

# 5

## The Basics of Planning for Citizen-Centered Advocacy

Planning is necessary because we:

- have limited resources;
- have a limited timeframe in which we want to accomplish certain objectives;
- want to be increasingly accountable to our constituents and partners;
- must achieve some concrete results as well as a systematic process;
- operate in changing and sometimes unpredictable environments;
- need to have a clearly articulated common aim to minimize conflicts and differences.

### What Is Advocacy Planning?

Advocacy planning is about the development of:

#### **An Overall Change Strategy**

This is usually a long-term plan that embodies your vision and reflects where you are, where you want to go and how you can get there.

#### **A Campaign**

This is a medium-term plan with activities aimed at influencing the policy environment and public opinion. The activities are intended to achieve some of your advocacy strategy objectives.

#### **Tactics, Actions, or Activities**

These are usually short-term activities within a larger change strategy, designed for a specific moment and opportunity. They could include research and media work to shape the campaign and capture the attention of people in power in relation to your issue. These activities are often referred to as strategies as well.

#### **Impact Assessment**

This involves monitoring your impact so you can change your strategy, campaign, and activities as necessary.

However, planning for advocacy is more than just a set of tools and steps for improving impact. Participatory approaches to planning further advocacy goals by putting into practice

### Immeasurable Goals

Maruja Barrig, a strategic planning expert from Latin America, points out that planning for social and political change is very different than planning for development projects such as building wells or providing health services. In development projects, the goals are measurable. But political change goals like empowerment are difficult to measure because real examples are scarce, therefore we are hard pressed to describe what they look like. Advocacy strategies often try to “operationalize values” that do not have clear models in the real world. This makes them more difficult to envision and quantify. That’s why it’s important to find creative ways to measure these processes. Barrig says that measuring shorter-term results that are steps on the way to larger change may be more practical than trying to measure long-term results.

Barrig, Maruja, “Planificación Estratégica” in *Mujeres Al Timon*, a book produced as part of a women’s advocacy and political participation project coordinated by Agende (Brazil), Equidad de Género (Mexico), Flora Tristan (Peru) and other Latin American Women’s NGOs.

more equitable power relations and more inclusive citizenship. Participatory planning for citizen-centered advocacy:

- Builds organization and networks. Participatory analysis and decisionmaking help strengthen leadership and communication within and among organizations.
- Promotes political education. It involves new knowledge about power and politics and experiences that develop citizenship.
- Strengthens planning for negotiation. The process delineates a clear map of interests and levels of power among the key actors.
- Builds constituencies. When we involve many stakeholders—and particularly the people most affected by the advocacy issue—more people will be informed and motivated, and the campaign will have more legitimacy and clout.

Advocacy planning is a continual process. If some groups have not been involved in the initial stages of planning, they can be included later when plans are being reviewed and modified.

## How Advocacy Planning Differs from Other Types of Planning

The temptation to follow donor trends and be project-oriented has made many organizations reactive rather than proactive. Advocacy planning, on the other hand, needs to be strategic. Being strategic means making careful choices about how to use and leverage scarce resources. It is about achieving both our short-term aims (such as educating citizens about their legal rights) and our long-term vision for social change (for example, respect for human rights and more consultative public decisionmaking). Being strategic demands a careful analysis of external opportunities and constraints and internal organizational re-

sources for addressing a problem. However, since advocacy involves maneuvering in a complex political system where power dynamics generate conflict, planning for advocacy differs from traditional strategic planning tools in key ways.

Unlike many approaches to strategic planning where goals, objectives, activities, and evaluation are presented as a seamless and logical pattern, advocacy planning acknowledges that there are hidden agendas, different values and ideologies, incomplete information, and conflict. Further, planning and doing advocacy happen side by side. After every action it is often necessary to adjust goals in planning our next step. So assessment is a continual task in advocacy, rather than a step at the end of the planning sequence. Strategic planning for advocacy is always a work in progress.

