



Advocacy Guide



From Rights to Reality
How to Advocate for Women's
Reproductive Freedom Worldwide

Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION: THE ROLE OF AN ADVOCATE	3
II. CHOOSING THE APPROPRIATE FORUM	5
<i>A. Understanding the Role of the Legislative Branch</i>	6
<i>B. Understanding the Role of the Executive Branch</i>	9
III. BUILDING YOUR PLAN	11
<i>A. Developing Your Message</i>	11
<i>B. Understanding Ways of Influencing Laws and Policies</i>	12
IV. THE POWER OF LOBBYING: KEY LOBBYING TOOLS	15
<i>A. Fact Sheets</i>	15
<i>B. Briefing/Position Papers</i>	16
<i>C. Distributing Materials Via Mail/E-mail</i>	16
<i>D. Lobbying Letters</i>	17
<i>E. Working with the Media</i>	17
<i>F. Using the Internet</i>	21
<i>G. Understanding the Types of Actions Policymakers Can Take</i>	21
<i>H. Meeting with Policymakers</i>	22
<i>I. Phone Call Campaign</i>	25
V. ONGOING LOBBYING TECHNIQUES	25
<i>A. Coalition Building</i>	25
<i>B. Developing Relationships with Influential People</i>	27
<i>C. Organizing Briefings</i>	28
<i>D. Organizing Testimony and Assisting with Hearings</i>	29
<i>E. Creating Action Kits and Packaging Your Information</i>	30
<i>F. Organizing Lobby Days</i>	31
<i>G. Hosting Conferences</i>	31
<i>H. Organizing Rallies, Demonstrations or Vigils</i>	32
VI. CROSSING THE FINISH LINE	33
<i>A. Contributing Your Views in the Final Stretch</i>	33
<i>B. Counting Votes and Keeping Support</i>	33
<i>C. Appreciating the Champions of Your Cause</i>	33
<i>D. Defining Success and Assessing Your Victory</i>	34
VII. SAMPLE ADVOCACY EFFORT	35
<i>Sources Referenced</i>	38



I. Introduction

This handbook provides tools and strategies that anyone can use to advocate for the reproductive rights of women and girls everywhere. Whether you're going it alone and have limited political experience or you're already familiar with how to effect social change, we believe this guide will help you develop your political voice wherever you may be.

We begin with an explanation of the role of an advocate and then discuss general strategies and tools for reproductive rights advocacy in diverse settings around the world.

As a U.S.-based non-governmental organization (NGO), the examples and perspectives we rely upon are drawn primarily from the United States, which provides neither the only, nor the best, context for political change.

Please feel free to adapt this guide to the needs and customs of your organization and your national context—you are the expert on what works best with the people you want to reach!

Good luck in your advocacy efforts!

The Role of an Advocate

An advocate's role can vary. Many times, advocates work to educate, represent and persuade. Often, advocates take an even more active role in drafting, commenting on and contributing to legislative proposals just before they are adopted.

Whatever role you assume, remember that statistics and real life stories can be effective tools for gaining attention for your cause and for moving key decision makers to take action. And if you are a member of an NGO, never hesitate to use powerful contacts you may know to influence policymakers.

Here's a breakdown of three key roles for advocates:

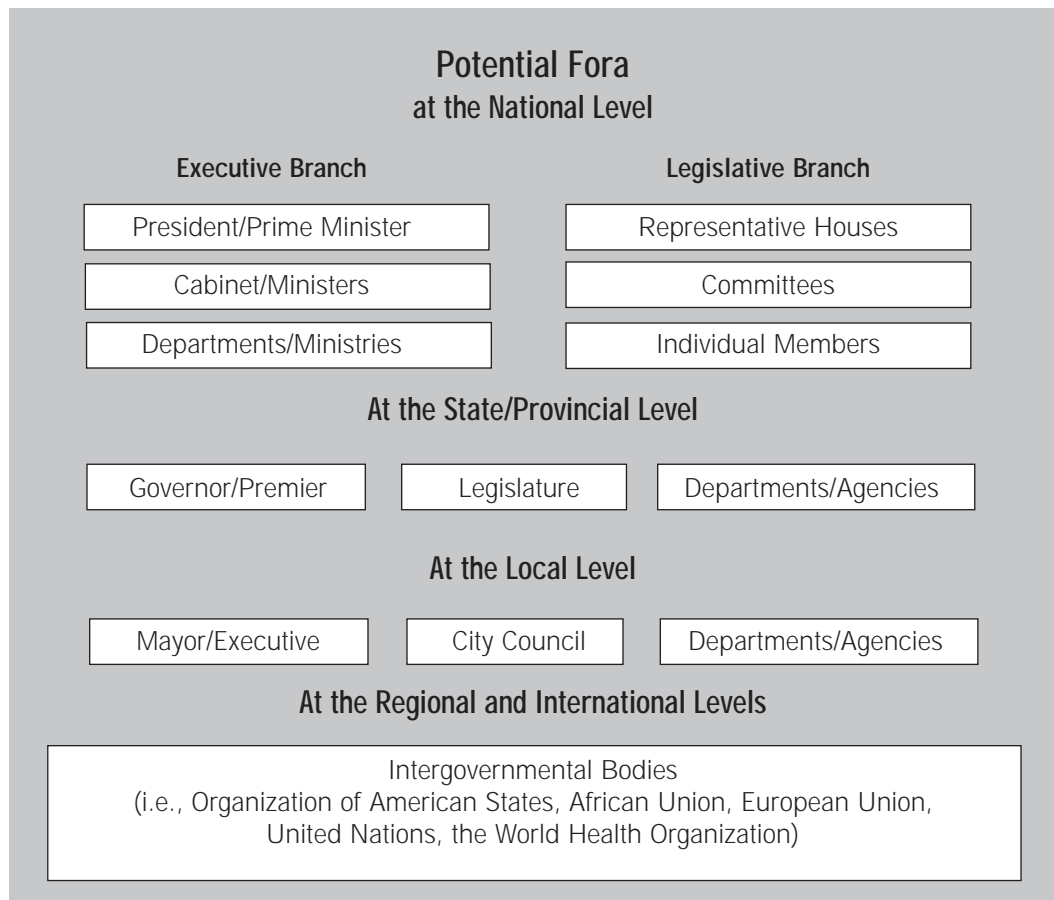
1. **EDUCATOR**- You are the expert on your topic, which does not mean that you have to be a professional lobbyist. Your expertise may come from years of experience working in the reproductive rights movement, or from your own personal experience with the issues at hand. Policymakers look to advocates to provide them with factual, pointed and relevant information. A good advocate is confident about the information she is presenting and works to convince the policymaker that the issue at hand is worth paying attention to.
2. **REPRESENTATIVE**- As an advocate, you are a mouthpiece for the several, the hundreds or even the millions of people whose lives are affected by the struggle for a particular reproductive rights issue. One of your goals should be to bring the issues of the people you represent alive for policymakers. If you want them to care, you have to convince them that you're not alone.
3. **PERSUADER**- To be influential as an advocate, your goal should be to work to gain the support and backing of policymakers who will commit to your cause throughout the legislative, administrative or intergovernmental process. This might mean getting a government official to vote for or co-sponsor reproductive rights legislation or declarations, getting a relevant ministry or executive branch official to support reproductive rights issues, or even just getting a member of a key official's staff to care enough about reproductive rights to discuss your proposals with his or her boss.



II. Choosing the Appropriate Forum

Your effectiveness as an advocate for reproductive rights may depend upon the forum in which you choose to lobby. When deciding upon the most effective forum, remember that your goal is to be heard by those who wield influence.

In most systems of government, the legislative and executive branches are the national-level fora that provide advocates with the greatest opportunity to influence laws and policies. In most democratic systems of government, the legislative branch is primarily responsible for creating laws and the executive branch is primarily responsible for administering those laws by creating regulations, rules and policies to implement them. Within each branch of government, and throughout the law and policymaking processes, there are several opportunities for lobbying. This guide will focus primarily on lobbying national legislatures. However, the tools and techniques discussed in this guide can be tailored to suit any advocacy needs.



A. Understanding the Role of the Legislative Branch

The legislative branch of government, which is composed of politicians elected by the people, typically operates with greater transparency and accountability than the executive or judicial branches. Legislatures can therefore help articulate the public's dissatisfaction or demand for action, especially to help influence the executive branch. As a result, it is easier to lobby, inform and build relationships with members of the legislative branch.

Although there are various legislative models around the world, all functioning legislatures in democratic nations have three basic roles: to represent the public, make laws and exercise oversight. The structure of the legislature and the system of political parties influence legislative behavior and the way in which legislatures operate.

The representative and lawmaking functions of a legislature provide the perfect opportunity for lobbying. Lawmaking involves reconciling differences between legislators or parties as well as with the executive branch. In most legislative bodies, the work of reconciling conflicts is accomplished in committees or small sub-groups of legislators. Because committees specialize in a certain area, members can and should become experts and skilled negotiators regarding the issues they cover. As legislators build in-depth knowledge, they become more serious governing partners with the executive branch. But to do so they need reliable and detailed information that can come from interested constituents such as yourself or your group. **IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU UNDERSTAND HOW THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM OF YOUR LEGISLATURE WORKS BECAUSE IT IS A CRUCIAL BODY FOR LOBBYING.**

Here are some general questions to ask when evaluating the legislature you and your organization are trying to influence. The answers will help determine the type of lobbying strategy you develop and an efficient use of your resources.

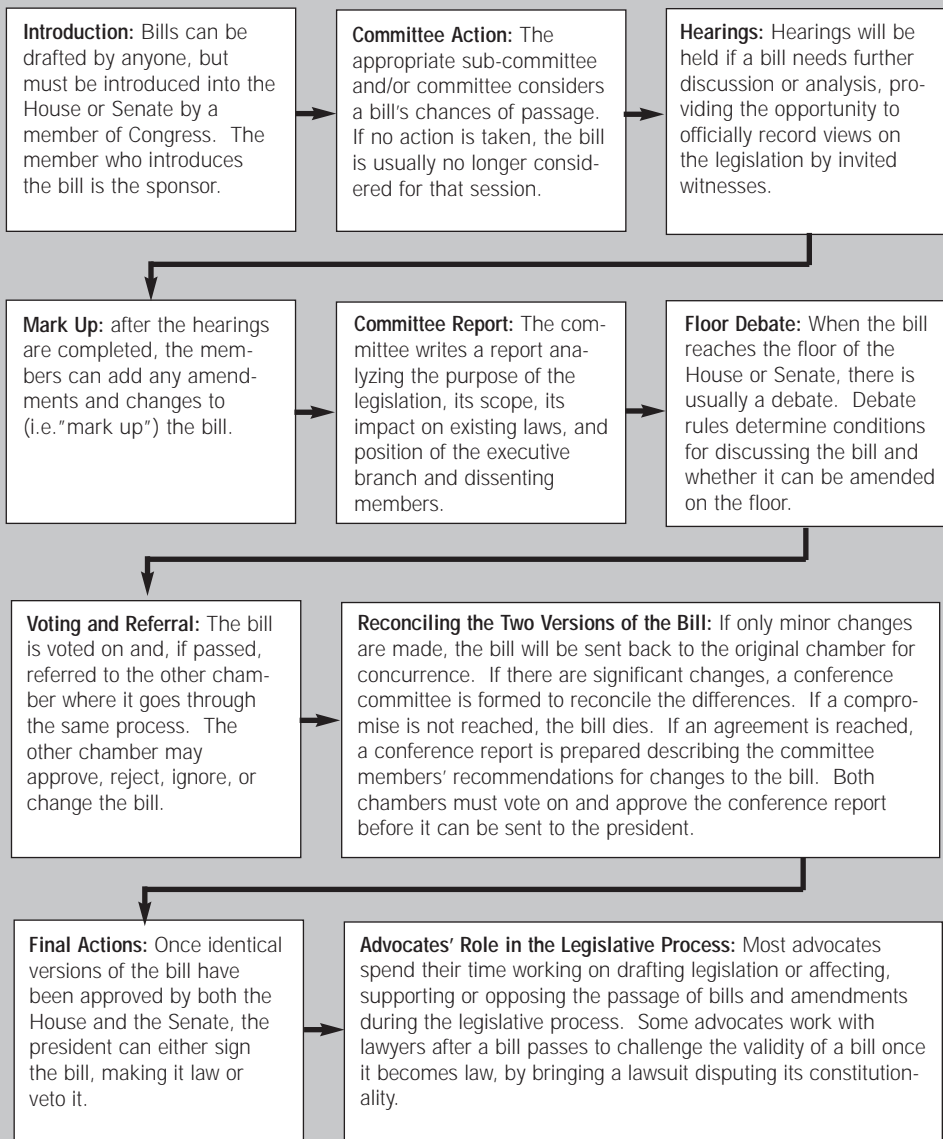
- What is the scope of a legislature's formal power to enact laws? In some systems, legislatures have exclusive authority to introduce legislation while in others legislatures can only consider proposals originating in the executive branch.
- What is the range of possibilities for shaping or influencing legislation (i.e., can you offer a full legislative proposal or just an amendment)? Does the legislative or executive branch have the final say regarding whether a proposal actually becomes a law? What bodies can have an impact on the final passage of a law? It is equally essential to understand the impact of legislative action or inaction. For example, does the executive branch have the power to make policy through other mechanisms, such as decrees, that have the force of law?
- Is there a system or institution that services the informational needs of legislators? Organizations and individuals can play a key role in providing this information whether or not these institutions exist, but they are especially important in countries where these systems or institutions are lacking.



