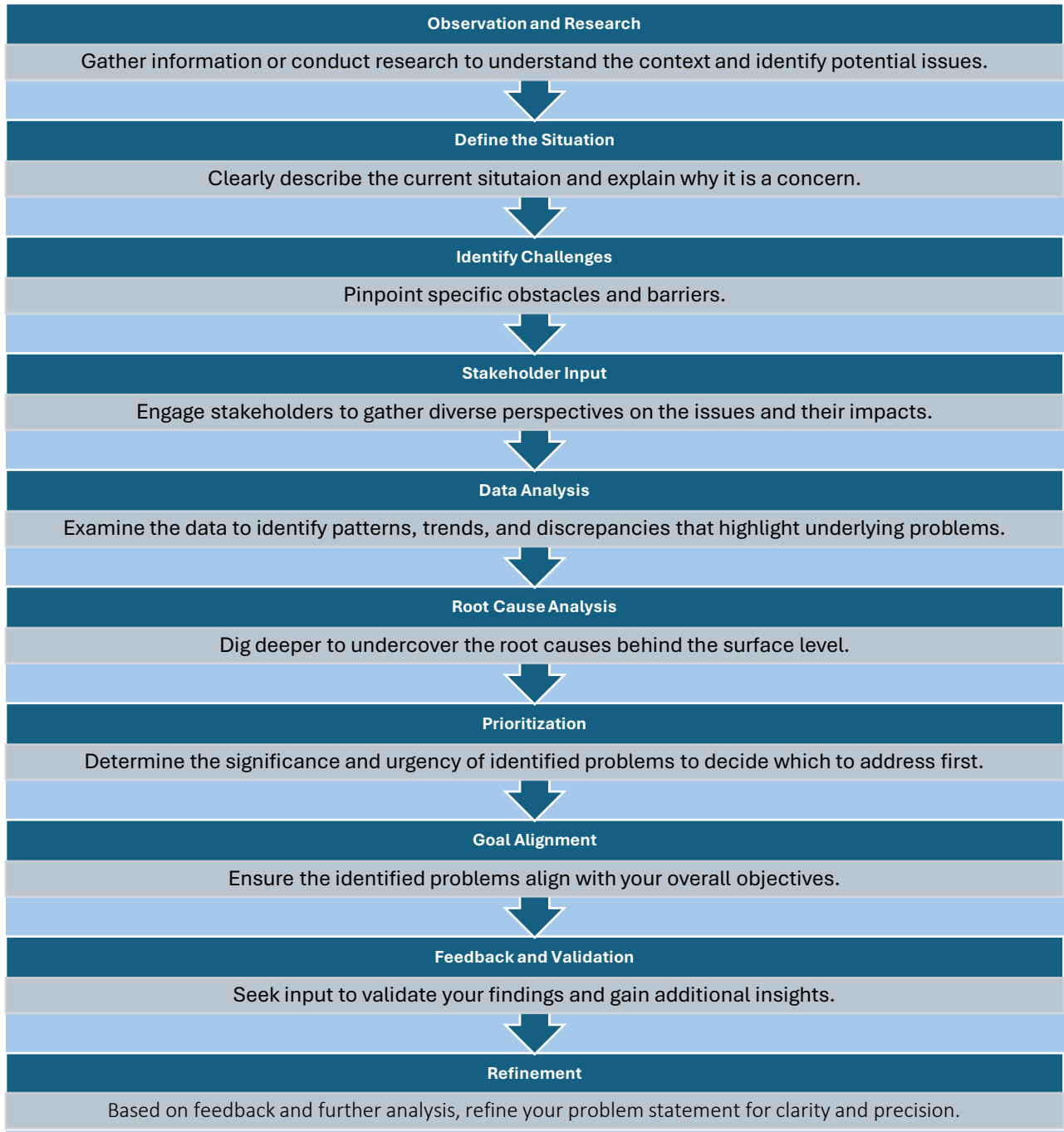*Figure 2: Problem Identification Process*