Citizen-centered planning includes a variety of other features:

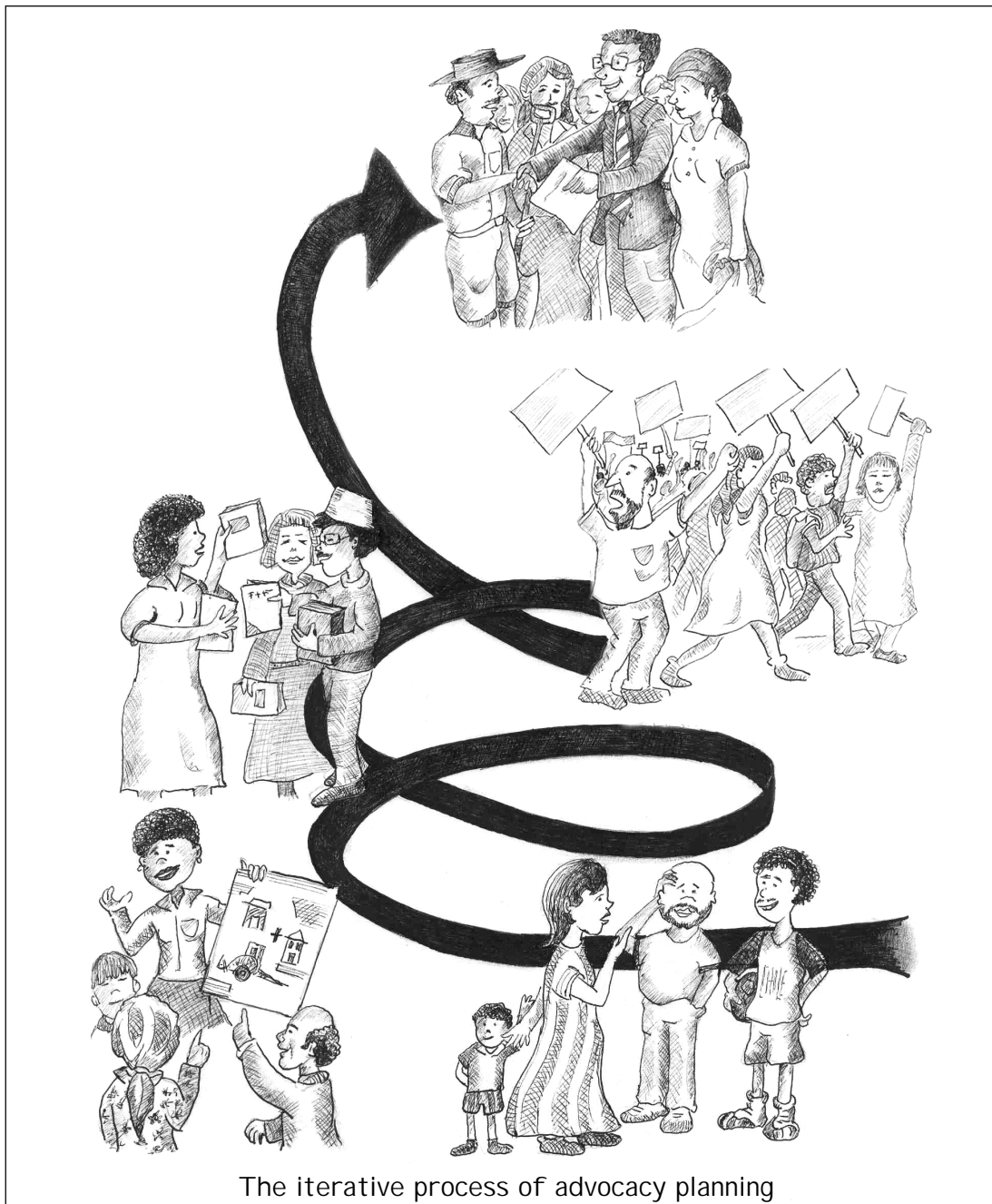
- It is not seen as value-neutral. Values and commitment are just as important as ‘facts.’
- It is not a linear set of steps with predictable outcomes. It is an iterative process of examination and adjustment.
- It gives direction to action, yet is also geared to responding to unforeseen opportunities.
- It should, if possible, involve the people most affected by a particular problem in planning and action—from setting the agenda to leading the campaign.
- It draws upon and strengthens the analysis, awareness, and organizational clout of marginalized sectors.
- It involves conflicts and negotiation.
- It places equal value on expertise and experience and seeks to integrate knowledge from different disciplines into a holistic strategy.