Political will is an important element that drives change. It is essential that you support leaders and legislators who are willing to address sensitive issues. These officials need to know that they have the backing of a strong constituency. It is important to lobby leaders who are willing to exercise their legislative powers for the purposes of your goal of advancing reproductive rights.

The Legislative Process in the United States

Before a bill becomes law in the U.S., it must go through the following process:



EXAMPLES OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION AFFECTING REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN THE U.S. CONGRESS:

POSITIVE LEGISLATION

- **The “Global Democracy Promotion Act”** would eliminate the global gag rule, which prohibits any foreign NGO that receives U.S. funding from using its own funds to provide women with legal abortion services, counsel them about or refer them to such services, or advocate for abortion law reform.
- **The “Equity in Prescription Insurance and Contraceptive Coverage Act” (EPICCC)** would prohibit insurance companies from excluding contraception from their private health insurance plans.
- **The “Saving Women’s Lives Act”** would provide improved guidelines for voluntary contributions by the United States to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
- **The “Emergency Contraception Education Act”** would authorize appropriations for USD 10 million annually for five years to develop and disseminate information to the public and educate health-care providers about emergency contraception.
- **The “Family Life Education Act”** would provide programs including comprehensive sexuality education to reduce the rates of adolescent pregnancy and HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmissible infections.
- **The “Mothers and Newborns Health Insurance Act”** would expand insurance coverage for low-income pregnant women, including prenatal, delivery and postpartum services.
- **The “Safe Motherhood Act for Research and Training” (SMART Mom Act)** would help ensure safe pregnancy for all women in the United States, in part by eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes.

NEGATIVE LEGISLATION

- **The “Partial-Birth Abortion Act”** is a vaguely written and unconstitutional abortion ban that would prohibit the safest and most commonly used abortion procedures.
- **The “Child Custody Protection Act”** would make it a federal crime for any person other than a parent to accompany a minor across state lines to obtain an abortion, if she has not first complied with the forced parental involvement law of her home state.



A NOTE ON BILL TITLES: Opponents of reproductive rights will often deceptively name a bill in order to create the impression that the policy is meant to help women and adolescents. Examples include the above-mentioned “Partial-Birth Abortion Ban,” which takes its name not from a medically defined procedure but from a deceptive term invented by anti-choice politicians.

Rather than protect the reproductive rights of women and girls, these bills are generally meant to limit those rights. Advocates of reproductive rights, on the other hand, often use positive titles such as the “Equity in Prescription Insurance and Contraceptive Coverage Act” for proactive legislation.

B. Understanding the Role of the Executive Branch

The Executive Branch of the U.S. government is very influential in setting policy goals and influencing legislation. If the president does not support reproductive rights, there are many avenues through which his administration can limit or eliminate those rights. Some of these include the following:

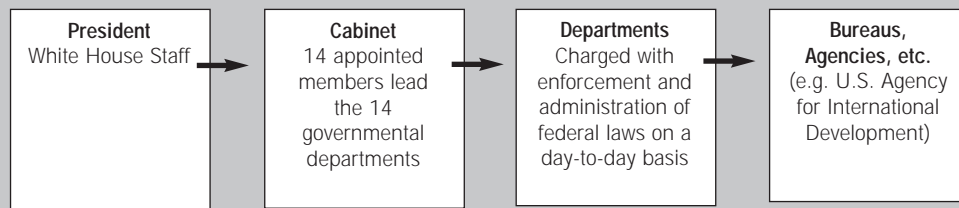
- **Issuing restrictive executive orders.** For example, President Bush reinstated the global gag rule by executive order on his first day in office.
- **Influencing legislation.** By showing support for or opposition to legislation, the president can influence the way members of Congress vote.
- **Influencing international conferences.** For example, in 2002, the U.S. delegation to the International Conference on Population and Development regional meeting in Bangkok stated that the United States respects life from the time of conception and does not support abortion, despite the fact that the majority of Americans are pro-choice and that the right to choose abortion is guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution.
- **Promoting an anti-reproductive rights agenda** throughout various departments, agencies and bureaus.

When the executive branch does not support reproductive rights, the voices of reproductive rights advocates are crucial. By attempting to influence the debate, advocates can show grassroots support for the protection of reproductive rights in the country or state in which they are working.

IT IS IMPORTANT not only to understand the legislative and administrative processes when lobbying, but also to fully understand the rules and regulations governing lobbying in the country in which you are working. In the United States, for example, quite a few rules govern the lobbying process, and violating them can have significant consequences.

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE UNITED STATES

The executive branch of the U.S. government develops rules, regulations, and policies that help interpret and implement the laws passed by Congress. The executive branch can also develop legislative proposals for Congress.



Advocates' Role in Lobbying the Executive Branch

Anyone can offer comments on the rules and regulations produced by the executive branch during a scheduled period for comments. Advocates can also attempt to influence the less-formal policies that are developed by departments, bureaus and agencies and their respective subdivisions. Many of these rules, regulations and policies can affect reproductive rights.

EXAMPLES OF U.S. RULES, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

- **Regulations** are developed to interpret laws by the relevant governmental department.
- **Executive orders** written by the president, such as the global gag rule, which prohibits international NGOs from spending their own funds on abortion services, referrals or law reform.
- **Reports** such as the State Department's annual human rights report, which reviews human rights in countries around the world.
- **Administering programs** such as the program administered through the Department of Health and Human Services, that provides funding for family planning and reproductive health services within the United States.



III. Building Your Plan

A. Developing Your Message

Before you begin your advocacy efforts, you must develop your message. Some general ideas for message development include these:

1. Identify why the issue, legislation or policy is important to the following people:

- the policymakers from whom you are demanding action;
- identified allies and coalition partners with whom you may work in the advocacy process;
- the general public from whom you are hoping to gain support; and
- the media through which you are hoping to gain public attention.

2. Develop a few main message points that are simple and easy to remember. You can use your fact sheets and briefing papers to expand on your main points.

For example, in the U.S. Congress there is currently a bill pending entitled the “Equity in Prescription Coverage and Contraceptive Coverage Act,” (EPICCC). The bill would prohibit private health insurance plans that cover prescription drugs from excluding contraceptives. The four key message points for EPICCC could be:

- The issue affects women’s health and their families.
- The right to contraception is recognized as a fundamental human right by international human rights instruments.
- The bill makes economic sense—the cost of contraception is less than the costs associated with childbirth or abortion, especially considering the additional costs of the woman’s time away from work or family and psychological costs due to unintended pregnancy.
- Women whose health insurance does not cover contraceptives are forced to pay the costs themselves, which can range from USD 300 to USD 700 annually.

3. Stay on message. It is important to repeat your main messages when speaking with members of the media or the legislature.

4. Stay on the offensive by promoting your message points instead of reacting to the opposition’s arguments. If you are talking with the media, you want them to remember your main points, not your opponent’s.

As an advocate, it is important to keep your strengths and weaknesses in mind. Know the vulnerabilities of your position so that you can craft messages that highlight your strong points and be prepared to respond offensively to your opponent's counterpoints.

B. Understanding Ways of Influencing Laws and Policies

After you have determined the forum in which you are going to lobby (legislature, executive branch, UN, etc.), it is wise to find the most effective way to influence that body. Some methods include the following:

- 1. Convince the government to help draft legislation on your issue.*** By asking the government to help do the drafting, you are asking them to make a commitment to the issue.
- 2. Comment on the draft legislation proposed by other groups or members of the legislature.*** If other organizations or legislators are drafting legislation that is relevant to your work, attempt to get a copy of the legislation as soon in the process as possible. This can be an extremely influential time during which you can provide input into the way that the legislation is written. If you have comments, try to make sure you offer them to those involved in the drafting before the legislation has been officially introduced.
- 3. Work on reforming current laws.*** Instead of writing a new law, you can try to influence current law through reforms such as amendments. This is a way to change laws or policies that already exist by changing only specific sections.
- 4. Comment on the effectiveness of current laws.*** You can look at current laws and publish reports on how the laws or policies are affecting people. One way to do this is through shadow reports. Part of the purpose of the Center for Reproductive Rights' shadow reports is to supplement, or "shadow," the report of a particular nation to a UN treaty monitoring body on reproductive rights issues under the laws of that nation. The treaty monitoring body may then recommend that the nation should reform such laws.
- 5. Contribute to negotiations at the final stage of the passage or defeat of a bill.*** As a credible advocacy group, coalition or individual, you may have the ability to influence not only the process of drafting legislation, but also the politics of getting it passed. Legislators often are forced to compromise or trade their votes. If you have been involved with the process from the beginning, you may be able to influence the compromises or trades that take place.

Policymakers often appreciate receiving an initial draft of a law or policy from advocates because it saves their staff time. Drafting your own legislation or policy also gives you the chance to include the language that you feel is important. Here are some things to consider when drafting laws or policies:



Clearly define the problem

- Be specific about the issues you are addressing. Avoid vague statements or unintended interpretations.

Think about your goal

- What is the intended outcome? Modification of behavior, reallocation of resources, societal change?

Examine the existing laws, regulations or policies

- Is it easier to amend a current law rather than write a new one?
- If an appropriate law or policy already exists, focus on its enforcement rather than its replacement.

Consider the law or policy to be adopted or changed

- What will bring about the intended outcome? Government programs, criminal sanctions, civil remedies, or budgetary appropriations?
- Who will enforce it?
- Where will the funding come from?
- What type of law are you writing (statute, regulation or policy) and at what level (international, regional, national, state, or local)?

Tips for drafting a clear, specific and precise law

- Determine how it will be applied and whom it will affect.
- Define words if they are not common or are used differently from their dictionary definition.
- Include dates that legislation will become effective and when it will expire, if applicable.
- Include appropriate enforcement mechanisms.
- State general rules before exceptions.
- Put the more important provisions before the less important.
- Put the permanent provisions before the temporary.
- Put the technical provisions at the end.
- Remember to have specific and appropriately circumscribed delineation of rights, powers and remedies.
- Be precise about the description and allocation of duties imposed.

- Include necessary conditions, qualifications, limitations, and exceptions.

Some common drafting problems to keep in mind

- Do not use jargon or uncommon, foreign or legalistic terms.
- Do not use too many acronyms.
- Do not include impractical or impossible expectations.
- Avoid ambiguity.
- Use the present tense, write in the third person and write in an active, not passive, voice.
- Avoid redundancy.