1.1.2. The framework for analyzing problems

Problem	Consequences	Cause	Solutions
Definition: Clearly define the issue or challenge. Understanding: Grasp the nature and scope of the problem. Impact: Recognize how the problem affects individuals or the community.	Effects: Identify the direct and indirect outcomes of the problem. Implications: Understand the short-term and long-term consequences. Stakeholders: Consider who is impacted by the problem and how.	Root Factors: Investigate the underlying reasons behind the problem. Contributing Factors: Identify different elements that lead to the issue. Patterns: Recognize recurring themes or trends that contribute to the problem.	Strategies: Explore potential approaches to address the problem. Feasibility: Assess the practicality and viability of proposed solutions. Implementation: Plan how solutions can be effectively executed and monitored.

Figure 3: Problem Analysis Framework

1.2. Goal and objectives identification

1.2.1. How can you distinguish between a goal and an objective?

Goal	Objectives
The main difference between a goal and an objective lies in their scope and specificity.	
Scope: Goals are broad, overarching aims that outline the desired outcome. Nature: They are strategic, long-term aspirations that provide direction for overall achievement. Measurability: Goals are generally qualitative.	Scope: Objectives are specific, measurable steps that break down the goal into smaller, achievable targets. Nature: They are tactical, short-term actions that serve as stepping stones to achieving the goal.

	Measurability: Objectives are quantifiable, with clear metrics, milestones, and deadlines to track progress effectively.

Figure 4: Goal and objectives

1.2.2. *What is the SMART framework and how can it be applied to setting goals?*

When planning an advocacy campaign in Afghanistan, applying the SMART framework is crucial for ensuring effective and achievable goals. SMART is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. It is a framework used to set clear and attainable goals.

SMART	**S**	Specific:	The goal should be clear and specific, so that anyone involved understands exactly what is expected, why it is important, and what their role is.
	M	Measurable:	The goal should include criteria for measuring progress and success. This helps to stay on track and reach the target by providing tangible evidence of completion.
	A	Achievable:	The goal should be realistic and attainable, considering the available resources, skills, and time frame. It should challenge the individual or team but remain possible to achieve.
	R	Relevant:	The goal should matter and align with other relevant objectives. It should be worthwhile and meet your needs or fit within your larger plans.
	T	Time-bound:	The goal should have a clear deadline, creating a sense of urgency and prompting prioritization. This helps to focus efforts and keep on track.

Figure 5: SMART Framework

1.2.3. *How to apply the SMART framework in the current context of Afghanistan?*

Numerous advocacy campaigns worldwide focus on education rights, inclusive governance, and human rights for Afghan people, both within the country and among Afghan diaspora communities. However, these advocacy efforts often articulate overarching goals and objectives that run counter to ITA's policies. Despite these campaigns, as of May 2024, there have been no tangible achievements. For international NGOs and Afghan local NGOs in exile operating outside Afghanistan, it will be feasible to advocate for general policies because they are operating in a safer civic space but for NGOs operating inside Afghanistan it will be risky and challenging to advocate for these polices in general and oppose ITA. For NGOs operating inside Afghanistan, it is

more feasible and safer to engage in narrowed-down policy reforms in subnational levels. To ensure success in advocacy campaigns within Afghanistan, please follow the following tactics:

- Identify the problem and establish realistic, achievable goal and objectives over a determined period.

Example: Evaluate the restricted education access for girls in Afghanistan. Given the sensitivity of this issue, it would be impractical for an Afghanistan-based NGO to advocate for the removal of this restriction. On the contrary, an NGO can set an achievable goal to remove education restrictions at a local medical institute for female students taught by female doctors and instructors. This goal can be realistic, achievable and the objectives are measurable within a specified timeframe.

- Set the advocacy objectives clear and focussed.

Example: To get approval for the institute, develop specific and focused objectives; increase the number of institute branches by five in Kabul and provincial cities; and increase the number of female students in rural areas by 200 within two years.

- Starting with a narrowed-down and achievable goal enhances advocacy success.

Example: International and Afghan NGOs in exile may or may not agree to advocate for remove of the restriction on female students' access to education in general. Nevertheless, local NGOs can advocate for the approval of an institute in Kabul and some rural areas. This will help to start with a narrowed-down and achievable goal and enhance advocacy success in the long run.