## Key Steps or 'Moments' of Advocacy Planning

Many approaches to planning call the phases of planning “steps,” and present them sequentially. However, advocacy planning involves a lot of “two steps forward, one step backward.” For example, you may begin with a macro-analysis of the context in which you are operating, but as you learn more about your issues and policymaking, you will also learn more

about the context and will then go back to refine your analysis. Because of this, we call the planning phases “moments” rather than steps.

Though they are not linear, there is a certain sequence to the moments of planning. For example, it helps to begin by looking inward (organizational self-assessment) and then move to looking outward (contextual analysis).



With participatory planning, it is not just the continual analysis that makes the process spiral rather than linear. It is also the fact that planning involves different people with different and sometimes conflicting interests.

The following moments are covered in Parts Two and Three of this Guide:

### **Personal and Organizational Assessment**

We start with a self-analysis by the organizers and advocates. We then move to organizational assessment by looking at its vision, mission and strategies, and developing a long-term political vision to guide advocacy planning. (Chapter 6)

### **Contextual Analysis**

This involves understanding the political context at the local, country, regional, and global levels. It includes discussion of visible and invisible power dynamics that marginalize some groups from the political process. (Chapter 7)

### **Problem Identification and Analysis**

In this planning moment, groups define and prioritize their problems for potential advocacy. It involves important decisions for citizens and is key for building the constituency. (Chapters 8 and 9)

### **Choosing and Framing the Advocacy Issue**

The analysis of problems and exploration of possible solutions helps groups to slice a big problem into manageable advocacy issues. Framing the issue is about describing your cause in order to have wider public appeal. (Chapters 9 and 13)

### **Long-term and Short-term Advocacy Goals**

The long-term goals specify the political,

economic and social changes the advocacy efforts seek to accomplish. These goals establish the basis for setting maximum and minimum positions for negotiations with decisionmakers. The short-term goals describe the desired outcomes for the specific advocacy solution. (Chapter 10)

### **Power Mapping**

This moment of analysis helps planners identify the targets, allies, opponents, and constituents for their advocacy. It examines stakeholder interests, positions, and conflicts. It reveals hidden mechanisms of power that affect marginalized groups' participation as well as important allies within decisionmaking structures. Power mapping is essential for planning, negotiating, and calculating risks. (Chapters 10 and 12)

### **Policy and Situational Research**

This moment involves gathering information about the policies, laws, programs, and budgets shaping your issue, and about its causes and the people it affects. This information will make your advocacy clearer and provide material for your media, outreach, lobbying, and negotiations. (Chapters 8 and 11)

### **Advocacy Objectives**

With the power maps and policy information, you can draft a set of advocacy objectives. These will spell out the desired changes in policy and decisionmaking structures, as well as how you will use political space, and strengthen citizen engagement. Finally, they indicate how the advocacy will ultimately improve people's lives. These objectives are continuously refined. (Chapters 10 and 11)

### **Activities, Actions, Tactics, and Implementation**

Advocacy objectives help you define action strategies. The nature of the political environ-

## Tips for Effective Advocacy Planning

### Use Simple Tools

Analytical frameworks and role play exercises presented in the Guide enable groups of people to think creatively and systematically about complex issues. (See especially *What's Your Political Vision?* (pg. #), the *SWOT Analysis* (pg. #), the *Power Map* (pg. #), the *Force-Field* (pg. #) and *Triangular Analysis* (pg. #))

### Clarify Jargon

Terms such as gender equity, democracy, empowerment, women's rights, and mobilization are complex ideas that different people understand in different ways. It helps to discuss them in detail to identify differences and similarities in interpretation before beginning to plan. Defining key concepts enables people to interpret and give their own meaning to citizenship and politics. Part One offers suggestions about how to do this.

### Involve Facilitators

You may want to have a facilitator assist the planning process within your organization or coalition. An external and skilled person is often helpful when planning brings together different organizations with different interests and contributions.

### Keep It Dynamic

Good planning is made of equal parts of information, excitement, commitment, and participation. Find ways to involve everyone in different tasks.