If you determine that you need more training on drafting legislation, check to see if the governing body, local university or a local NGO provides training sessions or other assistance.



IV. The Power of Lobbying: Key Lobbying Tools

The following tools can help you get your message across. They provide a starting point for thinking about the best ways to educate policymakers about your issue. Remember to use any message points that you have already developed. It is important to stay on message in all publications, letters to the editor, guest op-eds, and discussions with policymakers and members of the media to ensure that you are being consistent and accurate every time you talk about your issue.

A. Fact Sheets

Fact sheets are an easy way to illustrate the points of your argument. They should be one or two pages in length. Most policymakers do not have a lot of time to think about every issue that comes their way, so being brief and to the point is essential.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING A FACT SHEET

- Determine who your audience is. If your audience includes policymakers, make sure you are brief and to the point.
- Start with a summary of the issue.
- Highlight three to five of your main arguments with bullet points or boxes.
- Provide enough analysis of the issue so that readers can understand your arguments, but be brief enough to keep their attention.
- Use graphs, charts and boxes to make the information look interesting.
- Put your organization's logo on the fact sheet to enhance the visibility and credibility of the information. Sometimes, however, it may be better not to include your logo, such as when you want other organizations to adopt and use your language.
- Always provide the date your publication was produced.

USING FACT SHEETS

Fact sheets are great tools to use when you meet with policymakers. They are easy to carry to a meeting, can be used to point out key bits of information when talking with a legislator or staff person, and can be distributed easily to policymakers. You may not get very much time when meeting with a legislator, but if you leave behind your fact sheet, legislators can reference your information for themselves even after you have left.

Policymakers may use the talking points from fact sheets in speeches or in letters to constituents. (See enclosed sample)

B. Briefing/Position Papers

Briefing or position papers provide policymakers with a more in-depth analysis of an issue. Analyzing an issue in depth also demonstrates your expertise and shows that you can be counted on as a reliable source of information.

Not all groups have the capacity to develop briefing or position papers. The process requires thorough research and analysis of an issue. Briefing or position papers are not essential for lobbying, but if you can develop one, it will eventually prove worth the time and resources.

There are no set formats for briefing or position papers. However, they should explain an issue in more detail and in greater depth than a fact sheet.

C. Distributing Materials via Mail/E-mail

Once you have produced your fact sheets and briefing/position papers, distribute them to policymakers. You can start by writing a cover letter that highlights the main points in a concise way.

Things to remember when distributing materials

- **Determine which policymakers should receive your information.** If you are dealing with an issue that is highly political and sensitive, such as abortion, it may be counterproductive to distribute your research to those you know to have deeply held public positions in opposition to yours.
- **Be timely.** If a bill is pending in the legislature and you have fact sheets and briefing/position papers on that issue, try to send out your information near the vote so that lawmakers can see your arguments before they make a decision on the issue.
- **Have a reason to send your information.** If there is no bill or upcoming vote, you may not want to distribute your information at that time, unless you are trying to build general awareness of and support for your issue. If you are at an initial stage of looking for a policymaker to champion your issue, you may want to try an in-person meeting. Remember that the issue you are promoting must be relevant to the work of lawmakers. If you send them information about something they are not working on, they may ignore it.

Guidelines for Written Correspondence

- Use formal titles when addressing the recipient.
- Try to keep the letter to one page.

USING E-MAIL CAN BE QUICK AND EFFECTIVE.

As more policymakers rely on computers to facilitate their work, consider using e-mail to send them information quickly and inexpensively. Think about creating a listserv with the e-mail addresses of all of the offices you would mail information to and use that instead of, or in addition to, traditional mailings. Attach your publications as a document that they can open and print. If your organization has a website, you can provide a link and invite them to visit your site for more information.



- Make a specific reference to the policy, legislation or issue at hand.
- Include accurate and validated information to support your points.
- Remember that your letters reflect your credibility and that of any organization you represent—it is generally most effective to be moderate and reasonable in tone.

D. Lobbying Letters

You can use different types of correspondence to communicate your message points to policymakers. Policymakers may welcome letters and use them to support their position on legislation. Here are some examples of letters used to influence policymakers in the United States.

LOBBYING LETTER. These are letters addressed to policymakers themselves. The letter highlights an action you would like the policymakers to take or a vote you hope they make. These letters can also point out a policy area for policymakers to address. You can both send the letter to policymakers and use it in lobby visits. (see enclosed sample)

OPEN LETTER. An open letter can come from one organization or a coalition of groups. It can be addressed to the president, the legislature, an executive branch ministry or agency, or the United Nations. Sometimes open letters are published in a newspaper or other print media, rather than sent only to the addressee, to gain greater attention for the issue. By publishing an open letter, a group can publicly work to persuade the policymaker to take a particular action. Open letters also create accountability by informing the general public that you have asked the policymaker to address the issue, creating further pressure for the policymaker to take action. They can also be published to educate the public about your issue: by purchasing space in the print media for your letter, you can raise awareness and reach the general public with your arguments. (see enclosed sample)

SIGN-ON LETTER. An effective way of demonstrating widespread support for your issue is by initiating a “sign-on” letter. Circulate your letter to organizations that might agree with you and ask them to show their support by signing onto the letter. This shows policymakers that the issue enjoys broad-based support from various organizations, some of which may represent many members, if so, let them know! You can send these letters to policymakers and bring them to your lobby meetings. (see enclosed sample)

E. Working with the Media

The media can be an advocate’s friend or foe; the key is learning how to make them work for you. Most policymakers monitor the media to determine what is important to their constituents, so using the media to your advantage is a powerful skill to master. You can learn to use the media to help accomplish the following goals:

- **Inform the public about your issue and why it is important.** If the public is con-

cerned about your issue and there is coverage of it in the news, then policymakers are more likely to care about it.

- **Help change public attitudes and opinions about your issue.** By informing the public about your issue, you may be able to persuade people who previously opposed your position.
- **Mobilize supporters of your cause.** If you are able to make use of the media to influence public opinion on your issue, you are likely to gain support for your cause. This is important in lobbying because the more people who agree with your argument and are willing to publicly support it, the more a policymaker may believe it is an issue that deserves attention.
- **Influence lawmakers, policy and legislation.** This is the ultimate goal when using the media. If you are successful, you can convince lawmakers that the issue is relevant and that you have public support. Try to place letters to the editor or guest editorials on your issue in the policymaker's hometown newspaper or a major area newspaper. Additionally, collect supporting letters and editorials written by others to show the relevance of the issue to the policymakers' constituents, and give them to the policymaker.

IF YOU BELONG TO A GROUP WITH MEMBERS, you could start a letter writing campaign. When an article is printed that relates to the issue you are working on, get your members organized to send in a response. Usually when a newspaper or magazine receives a large number of letters, it is more likely to print one or two of them. The more your group submits, the better your chances of publication.

Before approaching the media, be aware of the pitfalls. Try to find out who is in control of the particular media outlet and what their positions are on your issues. In some countries, the media may be controlled by conservatives who are not sympathetic to reproductive rights; in other countries, it may be controlled by the government. Approaching the media in these instances may result in negative publicity for your cause. In such cases, you may want to approach the international media to draw attention to your issues.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor can be written in response to a recent news article or other story printed in a newspaper or magazine. When a letter written by you or your organization is published, it is a chance to get your point across to a larger audience.

Many people, including policymakers, read letters to the editor, which makes them a great lobbying tool. Usually this type of letter is written to correct a story that you feel has incorrect facts or to show how the news is related to your issue.

Writing the Letter

- Letters to the editor are usually printed no more than two or three days after the article appeared in the paper. So write it and send it quickly.
- Make the letter no more than approximately 200 words long. Be succinct.
- If the letter is coming from your group, use paper with your organization's logo on it. If it is coming just from you, use plain paper.



- Include your name, title and the name of your organization (if applicable) on the bottom of the page.
- Make sure your facts and numbers are correct.
- Letters that are typed stand the best chance of getting printed.
- Make your point without being negative or attacking.
- If your letter doesn't get printed, keep trying with other letters when important articles appear. (see enclosed sample)

OPINION-EDITORIAL COLUMNS

Opinion editorials, often called op-eds, are guest essays written about issues that are of particular interest to the media's audience. In newspapers, guest writers produce a column with their (sometimes expert) opinion on an issue or event. Television and radio news programs often set aside time for guest opinions as well.

Op-eds can help make your audience aware of a problem and send your organization's message out to the public and to lawmakers.

Writing the Op-Ed

- Call the editor of the publication and ask for any specific requirements for op-eds. The policy differs with each paper.
- Humanize your topic. Begin by illustrating how the issue affects an individual or group of people.
- Take a point of view and support it with facts and examples.
- Tie the op-ed to a holiday, anniversary, election, report, vote, or some pending action by the government.
- Keep it short—the average length of an op-ed is 750 words. If it is too long, it won't get published.
- Write clearly and concentrate on just one issue—many readers may not be familiar with the topic. Incorporate your main message points.
- If you have a fact sheet on the issue, you can use the main points from that document.
- See if you can reduce your point to a single sentence, for example, “reproductive rights are human rights.”
- Raise the opposition's best arguments and disprove them with countervailing facts, or irony, if appropriate. Support your side with facts and numbers.

- Be positive—provide solutions, not just problems.
- Include a suggested headline, byline and one-sentence description of the author and her expertise.

Getting the Media to Publish Your Op-Ed

- Try to write the op-ed before you call the newspaper. If the editor or writer is interested, he or she may ask you to send it immediately. It is good to have it on hand.
- Find out the names of the editor or editors of the op-ed section at each media outlet.
- When you get someone on the phone, quickly tell them who you are, what organization you represent, about your issue, and why the proposed op-ed is timely or newsworthy. Then tell them you have an expert—yourself, the head of your organization or a well-known personality—who would like to get your side of the issue across to the media's audience. Be prepared either to get rejected or to be asked to send the editorial for consideration.
- Once one media outlet has agreed to look at it, do not send your op-ed to other outlets until your initial pitch is rejected or accepted.
- If the article is not accepted, revise and improve it and keep passing it around to different media outlets until someone agrees to use it or its timeliness has faded.

OTHER MEDIA-RELATED TOOLS

PRESS RELEASES. A press release is a one-page document that explains an event or issue to the press. It is usually written like a news story so that reporters will find it easy to read and will find the information they need to understand the story. Often news outlets will print a story straight from your release. (see enclosed sample)

PRESS CONFERENCES. A press conference is an event your organization puts together with speakers to announce something newsworthy and important to your organization or your cause. Press conferences are a way for journalists to hear about your issue and possibly follow through with an article. Press conferences should be reserved for big events or announcements. It is also a good idea to schedule them in the morning so journalists have a chance to write about the event and file their story in time for publication the next day.

APPROACH JOURNALISTS. It may be worthwhile to approach journalists who specialize in your issue as well as editorial boards and encourage them to cover your issue in their stories, editorials and articles.

ARTICLES IN MAGAZINES OR NEWSLETTERS. Another way to inform the public and policy-

ONCE A POSITIVE ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED, make many copies to bring to meetings with policymakers or their staff. Being able to reference the issue in the news media can be helpful when trying to make the issue seem relevant to them. Do your research on the newspaper so that you are able to give them information on approximately how many readers the article has reached.



makers is to publish an article yourself. To do this, start by approaching a magazine or organization that publishes a newsletter with your idea. Pick publications that typically publish articles written by guest authors. If you make your issue relevant to their readership you may have a better chance of being published.

TV/RADIO INTERVIEWS. Approach local or national radio or TV shows regarding your issue and ask to be a guest. You might be asked to answer questions from the host, or debate the topic with another person. This is another place to once again use your message points and gain public attention for your issue. Send TV and radio producers your fact sheets and press releases on a regular basis. You could also discuss your issue on call-in shows, and if you belong to a group with members, you could mobilize them to call into shows to highlight the reproductive rights issue as well.