- Identify short-term objectives and map steps towards long-term goals in restrictive settings to counter challenges and maintain motivation.

Example: As a short-term objective, an NGO can start advocating for the approval of an institute in a single city. In the long term, NGOs can advocate for the expansion of the institute to several regional provinces.

The questions you must answer while setting your goal and objectives:

1. What specific change are you seeking to achieve through the advocacy campaign?
2. How do the goal align with the unique context, challenges, and needs of the audience?
3. How do you identify intermediate objectives to effectively progress towards the overarching goal?
4. Who are the target audience for your advocacy campaign?
5. Who are the stakeholders and beneficiaries for your advocacy campaign?
6. What strategies and tactics are most suitable given the local dynamics, constraints, and available resources?

7. How will the goals and objectives of the advocacy campaign contribute to positive impact and sustainable change?

1.2.4. Turning goal and objectives into tactic

Goal	Objective(s)	Tactic steps
Obtain official approval for the institute and its expansion plans.	Increase the number of institute branches in Kabul and provincial cities by five within the next two years. Enhance female student enrollment in rural areas by 200 students within the same timeframe.	Identify key influencers who can help you get approval from ITA for the institute. Collaborate with local authorities to expedite approval processes. Conduct targeted outreach campaigns in rural communities to increase the branches and female student enrollment. Offer scholarships or incentives to encourage female students to enroll in rural areas.

Figure 6: Turning goal and objectives into tactics.

1.3. Stakeholders, and targets determination

Identifying stakeholders in Afghanistan entails recognizing those who have a stake in the project's success or failure, including beneficiaries, local partners, international donors, religious leaders (Mulla Imams), community leaders (Malik, Arbab), neighborhood leaders (Wakil Guzar), and authorities. Determining targets means identifying specific groups or influential individuals within the stakeholder network that advocacy efforts aim to influence or engage with, often to create a desired impact or change in behavior, policy, or perception. By pinpointing both stakeholders and targets, organizations can tailor their strategies, messages, and tactics effectively to achieve their objectives while considering the interests and needs of key stakeholders, including the diverse cultural and social dynamics unique to Afghanistan.

Stakeholders: identify any individuals, religious leaders (Mulla Imams), community leaders (Malik, Arbab), neighborhood leaders (Wakil Guzar), organizations, or groups that are already supportive

of your cause or are influential voices in the community. These stakeholders and allies can provide valuable support, endorsement, and collaboration for your advocacy efforts.

Target audiences: Identify your target audience. Clearly outline the specific actions or changes you are requesting from your target audience. Tailor your advocacy strategies and messages to effectively reach and resonate with this target audience.

- Identify decision-makers: Individuals with the authority and capability to enact change.

Amir of Taliban, the prime minister, the minister of justice, the other ministers, the directors and the provincial governors.

- Key Influencers: Individuals with the capacity to sway decision-makers.

Religious leaders (Mulla Imams), tribe leaders, community leaders (Malik, Arbab), neighborhood leader (Wakil Guzar).

- Impacted audiences: Individuals directly or indirectly affected by relevant policies.

People, women, children, activists, journalists, Students, Patients, Employees, Consumers, Local Communities

1.3.1. Mapping stakeholders and targets

Major stakeholders and targets	Name of Institution	Point of contact	Interests/stakes	Positions
Authorities/ targets				
National level Provincial level District level				
Local Stakeholders				
NGOs Media Religious leaders (Mulla Imams) Tribe leaders Community leaders (Malik, Arbab) Neighborhood leader (Wakil Guzar) Academia and experts				
International stakeholders				

Donors INGOs UN bodies Allies				

Figure 7: mapping stakeholders and target audiences.