### Bring Values and Assumptions to the Surface

Differences, power imbalances and hidden stereotypes cause misunderstanding and conflict that will slow down planning and action. Begin your planning with the introductory exercises from Chapter 6 or the Annex. Deal with these matters openly when they arise. Also see discussion of conflict management in Chapter 16.

ment, opponents and targets will inform your media, outreach, lobbying and negotiation tactics. (Chapters 10 and 11 and Part Three)

### Measuring Progress and Adjusting Action

Ongoing evaluation helps to ensure that advocacy responds to political opportunities and follows organizational priorities. Evaluation allows groups to adjust their actions to changing situations.

## The Importance of Participation in Advocacy Planning

How planning is done is just as important as how well a plan is defined. There are many reasons why participation is critical for effective

advocacy. When we focus on building citizenship, two reasons stand out. First, planning *is* learning and decisionmaking. Many initiatives that claim to be participatory actually consult people, but the real decisions about plans and directions are made elsewhere. Being involved in making decisions is key to empowerment and creates ownership, motivation, trust, and impact. Participation by staff, board, and constituents in all aspects of planning helps to:

- generate commitment;
- create shared ideals and directions;
- speed up action (but may slow progress initially);
- surface and cope with conflicts and differences;



- assess political risks;
- improve organizational accountability; and
- increase self-confidence and critical consciousness.

Secondly, participation in advocacy planning provides new citizenship experiences and skills in such areas as:

- analyzing problems, power, and context;
- setting objectives;
- locating resource;
- preparing budgets;
- leading meetings;
- organizing campaigns;
- identifying and negotiating diverse interests;
- collective problem-solving;
- speaking in public; and
- evaluating accomplishments.

Citizen-centered advocacy is based on the premise that participation in public decisionmaking is a right. Participation in

advocacy planning begins to give shape and meaning to this right for citizens.

The kind of participation may differ at different stages in the planning process. In the early stages of choosing issues and defining solutions, constituents, and allies can be fully involved. As you move into the fast-moving policy arena, the pressure for quick responses to opportunities may make full participation more difficult.

Participation is empowering only when those who participate make decisions and choices.

## Making Participation Work

There is general agreement that active participation by intended beneficiaries—such as poor people, women, and workers—in planning is necessary for lasting success both in terms of empowerment and social change. Everyone from water-user groups and women's rights activists to the World Bank is calling for more participation. Participation is a buzzword that

has many meanings depending on who is using the term. The typology on the following page explains how the word ‘participation’ is used to describe very different processes with very different results with regard to power, empowerment, and learning.

Although there are no perfect models, some people see ideal participation as one where everyone participates equally. But people’s contributions are not equal—people participate in different ways and make different kinds of contributions. In order to enable different perspectives to be heard, it is essential to acknowledge how differences can translate into unequal power dynamics, and then adjust the dynamics to facilitate more equal communication and decisionmaking.

Here are some points to consider in making participation work:

**Look At Who’s Involved**

Participatory planning will involve the following people in different moments:

- staff and volunteers, directors, and board

- members and affiliates
- constituencies, including excluded groups that will benefit from advocacy
- partner organizations involved in the advocacy effort or related issues
- individual and organizational allies

**Value Diverse Perspectives**

Ideally everyone should have a voice in deciding the broad direction of the organization and strategy. The selection of the issue and more specific aspects of planning may require a smaller group who can represent the concerns of others at some stages in the planning process. Differences also bring debate and disagreement into the planning process. See Chapters 8, 15, 16, and the Annex for tips on conflict, prioritizing, and consensus-building.

**Involve Constituents**

It is particularly important for constituents—those most affected by the problem—to be involved in choosing and analyzing the issue, exploring strategies, leading meetings, speaking in public, organizing events, and other roles (see Chapters 8 and 14).

**Engagement and Participation**

“Engagement in social and community participation has inevitably brought citizens in closer contact with the institutions and processes of governance. Conversely, leaders of projects, programs and policy research initiatives have increasingly sought the voices and versions of poor people themselves. Where citizens have been able to take up and use the spaces that participatory processes can open up, they have been able to use their agency to demand accountability, transparency, and responsiveness from government institutions. . . . These moves offer new spaces in which the concept of participation can be expanded to one of ‘citizenship participation’, linking participation in the political, community and social spheres.”

