



Policy Advocacy and Lobbying

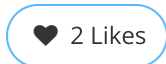
A lot of times, we may wonder why despite efforts by well-meaning individuals and organizations to create positive change in a particular direction, their efforts seem fruitless. To ensure achievement of set objectives, an effective approach is to engage in advocacy and lobbying in order to influence decision-makers to advance and improve conditions for relevant rightsholder groups. As eloquently put by the session facilitator, Chukwunonso Okoli, Advocacy sometimes is aimed at course correction and at other times, it may be charting an entirely new course! Policy Advocacy and lobbying are hinged on leading positive change in behaviour, policy and practice and therefore, should be carried out to every level of stakeholder influence like decision- makers, politicians, influential individuals, international partners, religious leaders, heads of associations communities' gatekeepers as well as tribal leaders. Participants had several views about the difference between Advocacy and Lobbying. Participants' perceived views on the difference between these terms include: 'When advocating for a change you follow the right channel to enter the community whilst

when lobbying, you use the back door', Another opinion was that lobbying is a fast-track method while advocacy takes more time. Giving more insight on this, the CAPIO representative, explained Lobbying as specialized form of Advocacy which is informal and strategic in outlook, but thoroughly researched and planned. Its features include creating a win-win situation, investing in long-term relationships, linking policy actions and requests to the interests of stakeholders, use of 2-way communication and helping decision makers see how the action benefits them and their communities. Participants wanted to know how much is too much to use money for lobbying? It was elaborated that giving money to communities for buy-in is not sustainable and is not necessary. Organizational and Donor goals, values and ethics should be borne in mind and not be deviated from. There have been success stories of the use of 'Negotiation' and 'Participatory approaches' in advocacy and lobbying without the use of 'money'. Good practices of Advocacy and Lobbying include setting goals and direction on the change by clearly identifying the problem or the solution, carrying out a fact-finding research, establishing links with allies that can weigh in, making the people part of the process, communicating effectively, having a plan and building momentum by telling your story, use of both traditional and social media. From this coaching session, participants could identify clearly that lobbying was a type of advocacy, lobbying tends to be more persuasive and very importantly, both advocacy and lobbying can achieve their aim without the use of 'money', instead of using money employ negotiation, leverage on allies and build movements. Lastly, organizational value, goals and ethics should be upheld when lobbying and advocating for positive change One final note is to understand that advocating for positive change is a learning journey for stakeholders which may be slow and therefore requires patience and consistency. It is helpful to have a support network and always put the rightsholders first in order to keep one's eyes on the prize.

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Author



BUKOLA OLORUNTOBA

COGNITO

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