The questions you must answer while mapping your stakeholders and target audiences:

1. Who are the key stakeholders?
2. Who are the target audiences you want to influence?
3. What are the interests, positions, and influence levels of the target audiences in relation to the campaign goals?
4. How can we categorize these stakeholders according to their support, neutrality, or opposition to the advocacy objectives?
5. What are the effective strategies for engaging and mobilizing these stakeholders?
6. How do you identify and segment the target audience so that advocacy messages and initiatives are tailored accordingly?
7. How can you reach, engage, and mobilize the stakeholders to support the advocacy campaign goals?
8. How can the involvement and support of stakeholders and target audiences contribute to the success of the advocacy campaign in Afghanistan?
9. Who is likely to collaborate with you?
10. What partnerships could offer support and protection?
11. Who might resist your endeavors?
12. Is there public backing for your campaign?

1.4. Risk assessment and strategy development

Risk assessment and strategy development are vital components of an advocacy campaign in a restrictive environment. Risk assessment involves the systematic process of identifying, analyzing, and evaluating potential risks that could hinder the campaign's success. This process typically includes understanding potential legal repercussions, political backlash, or social resistance, assessing their impact, and developing mitigation strategies to minimize negative consequences.

1.4.1. Steps to consider

- Recognize and list all potential risks, uncertainties, and obstacles that could impact the advocacy campaign's objectives and outcomes.
- Assess the likelihood of each identified risk occurring and analyze the potential impact or consequences on the campaign's objectives and tactics.
- Prioritize the identified risks based on their severity, likelihood, and potential impact to determine the most critical risks that need to be addressed.

- Develop strategies to mitigate risks by carefully planning actions, considering different scenarios, and preparing responses to minimize negative consequences.
- Develop a flexible strategy that can adapt to changing circumstances, unforeseen challenges, and responses from the restrictive authorities.
- Define clear and specific goals that align with the advocacy campaign's mission while considering the restrictions imposed by the authorities.
- Explore creative and non-confrontational advocacy tactics that can effectively communicate the message and mobilize support while navigating restrictions.
- Explain how to build alliances and partnerships with like-minded individuals, religious leaders (Mulla Imams), community leaders (Malik/ Arbab), neighborhood leader (Wakil Guzar), organizations, or groups and international networks to bolster legitimacy, amplify voices, and increase advocacy impact despite authorities' constraints.

1.4.2. _Opposition strategy planner_

Goal	Objectives	Opposition Targets	Tactics	Risks	Timeframe
The overarching aim you seek to achieve in countering or addressing the opposition.	Specific, measurable steps that break down the goal into actionable targets, providing a clear pathway to success.	Individuals, groups, or entities that are the focus of your efforts to counter or engage with, based on their stance or influence.	The specific actions and strategies you will use to achieve your objectives and reach your goal.	Potential challenges, threats, or adverse consequences associated with your tactics and strategy.	The period within which each step, objective, and overall goal should be achieved, ensuring timely and organized execution.

Figure 8: Opposition Strategy Planner

1.4.3. _Organization strategy planner_

Goal	Objectives	Organizations, Constituents, Allies	Tactics to Empower Organizations and Individuals in Advocacy Endeavors	Timeframe
Represents the overarching aim or desired	Specific, measurable targets that contribute to the	Refers to the various groups, individuals, and partners involved or	Specific actions and strategies designed to strengthen and support both organizational structures and individual	The designated period within which activities,

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outcome that the organization seeks to achieve through its advocacy efforts.	accomplishment of the goal, breaking it down into actionable steps.	supportive of the advocacy work, highlighting key stakeholders.	advocates in advancing the advocacy mission.	objectives, and goals are planned to be achieved, providing a structured framework for planning and evaluation.

Figure 9: Organization Strategy Planner

1.4.4. *Risk matrix in advocacy campaign:*

Likelihood		Very likely	Likely	Unlikely	Highly Unlikely
Consequences	Fatality	high	high	high	medium
	Major	high	high	medium	medium
	Minor	high	medium	medium	low
	Negligible	medium	medium	low	low

Figure 10: Risk Matrix (Adopted from Safety Culture).