F. Using the Internet

If your organization has a website, it can be an effective tool for disseminating your message to policymakers and the general public. If you can create a specific page or pages addressing the issue you are advocating, you can then direct policymakers to your website and they can access your information at any time. Websites are also a great tool for educating the general public about your issue and encouraging them to take action. If your organization is able to partake in grassroots lobbying (urging the general public to take action for or against a policy) you can use your website to encourage people to contact their representatives and policymakers, provide sample letters to send to policymakers and provide links to other organizations who work on similar issues or are members of your coalition. Our website, www.reproductiverights.org, is an example.

G. Understanding the Types of Actions Policymakers Can Take

Before meeting with policymakers or their staff, it is a good idea to understand the actions that policymakers can choose to take. Here are some examples of what they can do:

- Work to create a new policy.
- Work to amend an existing policy.
- Co-sponsor legislation or lobby their colleagues.
- Investigate an issue through hearings, letters of inquiry, phone calls, or reports.
- Speak publicly about an issue and/or make public statements for the official record on the floor of the legislature or in public hearings. Another way of making public statements is through media outlets such as talk shows and op-ed pages in the newspaper.

- Send a letter to their colleagues or to other policymakers, sometimes referred to as a “dear colleague” letter.
- Issue a press release.

H. Meeting with Policymakers

As you are working to gain media attention for your issue, you can explore the idea of taking your issue and your arguments to the policymakers. When dealing with powerful and influential people you may only be able to meet with a staff member. Most policymakers are required to know about so many issues that they typically rely on staff experts and advisers. If you get a meeting with the actual policymakers, even better! As you deal with staff members or policymakers themselves, remember to give them accolades and credit for all of the work that they do on your issue. Also, provide as much assistance and information on the issue as possible. This can make their job easier and your research and arguments more accessible and likely to be used.

Steps for Scheduling a Meeting

- Do your homework. Know about the legislator before you call his/her office. Read about his or her voting record and get a sense of the types of issues he or she cares about and, if possible, how he or she feels about your issue. Also, read through your fact sheets to be prepared to talk about the issue.
- When you call, introduce yourself. Ask for the person who deals with your issue and then briefly explain to the person answering the phone why you are calling. You may not get a meeting unless you can win over the first person to whom you speak.
- Example: Hello, my name is Suzanna Martinez from the Center for Reproductive Rights. Can you tell me who the staff person is that deals with women's issues? I would like to speak to him or her about a piece of legislation that we are supporting for passage.
- After you reach the right staff person, explain your issue and ask if you can schedule a meeting to discuss it further and provide them with information. You may need to convince them at this time that the issue is relevant.
- Example: Hello, I am Suzanna Martinez from the Center for Reproductive Rights and I am calling about the Emergency Contraception Education Act. My organization strongly supports the passage of this legislation and I was hoping I could schedule a meeting with you to discuss it further.
- If they agree to a meeting, set up a time and place.
- Thank them and start preparing for your meeting.



Preparing for the Meeting

Set goals and expectations. Determine exactly what issues and topics you want to address in the meeting. It is best to focus on only one or two issues.

Decide what kind of commitment you are asking for and what you would like the policymakers to do.

- Are you asking them to define their position on an issue?
- Do you want them to vote a certain way on a bill?
- Do you want them to co-sponsor a bill?
- Do you want their leadership on the issue?
- Do you want them to sign a letter to their colleagues?
- Do you want them to mention your issue when talking on record, with constituents, in letters, or with their colleagues?
- Do you want them to attend an event?

It is important to know what type of commitment you want to have when you leave the meeting and to ask for it.

- If you are going with more than one person or organization, discuss the meeting beforehand. Make sure everyone knows what he or she plans to say. It is wise to have a designated leader who will run the meeting and make sure that all of the points are made.
- Prepare a packet of information. Bring your fact sheets, briefing/position papers, copies of any media coverage on the issue including letters to the editor and guest editorials, and draft legislation or policies, if applicable. It is especially effective to bring media clips from the policymaker's home district. Make sure also to provide basic information about your organization, such as brochures. Finally, always have business cards with you and get one from the people you meet with for your files.
- Practice talking about the issue. Rehearse your message points and know what you plan to say.

Meeting with a Legislator or Staff Person

- Be on time. Legislators and their staff are very busy and may not have too much time to meet with you.
- Be concise and to the point. Keep your presentation focused and brief, leaving enough time for questions and discussion.

- Use your information. Explain your fact sheets and other materials. Highlight the main points and show where the research and information is to back them up. Offer your information to them and tell them they can use your talking points when they are writing speeches and letters—this makes their task easier.
- Make it real. Bring up real-life examples of how the issue is affecting people. Make it relevant to the policymaker's home district and the people he/she has been elected to serve. Give examples, cite statistics, and inform them of other high-profile supporters or dissenters (depending on your position on the issue).
- Request the action you want the policymaker to take. Don't be shy—ask for what you want! Make sure you are clear about what you are asking for. If the policymaker is evading the issue, try another angle. Suggest that instead of co-sponsoring a bill, he or she sign a letter to his or her colleagues or mention the issue in a speech or in letters to constituents. Try to leave the meeting with at least one commitment.
- Listen to what a policymaker has to say and understand if he or she is not able to commit to what you are asking for. If you can't secure a commitment to your issues from the policymaker, tell him or her that you will follow up later.
- Don't be intimidated. Legislators are real people and they are in office to serve the public. If you are asked a question and you don't know the answer, be honest and say that you don't know the answer but you will find it. Then make sure you follow up and get the answer to them as soon as possible! Follow-up can present another opportunity to push your message. Remember, you are their source for reliable and factual information.
- Be sure to thank them for their time!

After the Meeting

- Make a follow-up call or send an e-mail. You do not want to overwhelm policymakers, but you do want to thank them for their time. This can be a chance to summarize your main points and to ask again for a commitment if they were unable to offer one during your meeting. Often if policymakers know you are going to follow up they will take the time to determine whether they can make the commitment you requested.
- Stay in contact. The issue on which you are working may be relevant for some time, so continue to be in contact with the legislator's office so that he or she doesn't forget about your issue. Try to build a relationship with the staff person or the legislator. Whether or not the bill you are working on passes, there may be another opportunity to work with the staff person or legislator in the future, so it is important to develop lasting relationships.



I. Phone Call Campaign

If you are trying to get a message to a large number of policymakers and are not able to meet with each one, consider contacting them by phone with the same messages you would use in person. If you are working toward a vote on a bill, try to meet with as many legislators as possible (you can split the meetings up within your coalition), and then do a follow-up phone call campaign to urge each policymaker to vote in support of your issue.

V. Ongoing Lobbying Techniques

The previous chapters outlined some basic lobbying techniques and a strategy for creating your message and conveying it to policymakers. This chapter provides examples of how to strengthen your message.

A. Coalition Building

DEVELOPING ALLIES WITHIN YOUR ISSUE

It is very important to have good relationships with other organizations that work on your issues. By collaborating closely, you demonstrate the strength of your movement. This guide offers numerous tips for working within a coalition.

One of the advantages of working within a coalition can be sharing the workload, such as calling and meeting with policymakers. If your lobbying effort requires you to meet with many policymakers, it is much easier to split up the meetings within the coalition.

Coalitions are also a great place to strategize about the best ways to advance your causes, taking into account the needs of the various organizations that are involved with the process. If you are conducting an advocacy campaign on your own without consulting similar groups, you may unintentionally overlook arguments that other groups can contribute to the campaign.

Remember that when working within and developing coalitions, it is a good idea to develop a specific goal for the coalition and work together until you reach that particular goal. Sometimes, coalitions work on too many issues and are not able to focus on attaining specific goals.

DEVELOPING ALLIES OUTSIDE YOUR ISSUE

Showing lawmakers that your issue has widespread support among many types of groups is an important step in advancing your cause. Often, groups who do not work directly on an issue will nevertheless publicly support it. When you can gather together groups in support of your cause, you are multiplying your strength and are more likely to receive attention from policymakers and the press.

Consensus of diverse groups is especially helpful if your issue is controversial. Lawmakers are more likely to support a controversial issue if they see that it draws support from a wide range of people. For example, NGOs that support reproductive rights are sometimes able to garner support from more traditional, mainstream groups such as religious groups, which also tend to have large constituencies.

Again, the primary concern of an elected lawmaker is his or her constituents. If you, as an advocate, can demonstrate to the policymaker that many diverse groups support your cause and your coalition partners will obtain grassroots support for the issue across the country, including the lawmaker's own district, your chances of success increase.

To begin creating coalitions, start making contacts in your community. By networking with other groups, you can form relationships. If you already know the president of a health organization, for example, you can call your colleague and broach the idea of working together. Some ways to involve coalition partners include the following:

- Suggest they show their support by signing a letter that you plan to send to policymakers. This will show lawmakers that you have the broad-based support discussed above. "Sign-on" letters with many organizations listed as supporters are a great tool to use when meeting with policymakers.
- Invite members of the group to your next meeting so that they can learn about your issue and what you are doing. They may volunteer to help you, or they may attend just to become informed.
- Invite members of other organizations to join you in lobby visits or to attend or speak at events such as briefings or press conferences.
- Continue the relationship. After they have expressed support for your issue, keep members of other groups informed of the outcome of your lobbying efforts. An easy way to do this is to send updates via e-mail or fax. It is very important to keep coalition partners informed so that the next time you have a lobbying effort you can call on them again for their support.
- Seek out and join other coalitions that are working on issues related to your priority issues.

EXAMPLES OF ORGANIZATIONAL ALLIES FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ISSUES:

- Health-related groups (provider and advocacy organizations)
- Educational groups
- Environmental groups
- Mainstream religious groups
- Student groups



- Business and professional groups
- General women's groups
- Legal advocacy groups
- Mainstream human and civil rights groups

B. Developing Relationships with Influential People

Most advocates must rely on more than just providing good, solid information to gain support for their position. Creating and sustaining relationships with influential people may make it easier for you to garner support for your issue.

WHEN WORKING WITH A LEGISLATIVE BODY

It may be necessary to establish relationships with key policymakers in order to schedule briefings or have an expert on your issue testify in a committee hearing. It is also important to have legislative allies when you are working to pass, amend or defeat a law. You can ask your supporters in the legislative body to talk to other members who may be wavering on the issue. You can even ask them to lobby for you!

There are official and unofficial ways of using legislative allies to address your issue with their colleagues. You can ask legislators to use their influence with their colleagues to advance your issue. If they chair a committee, for instance, you can ask them to schedule a hearing. Another example is to circulate a "dear colleague" letter. This is a letter that originates in one legislator's office but carries the signatures of many more legislators who then use the letter to gain support from other colleagues. You can offer to write this letter for a legislator and then ask him or her to circulate it for signatures. You can also volunteer to call other legislators' offices to urge them to sign onto the letter. The more signatures on the letter, the more powerful its endorsement of your argument. At the same time, individual lawmakers can also send a powerful message by sending their own letters.

Remember to keep legislators informed and educated so that they are prepared to use your message points. You will not have control over what they say, but you can do everything possible to make sure they know what they are talking about.

If a legislator has professional staff, it is also crucial to maintain good relationships with them. Often, they recommend how a legislator should vote on your issue. Sometimes, staff members can be as powerful and influential as lawmakers themselves.

Thank legislators and their staff whenever appropriate. The number one rule when dealing with legislators is to make them feel that it is worth their time to care about your issue. If they feel under-appreciated, they may lose interest in serving as your ally.

OTHER INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE

Gaining access to influential people can create important networking opportunities and sometimes give you access to policymakers whom you may not be able to meet on your own. Powerful contacts can also help you find allies in the executive branch of government. These contacts often have access to legislators or can advance your issue outside of the legislative arena.

Finding celebrities, industry experts and prominent constituents who are willing to support your issue publicly can also be very helpful. They can generate media opportunities and also provide the “real life” point of view on your issue. Constituents can be very powerful in dealing with elected policymakers because they are the very people the lawmaker was elected to represent.