Cornwall, Andrea and John Gaventa “Bridging the gap: citizenship, partnership and accountability” in *PLA Notes: Deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment*. International Institute for Environment and Development, February 2001.

Different Types of Participation <sup>1</sup>	
TYPOLOGY	CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH TYPE
Token Participation or Manipulation	People sit on official committees, but they are not elected and have no real power.
Passive Participation	People participate as recipients of information. They are told what has been decided or what has already happened. The administration or project management passes on this information, but does not listen to people's responses.
Participation by Consultation	People participate by being consulted or by answering questions. External agents define problems and information gathering processes, and control the analysis. The professionals are under no obligation to include people's views.
Participation for Material Incentives	People participate by contributing resources, for example labor, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. People provide these resources, but are not involved in decisions as to what is done. They have no stake in carrying on with things when the incentives end.
Functional Participation	People participate at the request of external agencies to meet predetermined objectives. There may be some shared decision-making, but this usually happens only after the big decisions have already been made by external agents.
Interactive Participation	People participate in joint analysis and development of action plans. Participation is seen as a right, not just the means to achieve project goals. The process involves methodologies that seek all the different perspectives and use structured learning processes. Because groups are involved in decision-making, they have a stake in maintaining the project. Local institutions are strengthened.
Self Mobilization	People participate by initiating actions independently of external institutions. They develop contacts with external institutions for the resources and technical advice they need, but control how the resources are used. The mobilization may or may not challenge existing distribution of wealth and power. Government and NGOs sometimes provide support for self mobilization.

<sup>1</sup> This was initially designed to assess participation in development projects, but has been adapted and revised for different purposes. See Biggs (1989), Hart (1992), Pretty (1995), and Cornwall (1995).

### Build Trust

Trust emerges through open communication and respect for different talents and perspectives. Some groups outline participants' responsibilities in a pact or agreement. In this pact, constituencies mandate leaders to act on their behalf during fast-paced moments of advocacy when full consultation is impossible.

### Use Interactive Dialogue

Often the most constructive learning and planning will use a series of open questions or a simple framework for structured discussion.

Listening is as important as speaking, and often, encouragement to speak involves waiting in silence for a voice.

### Work in Small Groups

Wherever possible, work in small groups where each individual can speak more easily. Be conscious that gender, age, and other factors may make it difficult for some people to voice their opinions. Follow up with larger meetings to pull together the contributions of the small groups.



### Use Participatory Needs Assessments

Participatory community needs assessment and surveys enable grassroots groups to be involved in assessing their situation and choosing the issues and solutions to the problems that affect them. Because they live with the issues, they have important insights about why a problem exists and what would solve it. They also have the anger and motivation to push hard for change (See chapter 8).

### Integrate Experience and Expertise

Generating decent solutions requires a combination of practical know-how and theoretical expertise where both kinds of knowledge are valued and examined. Marginalized communities have the knowledge of firsthand experience, yet they often need more information to make good choices and formulate arguments. On the other hand, college-educated advo-