When develop risk assessment and strategy, consider the following questions:

1. What are the specific risks associated with your advocacy campaign?
2. How might these risks impact the advocacy campaign's objectives, stakeholders, and activities?
3. What strategies can we implement to mitigate the identified risks and minimize their potential negative outcomes?
4. How adaptable and flexible should the strategy be?
5. Can you employ alternative tactics to overcome obstacles and achieve your advocacy goal?
6. What do you want to change?
7. Who do you persuade to enact this change?
8. Do you need alliances and partnerships with individuals, religious leaders (Mulla Imams), community leaders (Malik/ Arbab), neighborhood leaders (Wakil Guzar), organizations, groups, and international networks?
9. In the target audience, who do you persuade to enact the changes?
10. How do you effectively engage with these decision-makers or influencers?

1.4.5. *Opportunities and threats assessment matrix*

Relevant targets	Opportunities	Threats

These targets may include specific policymakers, ITA's authorities, or influential community leaders with the power to enact or influence changes. Clearly defining these targets helps develop focused strategies and messages that resonate with the audience and achieve desired outcomes.	Opportunities may arise from political shifts, such as new leadership that is open to reform or changes in international relations that pressure domestic policy adjustments. Collaborations with international NGOs, leveraging social media, and gaining support from influential cultural or religious figures are significant opportunities.	The threats include political instability, repression by authorities, and security risks for activists. The instable political climate can lead to sudden policy shifts, while repressive actions such as arrests, or harassment of activists pose significant dangers. Public opposition or counter-campaigns can spread disinformation, and resource constraints, such as limited funding or manpower, can impede progress.

Figure 11: Opportunities and Threats Assessment Matrix

1.5. *Message development*

An advocacy campaign message is a concise, compelling, and targeted communication that conveys the advocacy campaign's main goal, objectives, and calls to action. This message serves to raise awareness, mobilize support, and influence key stakeholders, decision-makers, and the broader public on a specific issue or cause. It often summarizes the campaign's key messages, values, and desired outcomes in a way that resonates with the audience and inspires action or change. We develop the advocacy campaign message to effectively communicate the campaign's urgency, importance, and impact, with the aim of driving engagement, mobilizing resources, and bringing about the desired change or response.

Effective advocacy campaigns use tailored messaging to reach a variety of audiences, with public communications targeting the community and specific messages addressing stakeholders directly. To optimize the impact of advocacy messages, understanding the goals and audience targets is key. Developing messages that resonate with the audience, whether authorities, the public, or the media, boosts engagement. By aligning advocacy messages creatively with the audience's experiences or concerns, the likelihood of success increases. Incorporating evidence-based strategies is essential, ensuring messages suit varying audience responses by combining factual data with personal narratives or emotive elements for a more impactful delivery.

While developing your advocacy message, it's important to follow these steps:

1. Clearly define what you want to achieve with your advocacy campaign.
2. Determine who your target audience is.
3. Gather relevant data, facts, and stories that support your advocacy campaign.
4. Develop a clear and concise message.
   - Begin with a powerful statement or question to capture attention.

- Clearly articulate the issue you are addressing.
- Present a clear and achievable solution to the problem.
- Specify what you want your audience to do (e.g., sign a petition, contact a legislator, or attend an event).

5. By touching on an emotional level, you make your message more persuasive and memorable.
6. Share your draft message with a small group of trusted individuals for feedback.
7. Decide on the safest platforms to disseminate your message, such as secure social media, or email.
8. Ensure that your message is consistent across all channels and communications.
9. Actively engage with your audience, respond to their questions and concerns, and encourage them to act.
10. Track your message's impact and be prepared to adjust based on feedback and outcomes.

When crafting a message for an advocacy campaign, keep the following questions in mind:

1. What are the local laws and cultural norms relevant to your cause?
2. Who is the safest and most trustworthy audience?
3. Does your message avoid cultural, political, or religious sensitivities?
4. What is a secure channel for communicating and disseminating our message?
5. How do you frame the message addressing the issue so that it aligns with local values or needs?
6. Do you need to get feedback from potential allies within the community?
7. What languages do you use to convey your message?