Another group of people who can speak out on your issue with authority are the “grasstops,” including leaders of national organizations or organizations in your coalition. These people are usually well known for their work in the community and can provide expert testimony.

C. Organizing Briefings

The more you can educate policymakers and their staff about your issue, the more effective you will be as an advocate. The previous chapter discussed how to set up meetings with individual policymakers. Another very effective and efficient way to educate policymakers is to hold a briefing on your topic. Most briefings last from one to two hours, giving you plenty of time to showcase all of the main points of your argument.

- Hold the briefing in a convenient place for policymakers and their staff. If your briefing is far from where they meet, they are less likely to attend.
- Find a policymaker or two who will agree to sponsor the event. This shows support for your issue. In Washington, D.C., if you are having a briefing in the Senate, House or Capitol buildings you must have a legislative sponsor. In this case, the legislator's staff typically reserves the room for the briefing and your group plans the rest of the event.
- Work with your coalition partners. Designate one organizer for the event who will coordinate the details but use the expertise of everyone involved.
- Create an invitation list that includes policymakers, their staff, coalition partners, other interested organizations, and members of the media. Send out invitations for the event one month in advance and issue weekly reminders. If you have access to the invitees' e-mail addresses you can invite and remind them via e-mail.
- Send out a press release about the event to local news groups a day or two in advance of the briefing.



- Determine who will speak. Often, a briefing will bring together a panel of experts on the issue, with each person focusing on a different part of the issue to discuss and explain in detail. This is a good place to work with coalition partners to draw on the expertise of those who are working in the field on your issue. For example, if your issue is a restrictive abortion law, you may include a doctor on the panel to discuss the dangers of the restrictions based on her knowledge as a medical professional.
- Allow each speaker approximately 10 to 15 minutes to speak. Reserve time at the end for questions.
- Limit the number of speakers to four or five. Designate one person to be a moderator who will introduce the panelists, keep the briefing moving, and also facilitate the question and answer segment.
- Provide refreshments for those attending.
- Provide information that your attendees can take with them from your organization and your coalition partners such as fact sheets, briefing/position papers and organizational brochures.
- Record or transcribe the panelists' speeches for future use on your website, in publications or with the media. Take pictures of the event and consider publishing them or putting them on your website.
- Thank everyone for attending and make sure you get attendees' contact information. Send a follow-up e-mail or card thanking them for attending and include a brief overview of the program, highlighting the main points made by each speaker and a link to your website for further information. This gives your audience one more opportunity to hear your message points. In the thank-you message, offer to be available for any further questions they may have on your issue in the future.
- See enclosed sample checklist.

D. Organizing Testimony and Assisting with Hearings

A formal way to deliver your message is to offer expert testimony in an official hearing. This normally requires your organization to coordinate with a member of the governing body to present your expert's testimony. In the United States, testimony is recorded by the policymaking body (the sub-committee or committee) and typically published. Most legislative bodies require that you be officially invited to testify. Here are some things to consider when organizing testimony or assisting with the coordination of hearings:

- It is a good idea to have at least one person testify who is personally affected by the issue. Having someone discuss the real-life effects of the law being debated often resonates with elected lawmakers.

- The real-life perspective is useful only if the person can deliver the message effectively. Pick a person who has good public speaking skills and who can deliver your message in a personal and professional way. If you have a speaker who is nervous and unable to answer hard questions from the committee members, you may not be helping your cause.
- If official records of briefings or hearings are kept, ask the person who is testifying about your issue to prepare a written version of his or her speech for the record, which they can turn in to the staff for the official record of the hearing. You can also use the written remarks in a press release and distribute it to the media or post it on your website. Encourage the person testifying on your behalf to prepare notes from the written speech, but advise against reading the speech word for word.
- Make sure the person testifying understands how to address the officials conducting the hearing and any rules or protocol regarding the forum in which they are testifying.
- Prepare the person testifying for hard questions from the members.
- Be prepared for particular quirks of the forum. For example, during a committee hearing in the U.S. Congress, members may get up and leave, confer with each other or read while a witness is speaking.
- Sometimes it is possible to submit written testimony, even if you have not been asked to testify. Consider asking if that is a possibility.
- Issue a press release about the event.

E. Creating Action Kits and Packaging Your Information

You or the coalition of organizations you are working with can create an action kit. This can be a great way to combine the different information that each organization has compiled on the issue in a useful kit that can be referenced by either policymakers or grassroots activists.

When packaging your information for policymakers, remember that they cannot spend hours reading about your issue even though they expect comprehensive information. You can include the documentation already discussed in this guide, such as the best and most informative fact sheet from each member of your coalition, any press releases and media coverage that you have generated on the issue (including magazine articles or letters to the editor that your coalition has had published), transcribed speeches, and/or submitted testimony.

When packaging your information for grassroots activists, include the arguments you are using in your lobbying so that they can employ them in their efforts on your issue. If there are any common misconceptions about the issues, you may want to prepare a fact



sheet that compares myths with facts.

It is also a good idea to include answers to frequently asked questions about your issue so that grassroots activists are fully prepared to talk about the issue with policymakers.

In the kit, you might want to request that NGOs and activists take action on your issue by contacting policymakers through letters, petitions and media outreach, including samples in the kit. You can also post action kits on your website for anyone to access and use during lobby day campaigns (which are discussed below). You can also provide grassroots activism tips. See the Alliance for Justice website for tips on non-profit advocacy at www.afj.org/fai/nonprof.html.

F. Organizing Lobby Days

One way to bring focus and momentum to lobbying on a particular issue is to organize a lobby day. This can include inviting constituents from around the region or country to lobby their elected officials about your issue.

An effective way to get attendees for a lobby day is through your organization's members and/or the various organizations within your coalition, which can invite their members or supporters to the lobby day.

Plan on having a training session before people meet with the policymakers during which you highlight all of the messages you have been using in your own lobbying and distribute the action kit. In the training session, prepare the advocates for what to expect, depending on the forum in which you are lobbying (legislative, administrative, UN). Each forum will have different protocol and standards for meeting with citizens, so be aware of them before you begin.

Just as you would call and make an appointment with a policymaker, you can instruct those attending the lobby day to call their elected officials to set up an appointment. Urge them to practice their message points and be prepared (just as you would be) before they attend the meeting.

Ask the attendees to fill out a follow-up form after their meetings. This will help you to know which policymakers were reached, what the advocates said and how the policymaker responded.

G. Hosting Conferences

If you have the resources within your organization or coalition, you can host a conference to inform a group of people about your issue. You can organize workshops and panels that address the issue in depth. When organizing a conference, try to get your influential contacts to participate as guest panelists. They can offer expert information on the

topic and may also increase the attendance at the conference, and media coverage of your event.

Often, an award is presented at a conference to a policymaker who has been a champion of the cause. Recognizing the important work people are doing can be a great way to build strong leaders in your movement. Awards are also a nice way to publicly thank those people who are involved with your issue.

Organizations often will plan a conference and lobby day simultaneously so that attendees learn about the issue on the first day or days of a conference and are thereby empowered to approach policymakers on a lobby day later during the conference. If you do plan the two events together, try to include a lobby training session for grassroots activists before they approach policymakers. Make sure you discuss key messages for advocates to relay to policymakers and provide your attendees with action kits. Consider having a wrap-up session after the lobbying is done to evaluate the process.

H. Organizing Rallies, Demonstrations or Vigils

An inexpensive and sometimes very effective way to get the attention of policymakers or the media is through public rallies, demonstrations or vigils. Try to organize the event with your coalition partners and plan speeches from supportive policymakers and members of the community. Bring signs with messages that represent the goals you support. For example, at a rally to support abortion rights, signs can say “Keep Your Laws Off My Body” or “Keep Abortion Safe and Legal.” It is a good idea to clearly connect the rally or other event to the legislative or policy reform you are seeking.

When planning your rally, demonstration or vigil choose an area that is very public and near policymakers' offices (i.e., in front of the White House or U.S. Capitol building). Also try to get members of the media to your event. Be prepared for your opponents to show up with their own signs and recognize that the media loves to catch the drama of this conflict on camera!



VI. Crossing the Finish Line

Once you have begun meeting with lawmakers, making your arguments and developing relationships with key allies, it is time to take a step back and reevaluate your strategy and mission. In an advocacy campaign, it is wise to constantly reassess your goals and approach. If you are working to get a letter circulated but few legislators have signed on, maybe you should consider a different strategy. If you are meeting with legislators or their staff and they are saying this issue is not relevant to their constituents, you may need to mobilize more grassroots support for your cause.

This is also the time to determine what the final steps should be in your advocacy campaign.

A. Contributing Your Views in the Final Stretch

Although advocates cannot cast votes, they can be very influential in the end game of finalizing legislation. Legislators may be asked to trade their vote for another issue that they care about. As an effective advocate or part of an effective coalition, you may be able to convince the legislator, at the moment when it really matters, to keep his or her vote in support of your issue. If you have made your case for the legislation to pass or be defeated this far, you may need to continue to make your arguments until the vote is over. At times, legislators can feel enormous pressure from their colleagues to change their votes, so to maintain support for your issues, you should consider using the media, constituents and all of your arguments up until the vote takes place.

B. Counting Votes and Keeping Support

It is important throughout the lobbying process—and especially at the end of your campaign—to count your votes or know your level of support. If you are trying to get legislation passed or defeated, you should know how many votes you have. As you near the vote, stay in touch with policymakers, staff and other advocates to keep count of votes and ensure their continued support.

It is wise to have a few more votes committed than you actually need to win, just in case someone changes his or her mind at the last minute. Those who you thought were your supporters may be approached by the opposition or their lobbyists to change their vote. Be prepared to return to a legislator whose vote you thought you had secured.

C. Appreciating the Champions of Your Cause

After all is said and done, remember to thank your allies on the issue and show your appreciation for their support. Here are some ways to do this:

- Send thank-you letters.

- Send flowers or small tokens of appreciation (e.g., a photograph, t-shirt or commemorative pen). Always stay within lobbying regulations, however.
- Honor your supporters at an event or conference hosted by your organization (as discussed above).
- Give your supporters an award. For example, “Representative Sanders is being awarded our ‘Champion for Choice’ award for her outstanding commitment to preserving the right to choose in this country.”

D. Defining Success and Assessing Your Victory

Not all victories will mean the passage, or defeat, of a bill that you have worked on or a substantive change in policy. As an advocate, your focus should be not only on major victories, but also on smaller ones. Gaining votes on an issue is a victory even if the final outcome is not positive, because as you advocate for or against a piece of legislation you increase awareness about and support for your cause, which is crucial for building support for future success. You may not get all the votes you need the first time around, but legislators tend to vote the same on an issue, so once you get their vote on a particular bill, you are likely to have it as long as they stay in office. Another smaller victory is developing relationships with influential people on whom you can rely in the future.

Small steps to success are worth celebrating and can help sustain your energy for the next steps in your work to improve the reproductive rights of women and girls.



VII. Sample Advocacy Effort

The elimination of the global gag rule has consistently been a legislative priority for the Center for Reproductive Rights, formerly known as the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy or CRLP. The following is a description of the advocacy efforts that the Center took to overturn the gag rule from the time President Bush re-instated it. The examples in bold are illustrations of the ideas mentioned in this advocacy guide.

On January 22, 2001, the 28th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, President Bush reinstated the global gag rule. As a result, overseas NGOs—often the only health-care providers in remote, rural areas—are prohibited from using their own, non-U.S. funds to provide advice and information regarding abortion or make referrals to another health clinic; lobby their own governments to legalize abortion, oppose restrictions or decriminalize abortion; conduct public education campaigns regarding abortion; or provide legal abortions even where women’s health, physical or mental, is endangered. The global gag rule has serious implications for free speech and democracy, and for women’s health, well-being and lives throughout the world.

