



STEP 5: TAKING ACTION

The way in which advocates communicate evidence and solutions to government matters. If decision-makers are approached in the right forum, at the right time, with the right information and with the right people in the room who can make decisions, advocacy is significantly more effective. Furthermore, communicating useful solutions as part of advocacy can transform government's perception of organisations from 'activist' to 'valued partner'.

Advocacy includes a strong communications component and requires evidence that is presented in the right format and shared through the correct channels. Advocacy should be audience focused (having identified stakeholders), data driven, partnership oriented and both adaptive and responsive. It is often much easier to engage and influence stakeholders if there is an ongoing relationship between the advocates and the stakeholder as opposed to a singular interaction.

Gender transformative advocacy also pays attention at who carries out the advocacy actions to ensure everyone has equal opportunities to speak out and mobilise and to challenge the stereotype that the most marginalised do not have a say in decision-making. In the E4A-MamaYe project we encourage and empower women and girls as the most affected by MNH issues to lead on advocacy and participate in decision-making.

As part of this effort, make sure that representatives who have less experience speaking or leading advocacy actions (often women) are given the resources and support needed to prepare for the roles they will play.



Finally it is important to think carefully about potential counter arguments that you could receive, prepare a response and consider who is best placed to deliver the messaging. Ensure that you also prepare to respond to arguments that challenge the promotion of gender equality explaining why gender equality is important for the solution of the issue you are discussing.

E4A-MamaYe is developing a Communication Advocacy Handbook which will be available on our website (mamaye.org/resources) in 2020.



BaSAM members (Bauchi State Accountability Mechanism) at the MPDSR dissemination meeting, January 2020



Visualising information

Evidence is most likely to be used by decision-makers when it follows three basic principles:

1. It is packaged in a way that makes it easy to understand and accessible for the user
2. It is reviewed in a collaborative manner with multiple stakeholders
3. It is taken from trusted data sources

“By visualizing information, turn it into a landscape that you can explore with your eyes. A sort of information map. And when you’re lost in information, an information map is kind of useful.”
– David McCandless

Researchers agree that vision is our dominant sense: 80–85% of information we perceive, learn or process is mediated through vision. It is even more so when we are trying to understand and interpret data or when we are looking for relationships among hundreds or thousands of variables to determine their relative importance. One of the most effective ways to discern important relationships is through advanced analysis and easy-to-understand visualizations. It is important to consider how the evidence and data is being presented during advocacy efforts.

In the E4A-MamaYe project, a frequent tool used by our coalitions are scorecards which present commitments that have been made towards reproductive health services and “score” whether this commitment has been delivered on or not (see Figure 6). Other visualisations could include flyers, websites and pictures used to represent the advocacy efforts being undertaken.

USING GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication can raise awareness about harmful gender norms and aim at changing them to create equitable gender norms and dynamics. Some of the tips for this type of comms are:

Avoid reinforcing stereotypes - for example showing only women as care givers and man as bread winners or decision-makers

Challenge gender roles/stereotypes - for example showing women as educated, policy makers, doctors, etc.

Avoid instrumentalising women - for example instrumentalising them in their traditional role as mothers to improve the health of the family;

Avoid showing women as victims – where possible present them as agents of change.

Amplify women’s own voices – allow women to tell their own stories and give them a platform

Don’t present women as a homogeneous group – where possible show how different women experience a problem differently and have different needs

Promote use of sex and age disaggregated data