1.6. *Advocacy tactics preference*

You can tailor the tactics outlined in this guide to inspire innovative approaches to your advocacy campaign in Afghanistan. It is vital to assess your specific situation and resources, carefully weighing the risks and benefits involved. Once you have identified your goal, objectives, and strategy, you can design the campaign's tactics, ensuring they adapt to the specific risks in your environment. Your strategy serves as a roadmap to your goal, and your tactics should reflect the opportunities, challenges, and risks present in Afghanistan. Choosing tactics in such a context is a balancing act with no definitive answers; it depends on your nuanced understanding of the local context, available resources, and associated risks. Effective advocacy often employs multiple tactics and may need to adapt if the context changes, risks escalate, or certain tactics prove ineffective. Continuously explore various tactics to identify those best suited to your unique situation, as this adaptability is crucial for maintaining momentum and achieving your advocacy goals while ensuring the safety and security of everyone involved.

These questions will help you assess the tactics and apply them to your situation in Afghanistan:

1. Is this tactic appropriate for my issue and the Afghan context?
2. Who can I discuss this tactic with?
3. Which other Afghan groups should be aware of this tactic?
4. Have I ever encountered or used a similar tactic, and was it successful?
5. How will this tactic contribute to achieving my objectives?
6. Will this tactic effectively reach my target audience?
7. Has my specific target group previously used this tactic?
8. What resources will be required for implementing this tactic?
9. Who should I consult with for further information on this tactic?
10. How can I form alliances to support this tactic's implementation?
11. What potential reactions might my issue's opponents have to this tactic?
12. What is the level of risk associated with using this tactic, and am I ready to accept it?
13. How can I minimize the risks involved in implementing this tactic?
14. Can we adapt parts of this tactic for use in Afghanistan?
15. Is it possible to integrate this tactic with other tactics?
16. What contingency plan do I have in case this tactic fails to yield the expected results?
17. How will I proceed if this tactic does not work as anticipated?

1.6.1. Advocacy campaign planning chart:

Goal	Resources and Assets	Support/ Opposition	Targets/ Agents of Change	Strategies	Action Steps
This is the overarching objective or desired outcome that the advocacy campaign aims to achieve.	These are the tools, people, funds, or materials available to support the campaign.	Identifying individuals, groups, or entities that are in favor of or against the campaign.	Specific groups or individuals within the stakeholder network that the campaign aims to influence or engage with to create the desired impact.	The overarching approaches or plans that outline how the campaign will achieve its goals by leveraging resources and engaging with stakeholders.	These are the specific tasks, activities, or steps that need to be taken to implement the strategies and move the campaign forward towards its objectives.

Figure 12: Advocacy Campaign Planning Chart

1.6.2.   Planning tactics chart:

Action/tactic	By Whom	By when	Resources and support required.	Potential opponents
Describe the specific action or tactic planned for implementation.	Specify the individual or group responsible for executing the action.	Indicate the timeline or deadline by which the action is to be completed.	Lists the resources, assistance, or support necessary for the successful execution of the action.	Identifies individuals, groups, or entities that may oppose or hinder the implementation of the action.

Figure 13: Planning Tactics Chart

1.7. Monitoring and evaluation

M&E is crucial for the success of an advocacy campaign. This process involves not just tracking and assessing progress but also learning and adapting along the way. In a restrictive environment, it's important to design an M&E framework that considers the specific challenges and opportunities. This starts with setting clear goal, objectives, and key performance indicators that match the campaign's goal. Collecting and analyzing data continuously is essential, using both numbers and personal stories to understand the campaign's impacts. For example, you might look at how many policy meetings you've had, how many authorities you met, how many beneficiaries' you've had, or what policy has changed due to your campaign. Stories and feedback from stakeholders, narrative reports, and case studies are all equally important because they provide a deeper understanding of how your efforts are receiving and influencing change.

Building in regular moments to reflect on your progress helps you see what's working, what isn't, and what adjustments you need to make. These periods of review are vital to keeping the campaign flexible and responsive to new developments. Documenting every step of the campaign serves as both a record of your activities and a guide for future efforts. This includes keeping detailed notes on our interactions with key stakeholders, the outcomes of your meetings, any media coverage you receive in case we expose your campaign, and any shifts in policy or public perception. You must also prioritize security, anonymizing sensitive data, and protecting the identities of those involved. Working together with local partners and communities adds valuable insights to your evaluation, bringing in on-the-ground perspectives.