Following President Bush’s decision to re-impose the global gag rule, the Center for Reproductive Rights immediately swung into action, **appearing on three live television programs** (one within two hours of his announcement) and **providing numerous radio and print interviews**, both within the United States and internationally. We have continued our media outreach, providing reporters with interviews, information and contacts to our coalition partners in the U.S. and to our partner NGOs in other countries.

The Center for Reproductive Rights played a vital role in **organizing a press conference** along with our coalition partners in February 2001, during which members of Congress introduced legislation opposing the global gag rule, the Global Democracy Promotion Act. As part of the press conference, the Center invited the heads of organizations from Nepal and Peru, two countries affected by the global gag rule, to travel to Washington, D.C., and speak about the policy’s impact on their organizations and on women in their countries.

We also **sponsored a congressional briefing** that same day on the global gag rule, highlighting the experiences of our international guests from Nepal and Peru. The briefing was before a standing-room-only crowd that included several members of the U.S. Congress. We **distributed fact sheets and other materials** from the Center **during both events**. Since our briefing, we have been pleased that coalition partners have used the stories from our Nepalese and Peruvian guests in numerous publications and advocacy pieces.

In the spring of 2001, the Center for Reproductive Rights **published an action kit**, entitled *The Global Gag Rule Endangers Women’s Health and Democracy: Take Action!* This

kit, distributed to NGOs worldwide, consists of seven fact sheets on different components of the global gag rule. It also includes a request for local NGOs in other countries to take action against the global gag rule, such as sending a written statement of opposition against the policy, completing a short questionnaire providing information about the impact of the global gag rule, signing a petition to President Bush opposing the global gag rule, and working with their local media to publicize the negative effects of the policy (with a request that they forward a copy of any media coverage to us).

In April 2001, the Center for Reproductive Rights **sponsored another congressional briefing** called “Roadblocks to Reproductive Rights in Latin America,” which was attended by more than 70 people. At this briefing we **launched shadow reports on Peru, Bolivia and Argentina and our reports *An Unfulfilled Human Right: Family Planning in Guatemala, and Persecuted: Political Process and Abortion Legislation in El Salvador, A Human Rights Analysis*** as well as our supplement to our *Women of the World Latin America* report. A significant focus of the briefing was the roadblock to women’s reproductive health posed by the global gag rule. We linked the severe consequences of the gag rule to the reality of women’s lives in Latin America.

The Center for Reproductive Rights and coalition members participated in **congressional visits** with members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus in preparation for the briefing. This led to the addition of several new co-sponsors to the Global Democracy Promotion Act, which would overturn the gag rule.

We **worked closely with our coalition partners** in our advocacy efforts leading up to the vote in the House International Relations Committee (which approved the Global Democracy Promotion Act by a bipartisan vote of 26-22) and the vote on the motion to strike that provision on the House floor (which unfortunately passed by an extremely thin margin of 218-210). The Center for Reproductive Rights **conducted advocacy visits with more than 70 House offices** in the weeks before the vote, and **obtained several more co-sponsors of the act**. We also **participated in strategy sessions among the coalition leadership and congressional staffers developing the strategy in the House**.

In the summer of 2001, the Center for Reproductive Rights also worked with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and coalition members to **hold a congressional hearing** on the Global Democracy Promotion Act, and worked with the committee to coordinate the testimony of several witnesses for the hearing.

The Center for Reproductive Rights also **focused on lobbying Senate offices** to encourage their support for the Global Democracy Promotion Act—particularly members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee. We obtained several new co-sponsors for the act and helped to ensure a successful vote in both committees.

In the summer of 2001, the Center for Reproductive Rights **filed a lawsuit against**



President Bush in a challenge to the global gag policy on the grounds that it censors speech that promotes abortion law reform. In the suit, the Center for Reproductive Rights sought to establish that the U.S. government can not restrict the speech of American human rights advocates working in the United States or in other countries. Unfortunately, the lawsuit was dismissed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in September 2002.

During the summer of 2002, the Center for Reproductive Rights, in collaboration with coalition partners, **organized a briefing** in Washington, D.C. with four members of Parliament from Russia, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Denmark, to discuss ways that the global gag rule is affecting how their countries administer international family planning aid assistance programs. We **developed both a video of the briefing and a briefing paper** from the event, to be used in future lobby visits.

We have also **participated on numerous panels** on international family planning and the global gag rule before international and domestic audiences including conferences and teach-ins.

As the 108th Congressional session begins, we plan to continue our advocacy efforts to overturn the gag rule using the various lobbying methods in this guide.

Sources Referenced

A Media Handbook for Creating Social Change. Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, 2000.

Advocacy Guide for Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights. International Planned Parenthood Federation. First published January 1995, new edition revised and edited by Claire Hoffman, IPPF Global Advocacy Division, July 2001.

Advocacy Manual. Global Health Council. See http://www.globalhealth.org/view_top.php?id=13

Drafting Effective Legislation and Amendments. The Capitol.Net, March 20, 2001.

E-Advocacy for Nonprofits: The Law of Lobbying and Election-Related Activity on the Net. Elizabeth Kingsley, Gail Harmon, John Pomeranz, and Kay Guinane. Alliance for Justice, 2000.

How Our Laws Are Made. Bicentennial Edition, 1789-1989. Revised and updated by Edward F. Willett, Jr., Esq., Law Revision Counsel, United States House of Representatives, 1989.

Keep 'Em Honest Kit. Terry Cosgrove. ProChoice Resource Center.

The Citizen's Guide to Lobbying Congress. Donald E. deKieffer. Chicago Review Press, Inc., 1997.

The Gains for Women and Girls Campaign: Get Active, Get Organized, Get Results! Action Kit. Beth Myers. Women's EDGE, See www.womensedge.org.

Training for Advocacy. Report of the Inter-regional Advocacy Training Workshop, Nairobi, March 1996. International Planned Parenthood Federation, 1996.

Appendix: Samples of Advocacy Tools

SAMPLE FACT SHEET

SAMPLE OPEN LETTER

SAMPLE SIGN-ON LETTER

SAMPLE LOBBYING LETTER

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

SAMPLE BRIEFING CHECKLIST



Factsheet

International Family Planning and Reproductive Health

International family planning and reproductive health programs funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) population program provide health care choices that assist women in realizing their universal human rights. The right to health, including reproductive health care, and the right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of one's children, are well established under international law. However, U.S. support for desperately-needed programs in low and middle income countries to ensure these rights has been inconsistent, insufficient and mired with burdensome restrictions. Since 1995, Congress has significantly reduced funds for international family planning, and increased restrictions on these crucial reproductive health programs.

Reproductive Rights Are Human Rights

International human rights treaties affirm that reproductive rights, including the right to health, the right to family planning, the right to reproductive self-determination, and the principle of non-discrimination, are human rights. Lack of access to reproductive health services and information constitutes a violation of these basic human rights principles.

The rights to family planning and health were first articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and were refined in subsequent human rights treaties adopted by the international community:

- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by the U.S. in 1992, states that men and women of marriageable age have the right to marry and found a family.
- The first human rights treaty to require nations to recognize a right to health and to take steps to achieve the realization of that right for the benefit of families was the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

June 2001

International Family Planning and Reproductive Health

The Center for Reproductive Rights urges the U.S. government to support increases in international family planning funding, without restrictions, in order to:

- promote women and children's health around the globe;
- maintain the role of the U.S. in the development and promotion of human rights;
- comply with U.S. law governing human rights and foreign aid; and
- abide by the United States' international commitments.

- Women's rights to health and family planning services and information, in particular, are addressed in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child reiterates the right to maternal health and identifies it as a right intrinsically related to the right to health for children.

During the 1990s, a series of international conferences recognized reproductive rights, including the right to family planning information and services, as critical both for advancing women's human rights and for promoting development. Building on principles articulated at earlier conferences — dating back to 1968 — the international community, including the U.S., made commitments of political will and resources to realizing and securing these rights. At the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, and their five-year reviews, the international community and the U.S. unequivocally endorsed reproductive rights as human rights.

Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy

And repressed people around the world must know this about the United States ... we will always be the world's leader in support of human rights.

President George W. Bush (May 18, 2001).

The promotion of human rights is an important aspect of U.S. foreign policy, including foreign assistance. Although Congress and the President have broad discretion to determine whether to provide foreign assistance and to whom, this discretion must be consistent with the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA), which provides that the United States:

shall, in accordance with its international obligations as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and in keeping with the constitutional heritage and traditions of the United States, promote and encourage increased respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world. . . . Accordingly, a principal goal of the foreign policy of the United States shall be to promote the increased observance of internationally recognized human rights by all countries.¹



Factsheet

The United States' continued insufficient funding levels and restrictions on family planning contravene a "principal goal of the foreign policy of the United States." In addition, these policies severely curtail the ability of low-income nations to ensure their citizens' rights to health, family planning, and reproductive self-determination. By inhibiting the ability of these nations to protect human rights, the U.S. directly contradicts the spirit of the FAA, which seeks to promote development, as well as increased observance of internationally recognized human rights by other nations.

U.S. Financial Commitments to Reproductive Rights

Recognizing "the interrelationship between . . . population growth, and . . . development and overall improvement in living standards in developing countries," the U.S. began its family planning assistance program over 30 years ago. In a bipartisan effort, Congress expanded the FAA to authorize the President to provide assistance for voluntary family planning and health programs. The U.S. family planning program has contributed significantly to increasing the use of modern contraceptive methods from under 10 percent in the 1960s to 50 percent today, helping to reduce high-risk pregnancies and abortions and saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of women.

During international conferences such as 1994's ICPD, the U.S. recognized the critical role that international assistance plays in achieving important goals regarding population and development. The ICPD estimated that approximately \$17 billion would be required in the year 2000 to meet the need for international family planning and reproductive health services, including \$5.7 billion from donor countries. However, donor contributions have stagnated at around \$2 billion per year, significantly below the amount needed to provide sufficient resources to low-income countries. Donor countries, including the U.S., also committed to official development assistance at a level of 0.7 percent of gross national product, with part of that going toward family planning.

Unfulfilled Commitments

Because of its size and wealth, the U.S. remains one of the largest bilateral donors to international family planning programs; however, the U.S. ranks last out of 22 major donors in its contribution relative to gross national product (GNP). In fiscal year 1999, the U.S. provided a mere 0.1 percent of its

Funding levels for International Family Planning, 1995-2001

FY 1995	\$541.6 million
FY 1996	\$356 million
FY 1997	\$385 million
FY 1998	\$385 million
FY 1999	\$385 million
FY 2000	\$372.5 million
FY 2001	\$425 million

Fact Sheet

June 2001

International Family Planning and Reproductive Health

GNP for official development assistance, a figure that has actually declined in recent years despite the international pledges to meet higher goals, falling far short of the 0.7 percent of GNP endorsed by the international community.

Appropriations for USAID family planning assistance plummeted from \$541.6 million in fiscal year (FY) 1995 to \$356 million in FY 1996. Research organizations conservatively estimated that this 35% reduction in funding resulted in 4 million unplanned pregnancies, 1.6 million abortions, 8,000 maternal deaths, and 134,000 infant deaths due to increased high-risk births. Although the funding level rose to \$425 million in FY 2001, the Bush Administration's lack of commitment to family planning programs suggests that the funds are still at risk.

Furthermore, unfair rules governing the distribution of family planning assistance funds have been imposed. In addition to the 1973 Helms Amendment, which prohibits the use of federal money "for the performance of abortions as a method of family planning," USAID family planning funds are now further restricted by the "Global Gag Rule." This policy restricts non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that receive

these funds from using their own, non-U.S. funds to:

- lobby their own governments for abortion law reform
- provide legal abortion services
- or provide accurate medical counseling or referrals regarding abortion.

In June 2001, the Center for Reproductive Rights challenged the Global Gag Rule, arguing that this restriction is illegal because it violates our First Amendment's free speech guarantee.