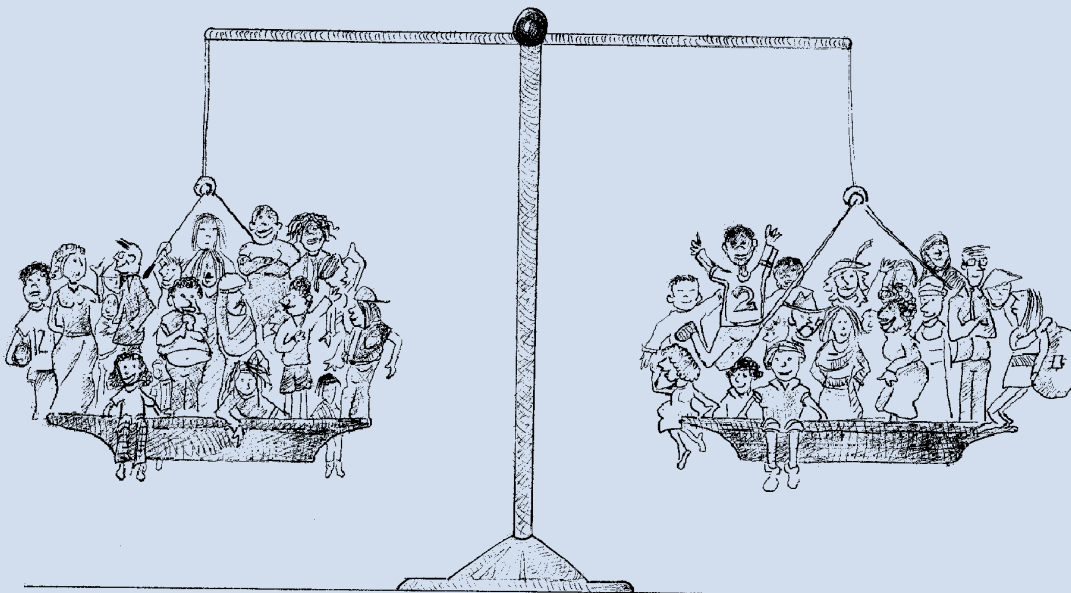
cates may have theoretical and factual knowledge, but they will not usually have the perspective or understanding of local problems that community people have. Sometimes experts are stuck in boxes (a single discipline) that do not provide coherent explanations or analysis. When different groups work together in advocacy, they need to respect each other's perspectives, interests, and contributions, and find ways to make decisions together that integrate their knowledge.

### Schedule Time for Planning As Part of the Strategy

Allocate adequate time for participation and include planning as a regular activity in your advocacy timeline. Use these planning moments for education, consciousness-raising, and building organization.

## Balancing Perspectives

Different individuals and organizations play different roles and have different responsibilities in advocacy. Some are grassroots organizers, others are lobbyists or policy researchers while some play still different roles. Each of these perspectives makes a vital contribution to advocacy; however, there is often a tendency to value some more than others. It is critical that advocacy leaders not allow these differences to evolve into a hierarchy in which one role is considered more important than another. For example, many advocacy campaigns have failed when the lobbyists and others close to decisionmaking begin to dominate the planning agenda.



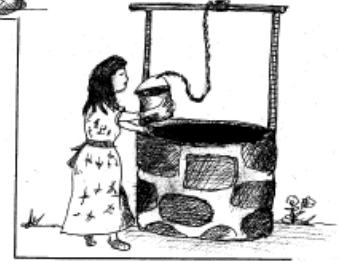
## Levels of Advocacy Planning: Local to Global



Global and National



National and Local



Local

Many of today's advocacy strategies require planning and action on more than one level of policymaking. For planning on a global level, for example, face-to-face discussion and decisionmaking are more difficult. While information technology has made global and regional planning easier, it has also reinforced inequalities. The further an advocacy planning process extends beyond the local level, the more it is necessary to have multilayered systems of consultation, communication and feedback.

### Local

Participatory planning is sometimes easiest at the community, neighborhood, or city level where face-to-face interaction is not complicated by distance.

### National

Often, planning for national level advocacy involves coordination of different organizations that serve as intermediaries for a variety of community-based and local groups. National advocates rely on their allies to be in touch with local groups and involve them in analysis, planning, and decisionmaking. National advocates need to remember that participatory planning takes time and should be careful to take this into consideration in their timelines.

### Regional

Regional planning efforts entail communication among the participants at different levels. Again, timelines need to accommodate discussion and decisions across borders. The Internet is often useful for regional advocacy planning. However, regional organizers need to make sure that groups without Internet access are fully informed and can offer input.

### Global

Like regional planning, global processes need to coordinate and provide information and feedback to the different players so that the final planning decisions include input from all levels. This input is crucial since some partners will be taking on greater risks than others. Their opinions need to be included to avoid unnecessary danger. Internet access is usually crucial for this level of work.

Multilevel participation in planning and carrying out global advocacy helps to:

- build new forms of citizenship that increase the voice of excluded groups;
- give legitimacy to people's voices in the eyes of global policymakers;
- create a network to monitor and enforcement so that global policy promises become real at the national and local levels.