Ultimately, a well-executed M&E system ensures that your advocacy campaigns are not only evidence-based but also adaptable and effective, leading to meaningful and lasting policy changes in this challenging environment.

Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

Program:

Indicator No.	Sub Indicator No.	Indicators	Responsible Team	Baseline	Target PY 2024	PY 2024 Actual (Total)	Target PY 2025	PY 2025 Actual (Total)	Target PY 2026	PY 2026 Actual (Total)	PY 2026 Actual (Total)	Remarks
Output Indicators												
Outcome Indicators												
Impact Indicators												

Figure 14: Performance M&E Plan

PART THREE: FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHILE PLANNING YOUR ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

1. Legislative Body

Following the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021, the Afghan parliament disintegrated. The regulatory structure under ITA is intricate and involves various hierarchies of authority responsible for endorsing laws, regulations, decrees, directives, and orders, including the amir al-mu'minin of the Taliban (their supreme leader), their prime minister, the minister of justice, other ministers and directors at the national level, and the provincial governors and provincial directors at the subnational level. Launching an advocacy campaign to bring about national change presents significant challenges. Advocating for policy reforms to higher-ranking ITA officials may be met with resistance, as diverging from their decisions can be viewed as contravening Sharia. Consequently, obtaining support for such endeavors becomes arduous. While pursuing advocacy campaigns directed at lower-level and subnational-level authorities for policy reform may be more feasible, However, it necessitates a strategic approach. When participating in an advocacy campaign targeting authorities at various levels of hierarchy, please refer to Figure 8: Risk Matrix.

Authorities at different levels of legislative hierarchy	Target area	Success	Level of risk
National level			
Amir al-mu'minin of Taliban (supreme leader)	Major polices - National level	Unachievable	High
The prime minister	Major polices - National level	Unachievable	High
Minister of justice	Major polices - National level	Unachievable	Medium
Other ministers	Major polices - National level	Unachievable	Medium
	narrowed-down policies – subnational level	Achievable	Medium
Directors	narrowed-down policies – subnational level	Achievable	Low
Subnational level			
Provincial governors	narrowed-down policies – subnational level	Achievable	Low
Provincial directors	narrowed-down policies –	Achievable	Low

	subnational level		
District governors	narrowed-down policies – subnational level	Achievable	Low

Figure 15: Legislative Hierarchy

2. Regulatory framework and sharia

The Taliban views challenging a regulatory framework originating from their amir al-mu'minin as a defiance of Sharia. They perceive any regulations endorsed by their amir al-mu'minin as binding and expect strict adherence from all individuals. Lower-ranking ITA authorities do not tolerate violations of such regulations. When planning your advocacy strategy, keep in mind the sensitivity of opposing legislation originating from their amir al-mu'minin, and approach such challenges strategically with careful consideration.

3. The restrictions imposed on NGO activities

Article 5 of the Procedure on Controlling and Regulating Activities of Domestic and International Organizations restricts NGOs to specific activities related to health, humanitarian aid, refugees and IDPs, agriculture, irrigation, livestock, rural rehabilitation, emergency assistance, education, higher education, and technical projects. This article explicitly prohibits activities beyond its scope, such as advocacy and awareness programs. Generally, most NGOs refrain from participating in advocacy initiatives, but some bravely engage in strategic advocacy campaigns without sharing their campaign reports with the authorities. Successful advocacy endeavors in Afghanistan pivot on an NGO's adeptness in effective communication with authorities, the establishment of robust networks, precise risk assessments, and the development of well-formulated strategies and tactics. Should you opt to partake in advocacy campaigns to achieve positive changes, meticulous adherence to the prescribed planning processes is required for achieving your objectives.