Conclusion

Cuts and restrictions on funding will continue to cause a significant increase in unplanned pregnancies, abortions, maternal and infant deaths, and transmissions of HIV and other sexually transmissible infections. The United States' inadequate provision of foreign aid for family planning, and the existing restrictions on such aid, undermine the leadership role of the U.S.

We urge Congress to revitalize U.S. leadership in international reproductive rights through an increase in funding—without undemocratic restrictions—for family planning and reproductive health assistance.

¹ Foreign Assistance Act, U.S. Code, 22, secs. 2304(a)(1) (1994).

SAMPLE SIGN-ON LETTER

Working Group on ratification
of the
U.N. Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women

Co-Chair:

Kit Cosby
Director for External Affairs
National Spiritual Assembly
of the Bahá'ís of the United States
1320 19th Street, N.W. Suite 701
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 833-8990 • fax: (202) 833-8988

Co-Chair:

Sarah Albert
Public Policy Director
General Federation of Women's Clubs
1734 N Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 347-3168 • fax: (202) 835-0246

December 6, 2001

An Open Letter to the Senate:

As the world observes International Human Rights Day on December 10, we join together to ask the Senate to take a step for the promotion of human rights of women worldwide and the women of Afghanistan by ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

December 18 marks the 22nd anniversary of the United Nations' unanimous adoption of CEDAW. **This treaty provides a universal standard for women's human rights.** It addresses discrimination in areas such as education, employment, marriage and family relations, health care and reproductive health, politics, finance and law. **To date, 168 countries have ratified CEDAW. The United States is the only industrialized nation that has failed to do so, and as such is in the company of countries such as Iran and Afghanistan.**

In the last several months, the world has seen an even greater struggle for freedom and the promotion of fundamental human rights principles. **We see the protection of women's rights as vital to the success of these efforts.** There can be no civil society in Afghanistan without the full restoration of women's rights. CEDAW is critical to ensuring that the future of Afghanistan will have a democratic government that includes equal rights for women and protects the human rights and freedoms of all its citizens.

As President George W. Bush proclaimed earlier this year, "repressed people around the world must know this about the United States... we will always be the world's leader in support of human rights." The United States should demonstrate its commitment to human rights by ratifying CEDAW, the most comprehensive treaty ensuring the human rights of women - imperative for half of the world's population.

In 1992, following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of communism, the United States ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In doing so, the U.S. held up that treaty as a model for the new democracies in Eastern Europe and the development of their constitutions. **Today, U.S. ratification of CEDAW would not only set the stage for U.S. leadership in ensuring women's human rights in the rebuilding of a more**

democratic Central Asia, but would also reaffirm the U.S. commitment to promoting and protecting equality for its own citizens.

We urge you to work to ensure immediate ratification of CEDAW.

Sincerely,

Alice Paul Centennial Foundation, Inc.
American Association of University Women
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
Amnesty International USA
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
Business Professional Women
Business Professional Women, USA
Campaign for UN Reform
Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
Center for Reproductive Law & Policy
Center for Women's Policy
Center of Concern
Central Conference of American Rabbis
Church Women United
Clearing House on Women's Issues
Congregational Council Member Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Episcopal Church, USA
Family Violence Prevention Fund
Feminist Majority Foundation
Foundation for International Community Assistance
Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, MN
General Federation of Women's Clubs
HADASSAH
Heifer Project International
Hunger Project
Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament of Corpus Christie, Texas
International Legislative Counsel Center for Reproductive Law and Policy
Ipas
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Kenan Institute for Ethics, Duke University
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Marsteller & Associates, Non-Profit Coaching
McAuley Institute
Mennonite Central Committee US, Washington Office
NA'AMAT USA
National Abortion Federation
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Orthopedic Nurses
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Committee on UN CEDAW
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Women's Organizations

National Education Association
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Organization for Women
National Peace Foundation
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States
National Women's Conference
NCA Union Retirees
NOW Legal Defense & Education Fund
Older Women's League (OWL)
Pact, Inc.
Peace and Justice Coordinating Council, Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph
Population Action International
Population Institute
Stop Family Violence
The Alan Guttmacher Institute
The American Friends Service Committee
The Brehan Law Society
The Leadership Team of Sisters of the Holy Cross
The Union Institute
"The White House Project/Women's Leadership Fund"
The Women's Information Network (WIN)
Trickle Up Program
U.S. Committee for UNIFEM
UNA-USA
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
Unitarian Universalists Service Committee
Ursuline Convent of the Sacred Heart
Voters for Choice
Women Employed
Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)
Women's Business Development Center
Women's EDGE
Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom United States Section (WILPF)
Women Legislator's Lobby (WiLL)
Women's Research & Education Institute (WREI)
World Federalist Association
YWCA of the USA

January 11, 2002

SAMPLE LOBBYING LETTER

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee)

Re: Supplementary information on the Russian Federation
Scheduled for review by CEDAW Committee on January 25, 2002

Dear Committee Members:

This letter is intended to supplement the periodic report submitted by the Russian Federation, which is scheduled to be reviewed by the CEDAW Committee during its 26th session. The Center for Reproductive Law and Policy (CRLP), an independent non-governmental organization, hopes to further the work of the Committee by providing independent information concerning the rights protected in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This letter highlights several areas of concern related to the status of women's reproductive health and rights in the Russian Federation. Specifically, it focuses on discriminatory or inadequate laws and policies related to the reproductive rights of women in the Russian Federation.

Because reproductive rights are fundamental to women's health and equality, States Parties' commitment to ensuring them should receive serious attention. Further, reproductive health and rights are explicitly protected in CEDAW. Article 12 requires States Parties to "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care," and specifies that governments should ensure access to "appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation."¹ Article 10(h) requires that women have "access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning."²

The Committee's General Recommendation on Women and Health affirms that "access to health care, including reproductive health, is a basic right under [CEDAW]"³ and is fundamental to women's health and equality. Moreover, the General Recommendation considers it the responsibility of States Parties to "[e]nsure the removal of all barriers to women's access to health services, education and

information, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health,” and to “[p]rioritize the prevention of unwanted pregnancy through family planning and sex education and reduce maternal mortality rates through safe motherhood services and prenatal assistance.”⁴

We wish to bring to the Committee’s attention the following issues of concern, which directly affect the reproductive health and lives of women in the Russian Federation:

1. Right to Health Care, Including Reproductive Health Care and Family Planning (Articles 12, 14(2)(b) and (c), and 10(h))

A. Access to Affordable Modern Contraception

Availability of contraceptives remains unreliable due to the government’s failure to ensure affordable contraceptives, particularly for low-income women. The cost of contraceptives, which are primarily imported, is prohibitive for most Russians. For example, an annual supply of oral contraceptives costs about US \$80-100, which is approximately comparable to the average monthly wage, US \$80-200.⁵

Unaffordable or unavailable barrier contraceptives also contribute to the alarming rate of sexually transmissible infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS.⁶ In 1987, Russia reported 4.2 cases of syphilis per 100,000 people. By 2000, that rate had multiplied exponentially to 157 cases per 100,000 people.⁷ The government reported “1,661 recorded cases of HIV-infected women” in 1998⁸—an estimate that is strikingly lower than recent UNAIDS estimates reporting 40,000 new cases of HIV infections per year,⁹ with a ratio of one infected woman for every two infected men.¹⁰

B. Access to Information on Family Planning and Reproductive Health

In its report, the government outlines the state-sponsored set of family planning programs, known as “Children of Russia,” adopted in the early 1990s. The programs were intended to introduce modern contraceptives and train providers in family planning services.¹¹ According to the government, “[t]he measures carried out under these programmes have produced a welcome downturn in the number of abortions and stabilized the maternal and infant mortality rates.”¹² However, despite the documented success of these programs, in 1998, they were cut from the state budget.¹³ Consequently, several regions have no federal funding for family planning and reproductive health programs.¹⁴

2. Right of Adolescents to Education (Articles 10, 12)

A. Information and Education on Sexuality and Family Planning

In its report to the Committee, the government highlights the plight of adolescent girls whose incidence of “gynecological problems” tripled between 1993 and 1998.¹⁵

The government’s report provides an incomplete picture of adolescents’ sexual and reproductive lives. Over the past three decades, the incidence of pregnancy among women under age 20 has increased from 28.4% to 47.8%.¹⁶ In some cities, between 1984 and 1994, the number of pregnancies among adolescents increased by 20 times.¹⁷ Moreover, even with more than 70% of Russians commencing sexual relations between the ages of 15-19 years,¹⁸ reproductive health information and services remain inadequate. For example, one study found that about a third of young women are completely unaware of effective contraceptive methods.¹⁹ Another study found that, lacking education about contraceptives, 36.6% of adolescents have had to resort to abortions at later stages of pregnancy.²⁰

In its report to the Committee, the government cites “early maturity and early initiation into sexual activities” as the cause of the alarming rate of teenage pregnancy.²¹ Yet despite the government’s explicit recognition of adolescent sexuality and reproductive health concerns, sex education is not a required part of school curricula.²² In addition, existing family planning centers are inadequate to meet demand and no systematic efforts are made to ensure universal access to contraceptives, the price of which fluctuates with the local currency.²³

We hope that the Committee will consider addressing the following questions to the Russian Federation government:

1. What legislation and policies have been adopted to address the barriers that women face in accessing comprehensive reproductive health and family planning services, as well as information about these services? What is the unmet need for contraception and what governmental efforts are being made to increase public awareness about contraceptive methods?
2. The government report claims that “efforts are being made to improve the system of sex education in schools.”²⁴ Yet sex education is still not systematically offered in schools. Given this reality, what specific measures have been taken to institute government-sponsored programs such as public awareness campaigns and sexual education in schools, and to distribute contraception to adolescents?
3. According to UNAIDS and the WHO, Eastern Europe, and in particular Russia, exhibits the fastest-growing HIV-infection rates in the world.²⁵ What specific measures have been taken to increase public awareness to prevent, contain and manage the epidemic?

4. Given the increased risk of HIV infection that young women face in the Russian Federation, have any measures been aimed specifically at women and girls? For example, in 1999, the Ministry of Health established special health monitoring centers for children and women living with HIV/AIDS.²⁶ Do these centers continue to operate and receive federal funding? What programs and services are being offered through these centers and are they accessible and user-friendly?

Finally, we have included the following supporting documentation for the Committee's reference:

1. Chapter on the Russian Federation in *Women of the World: Laws and Policies Affecting Their Reproductive Lives, East Central Europe* (CRLP ed. 2000).
2. Report submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, written by CRLP and Open Dialogue for Reproductive Rights (ODRR), *Reproductive Rights of Young Girls and Adolescents in Russia: A Shadow Report* (1999).
3. Briefing paper authored by CRLP, *Trends in Reproductive Rights: East Central Europe* (2001).

There remains a significant gap between CEDAW provisions and the reality of women's reproductive health and lives in Russia. We applaud the Committee for its commitment to women's reproductive rights and the strong concluding observations and recommendations the Committee has issued to governments in the past, which stress the need to take steps to ensure the realization of these rights.

We hope that this information is useful during the Committee's review of the Russian Federation's report. If you have any questions, or would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Very truly yours,

Christina Zampas
Staff Attorney, International Program

Laura Katzive
Staff Attorney, International Program

¹ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, *adopted* Dec. 18, 1979, G.A. Res. 34/180, U.N. GAOR, 34th Sess., Supp. No. 46, at 193, U.N. Doc. A/34/46 (1979) (*entered into force* Sept. 3, 1981) [hereinafter CEDAW].

² *Id.*

³ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Gen. Recommendation 24, *Women and Health*, art. 12, para. 1, U.N. Doc. A/54/38/ (Part I) (1999).

⁴ *Id.* at para. 31(b), (c).

⁵ See WOMEN OF THE WORLD: LAWS AND POLICIES AFFECTING THEIR REPRODUCTIVE LIVES, EAST CENTRAL EUROPE 171 n.183 (Center for Reproductive Law and Policy (CRLP) ed. 2000) [hereinafter WOW], *citing* Youcef Ghelleb & Michel Sollogoub, *Assistance Provided by the ILO to the Russian Federation in the Field of Wage Policy: Analytical Report Containing Recommendations to the Minister of Labor, Mr. Kalashnikov*, in INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL AND LABOR ISSUES: OVERCOMING ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, *available at* <http://www.trud.org> (last visited Aug. 2, 2000).

⁶ For example, female condoms are not sold in Russia. See WOW, *supra* note 5, at 159.

⁷ See UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) & WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO), AIDS EPIDEMIC UPDATE 11 (2001), *available at* http://www.unaids.org/worldaidsday/2001/Epiupdate2001/Epiupdate2001_en.pdf.

⁸ Fifth periodic report of the Russian Federation to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, at 10, CEDAW/C/USR/5 (1999) [hereinafter Government report].

⁹ UNAIDS & WHO, *supra* note 7, at 10.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 11.

¹¹ Government report, *supra* note 8, at 28.

¹² *Id.* at 29.

¹³ See *Obraschenie v Sovet bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii obshchestvennost I spetsialistov v oblasti okhrany reproduktivnogo zdorov'is* [An address to the Security Council of Russian Federation of Public Specialists in Reproductive Health], 1 PLANIROVANIE SEM'I [FAMILY PLANNING] 5 (1999).

¹⁴ *See id.*

¹⁵ Government report, *supra* note 8, at 9.

¹⁶ See CRLP & Open Dialogue for Reproductive Rights (ODRR), REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS OF YOUNG GIRLS AND ADOLESCENTS IN RUSSIA: A SHADOW REPORT (1999), at 6, *citing* V. Kulakov, *Reproductive Health of Youth is a Future of the Nation*, REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND SEXUAL EDUCATION OF YOUTH 16, 19 (1995) (in Russian).

¹⁷ See CRLP & ODRR, *supra* note 16, at 6, *citing* Kulakov, *supra* note 16, at 16, 19.

¹⁸ See WOW, *supra* note 5, at 167, *citing* E.I. Nikolaeva & E.M. Vikhliaeva, *K epidemiologii iskusstvennydk abortov: pilotazhnoe issledovanie* [On the Epidemiology of Induced Abortions: Results of the Pilot Study], 3 PLANIROVANIE SEM'I [FAMILY PLANNING] 2 (1997).

¹⁹ See CRLP & ODRR, *supra* note 16, at 7, *citing* N. Tresheva, *State of the Reproductive Health of Girls and Experience of Sexual Education in Arkhangelskaya oblast*, in FIRST RFPF CONFERENCE PROBLEMS OF FAMILY PLANNING IN RUSSIA, MOSCOW 63 (1994) (in Russian).

²⁰ See CRLP & ODRR, *supra* note 16, at 7, *citing* Kulakov, *supra* note 16, at 21.

²¹ Government report, *supra* note 8, at 9-10.

²² See CRLP & ODRR, *supra* note 16, at 11, *citing* Russian Federation, Ministry of Health, Ordinance No. 154 of 5 May 1999, on the Improvement of Medical Care for Adolescents.

²³ See CRLP & ODRR, *supra* note 16, at 7, *citing* Facsimile from Elena Dmitrieva, Executive Director, ODRR, to CRLP (Sept. 3, 1999) (on file with CRLP).

²⁴ Government report, *supra* note 8, at 28.

²⁵ UNAIDS & WHO, *supra* note 7, at 2.

²⁶ Russian Federation, Ministry of Health, Ordinance No. 133 of 19 Apr. 1999, on the Prevention and Treatment of HIV Infected Pregnant Women and Children.

120 WALL STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10005
917-637-3660 • 917-637-3666 (FAX)
www.reproductiverights.org



The Power of Law for Every Woman

January 14, 2003

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters Editor

The New York Times

Email: letters@nytimes.com

To the Editor:

"The War Against Women" (editorial, Jan. 12) exposes the hypocrisy of the Bush administration's claim to promote democracy worldwide.

A woman's right to control her reproductive life is a fundamental human right and the mark of a free and fair society. Yet the Bush administration has embarked on a multifaceted attack at home and abroad to deny women this most basic right of self-determination.

The public needs to recognize this threat with the urgency that it deserves, and demand the protection of a woman's right to choose before it is eviscerated by the Bush administration and opponents of reproductive rights in Congress.

NANCY NORTHUP

President, Center for Reproductive Rights
New York, New York

120 WALL STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10005
917-637-3600 • 917-637-3606 (FAX)
www.reproductiverights.org



SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
FEBRUARY 6, 2003

CONTACT: ADRIANNA MONTAGUE-GRAY 917-637-3658
AMONTAGUE-GRAY@REPRORIGHTS.ORG

SLOVAK GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS RETALIATE AGAINST ROMANI WOMEN AND LEGAL ADVOCATES FOR EXPOSING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

ROMANI WOMEN INTERROGATED AND THREATENED FOLLOWING REPORT DOCUMENTING ABUSES IN SLOVAKIA'S HOSPITALS

New York, NY – Law enforcement officials and medical personnel in hospitals are reportedly threatening and retaliating against Romani women in Slovakia, following the release of a new report that documents grave human rights violations in Slovakia's public hospitals. The report, released last week by the Center for Reproductive Rights and Porad_ a pre ob_ianske a _udské práva (Center for Civil and Human Rights), documents cases of forced and coerced sterilization of Romani women, along with verbal and physical abuse, racially discriminatory standards of care, misinformation in health matters and denial of patient access to medical records.

“We are pleased that the Slovak government has recognized the need to address these illegal practices but we are now hearing disturbing reports of Romani women being threatened and abused in at least one of the settlements and the hospital that serves the settlement,” said Christina Zampas, legal adviser at the Center for Reproductive Rights and an author of the report entitled *Body and Soul: Forced Sterilization and Other Assaults on Roma Reproductive Freedom in Slovakia*.

At least one settlement to date has reported that police have begun rounding up Romani women to interrogate them. They have also threatened that, if these women file legal complaints against health care personnel for forced sterilization, they will face three years in prison for bringing false charges. In addition, there have been several reports that health care personnel in the Krompachy hospital are verbally abusing pregnant Romani women because of the information in the report. Porad_ a and Romani organizations are actively monitoring the situation.

“We are calling on the Slovak government to take immediate steps to stop this and to prevent any escalation and future intimidation or violence against the Romani community,” said Barbora Bukovská, Executive Director of Porad_ a and an author of the report. *“We urge the government to proceed with the investigation in a manner that respects the rights of victims, their families and communities, and recommend that the abuses be investigated through the transparent process set forth in the report,”* added Bukovská.

The Slovak government's Office of Human Rights and Minorities has filed a criminal complaint with the General Prosecutor's office against the “unknown perpetrator” that is violating health standards. This has led to the launch of the police investigation into illegal sterilization practices.

In addition, the Office of Human Rights and Minorities has filed a criminal complaint with the General Prosecutor's office against the authors of *Body and Soul*. Although the authors have not yet been charged, the Office's press release asserts that the complaint against the authors states two things:

1. If the information in the report is found to be true, authors will be prosecuted for failure to inform law enforcement of criminal activities, and

120 WALL STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10005
917-637-3600 • 917-637-3606 (FAX)
www.reproductiverights.org



2. If the information is found to be false, authors will be prosecuted under section 199 of the Criminal Code for “spreading false rumors and creating panic in society.”

“Filing this complaint is an outrageous attempt to deflect attention from the government’s failure to prevent and investigate allegations of forced sterilization and other reproductive rights violations against Romani women,” said Katherine Hall-Martinez, Director of the International Program at the Center for Reproductive Rights. *“It appears to be aimed at intimidating human rights defenders, as well as victims who spoke to our investigators,”* added Hall-Martinez.

On January 30th, the Center for Reproductive Rights and Porad_a presented the findings to the Health Committee of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. Jan Marinus Weirisma, Member of the European Parliament, EP Rapporteur on Slovakia and member of the Human Rights Committee, publicly expressed concern about the finding of the report and urged the Slovak government to investigate the findings and to address the issue immediately. He is in Bratislava this week and will be discussing the findings of the report, amongst other issues, with government officials. As a future member state of the European Union, Slovakia has committed itself to the “rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities,” as required by the political criteria for joining the European Union.

Body and Soul: Forced Sterilization and Other Assaults on Roma Reproductive Freedom in Slovakia is based on a fact-finding mission undertaken in eastern Slovakia in 2002. The report was launched in Bratislava on the January 28, 2003 and documents 110 cases where women were forcibly or coercively sterilized, or had strong indications that they were sterilized. Romani women, non-Romani women, obstetricians, gynecologists, hospital administrators and government officials were interviewed for the report. Real names of the victims were not used in the report and will remain confidential.

The practice of forced sterilization stems from a communist era policy targeting Romani women that provided monetary incentives to women to undergo sterilization. That policy was formally rescinded over a decade ago, and although monetary incentives are no longer given, the practice continues without full and informed consent of the patient.

For background information and copy of the report visit www.reproductiverights.org.

###

The **Center for Reproductive Rights** is a nonprofit, legal advocacy organization that promotes and defends the reproductive rights of women worldwide. Founded in 1992 (as the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy), the Center has used international human rights law to advance the reproductive freedom of women and has strengthened reproductive health laws and policies across the globe by working with more than 50 organizations in 44 nations including countries in Africa, Asia, East Central Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The **Centre for Civil and Human Rights (Porad_a pre ob_ianske a _udské práva)** is a nonprofit organization engaged in advocacy and strategic litigation on discrimination against Roma in the Slovak Republic. The priorities of Poradna are to implement projects focusing on social and economic rights with special emphasis on the Romani minority in general and Romani women in particular.

THE CENTER FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IS A NON-PROFIT LEGAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PROMOTING AND DEFENDING WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS WORLDWIDE.

CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING CHECKLIST

Schedule	Action	Instructions	Contact
	Visual Aids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Power Point Slides and/or Transparencies Walk around to get and keep audience's attention 	
	Reserve room or space	Call staff of partner congress member	
2 weeks prior	Mailings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mail invite with cover letter 	
2 weeks prior	Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email invite as attachment and in body of email 	
2 weeks prior	Fax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fax the invite to your list of invitees 	
2 weeks prior	Publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check with Julia to see which publications will be handed out Inventory publications in office (may need to request more from NY office) Box up publications anytime prior to briefing Check with Julia as to what should be ordered and to get her credit card info. Call with order (normal order below) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 70 people Cart Service Theater style with podium No food Assorted juices, sodas, and bottled water Small plates, napkins, cups, ice Request faxed confirmation Call to reserve order and pay with credit card (they charge an extra 5% to use a credit card, but checks must be ordered from N.Y. office and then brought in person or couriered over in order to avoid clearance time lag) Use list of Pro, Leans, Mixed congress members and phone #'s from alphabetical listing of Early Guide Ask for staffer who deals with issue at hand Inform/reminder staffer of briefing Offer to email or fax invite 	Deana Uptown Caterers (202) 225-5564
1 week or more prior	Catering		
Start calling 6 business days prior (takes 3-4 days)	Call appropriate staffers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use list of Pro, Leans, Mixed congress members and phone #'s from alphabetical listing of Early Guide Ask for staffer who deals with issue at hand Inform/reminder staffer of briefing Offer to email or fax invite 	
1 day prior	Reminder Blast Fax	See instructions for blast fax above	
	Reminder email	See instructions for email above	
1 day prior	Name Cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create name cards for speakers and moderator 	
	Camera/Video/AV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare digital camera. If necessary, prepare video-camera, and/or audio-visual equipment for presentation 	
Anytime	Sign-in sheets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-format sign-in sheets with correct date (click hyperlink below) S:\JULIA'S STUFF\CRLP Guest Sign-In Sheet template.doc Print and copy enough for event 	
After briefing	Briefing Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate and document outcome of briefing, distribute as needed 	

The Power of Law for Every Woman