4. Engaging international media and INGOs

Advocacy campaigns aimed at reforming significant ITA policies on a national level, such as lifting restrictions on girls' education rights, require international engagement. Due to safety concerns, local NGOs may face limitations in advocating for such substantial changes. Ideally, Afghan NGOs in exile or international NGOs should drive advocacy efforts for these reforms, involving international media and INGOs for enhanced collaboration and support. In contrast, for more localized policy adjustments at the subnational level, a local NGO could potentially take the lead

on advocacy campaigns, employing strategic communication tactics. Leveraging the expertise of international organizations can be beneficial, and we advise maintaining discretion about these partnerships. The higher the degree of visible coordination with international organizations, the riskier the advocacy campaign becomes, highlighting the importance of avoiding overt exposure to partnerships and networking with international organizations.

5. Consult with religious experts

To advance your goal, consult with religious leaders to obtain insights and endorsements from a religious perspective. Engaging with religious leaders is essential when conducting an advocacy campaign in Afghanistan, particularly in a region where religious beliefs play a significant role in societal dynamics. Consulting with these influential figures not only allows you to gain valuable insights and endorsements from a religious perspective, but it also facilitates aligning your advocacy goals with local cultural and religious norms. By seeking the support and guidance of religious leaders, you can enhance the legitimacy and impact of your campaign within the Afghan context.

6. Taliban welcome tangible projects

The existing regulatory framework does not adequately support advocacy projects. As previously mentioned in this chapter, the ITA ratified Article 5 of the Procedure on Controlling and Regulating Activities of Domestic and International Organizations, which restricts NGOs to specific tangible areas such as health, humanitarian aid, refugees and IDPs, agriculture, irrigation, livestock, rural rehabilitation, emergency assistance, education, higher education, and technical projects. Consequently, when naming your advocacy campaign, it is essential to strategically align and phrase it within the scope of activities stipulated by ITA for NGOs.

7. Working with the diaspora community

Collaborating with Afghan NGOs and HRDs in exile presents a valuable opportunity for local NGOs to push for policy reforms. The diaspora community enables local NGOs to engage with international partners and UN agencies, facilitating potential fundraising for their advocacy endeavors. Members of the diaspora community can lend their support at the national level by advocating for crucial policy changes such as promoting female education rights and safeguarding the rights of minority groups, as well as benefiting from a more secure civic environment in their host countries. However, a primary challenge for local NGOs when collaborating with the diaspora is twofold: ensuring secure communications and concealing partnerships, given the strained relationships many NGOs and HRDs have with ITA. Strategic communication and discretion are key when engaging with the diaspora community to safeguard partnerships and advocacy efforts.

8. Social media

Secure your social media platforms and communication tools: NGOs leading advocacy campaigns should effectively and safely leverage social media by implementing comprehensive security practices, such as using strong passwords, enabling two-factor authentication, and restricting account access to authorized personnel. Employing privacy settings to control content visibility, training staff on data security and social media guidelines, and establishing vigilant monitoring protocols for detecting unauthorized access and suspicious activities are crucial. Additionally, keeping social media accounts updated with the latest security patches and verifying the legitimacy of links and messages helps mitigate risks like phishing scams and data breaches. These measures collectively safeguard sensitive information related to your advocacy endeavors, maintain the integrity of communication channels with stakeholders, and build trust with your audience.

Do not take exposure risks on social media: Exposure to social media presents significant risks for advocacy campaigns and individuals involved in advocacy endeavors. Under ITA, any publicized opposition or calls for policy changes can attract severe repercussions, including threats to personal safety, arrests, or even harsher punishments. The visibility of social media platforms exposes activists to surveillance, tracking, and potential targeting by authorities, making it crucial to exercise extreme caution. Careless sharing of information, connections, or locations can harm not only the individual but also colleagues and supporters, weakening the entire advocacy effort. To mitigate these risks, advocacy groups must employ rigorous security measures, anonymize communications, use encrypted channels, and educate all participants about the critical importance of digital privacy and safety protocols. To ensure the safety and effectiveness of their campaigns, advocacy groups must avoid public acknowledgment of sensitive activities and meticulously protect all online interactions.

For more information about the safety of your communication, please check out our Communication Guide for Afghan Resilient Civil Society.

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