

TB IN THE MINES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

CSOs GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY PLAN

2017



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1.0 BACKGROUND

Tuberculosis (TB) remains one of the world's greatest health threats, and the African region has the highest burden relative to population. Miners in Southern Africa, particularly are at extreme risk of TB because of HIV infection and silicosis, exacerbated by working conditions and living environments. One-third of TB infections in the Southern African region are linked to mining activities and recent research has estimated that 3% to 7% of miners are becoming ill with the disease each year (TIMS Epidemiological Baseline Study, 2012). The mining industry increases the risk of miners contracting TB and also sharply increases the risk of TB spreading in the community. Migration across country borders disrupts the continuum of care for miners receiving treatment, putting their health and that of their families at risk. Over exposure to silica dust causes silicosis, an incurable lung disease, and also impairs the ability of the immune system to control TB infection and prevent TB disease. Mineworkers and their communities are high risk group for TB which needs particular attentions.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Tuberculosis in the Mining Sector in Southern Africa (TIMS) is a programme that was initiated to create a regionally coordinated response to TB and related illnesses affecting mineworkers, ex-mineworkers, their families and communities in Southern Africa. Ability to access pension funds, obtaining workers compensation for death, injury or illness contracted as a result of working conditions, particularly tuberculosis and silicosis, Human rights and gender barriers have been identified as main concerns to accessing treatment and compensation services. Workers, past and present do not have full understanding of their rights and mine management are not eager to educate their workers. Community systems therefore need to be strengthened in order for them to respond effectively to these challenges. The Southern African Development Community (SADC), through the SADC Declaration, provided statutory commitment to the programme and galvanised the Global Fund to support a regional TB response in the mining sector. In the Declaration, the SADC member states acknowledged that mineworkers and ex-mineworkers have poor access to basic healthcare and social services and mechanisms for financial compensation for mineworkers are inadequate to non-existent and committed to making improvements in these areas.

TIMS is the innovative multi-stakeholder programme involving representatives from the ten country coordinating mechanisms (CCM), Ministries of Health, Mineral Resources and Labour; mining companies; current and ex-mineworkers' associations; labour unions; development agencies; civil society and research institutions through a Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM). The initiative will focus on creating a regionally coordinated response to the issue of tuberculosis and related illnesses in mineworkers, ex-mineworkers, their families and communities.



3.0 ADVOCACY PLAN

3.1 What is Advocacy?

Advocacy originates from *advocare*, 'call to one's aid' or to speak out on behalf of someone, as a legal counsellor. The dictionary defines an advocate as someone who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy. Advocacy is the deliberate process, based on demonstrated evidence, to directly and indirectly influence decision makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences to support and implement actions that contribute to the fulfilment of human rights. Elaborating on this: advocacy involves delivering evidence-based recommendations to decision makers, stakeholders and/or those who influence them.

Advocacy fits into a range of activities that include organizing, lobbying and campaigning. Organizing is to ensure the views represented in advocacy come from those who are affected by the issue. Lobbying is meeting directly with decision makers to engage in (often private) quality discussions and debate. Campaigning is mobilizing public concern in order to achieve certain goals.

Advocacy is a means of seeking change in governance, attitudes, power, social relations and institutional functions. It supports actions which are taken at scale, and which address deeper, underlying barriers to the fulfilment of people's rights. The goal of advocacy can be to address imbalances, inequity and disparities, promote human rights, social justice, a healthy environment, or to further the opportunities for democracy by promoting children's and women's participation. Advocacy requires organizing and organization. It represents a set of strategic actions and, at its most vibrant, will influence the decisions, practices and policies of others.

3.2 Who are Advocates?

Everyone and anyone can be an advocate. In this context, an advocate is a community members who has first-hand experiences on the various issues (either through their own or others) or problems which leads them to seek for an solutions towards change. Advocates are:-

- Dedicated to their community;
- Help others realise the need for fundamental policy change and bring people bring together to influence government, other organisations and the public at large; and
- They are good communicators.

3.3 Why Advocate on Health

People advocate at different levels to mobilize others so that they are aware of the issue and join the cause for change.

- To build support for the cause –
- To influence others to support it; and
- To influence or reform legislation that affects it.

Normally this calls for collation, collection and dissemination of evidence through information sheets or awareness raising which states why the issue needs to be addressed and what is the cost of inaction on individuals, community and the country would be. This could be achieved through:

1 https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Advocacy_Toolkit.pdf

- Raise awareness to the grassroots organisations including women, teachers, labour unions, TB /Ex-TB patients and others to be able to identify and analyze problems, define their own solutions, exercise their rights and understand and participate in the policy process;
- Building and strengthening grassroots organisations, CSOs, and social movements to represent individuals who have a stake in the issue; and
- By engaging policy makers and challenging them to make decision-making more open, inclusive and accountable. Sensitise policy makers on the benefits of a more inclusive policy process and how to work with the private sector and CSOs sector organisation.

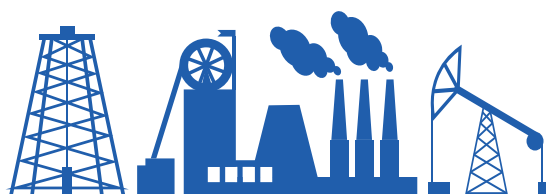
3.4 Outcome of Advocacy

The following are a list of some of the outcomes

- Knowledgeable community, leaders, gatekeepers and policy makers;
- Reforms of existing policies, laws and budgets for increased investment in health and education; and
- Creating more dramatic, open and accountable decision-making structures and procedures.

3.5 Basic Elements of Advocacy

- Clearly defined goals and objectives; will determine who the target will be, activities and how to frame the message.
- Data and research used to inform advocacy activities; Good data can be the most persuasive argument in the advocacy strategies and policy presentations, Key audiences/targets selected, clear message and Messages should be shaped to the interest and needs of a particular audience.
- Persuasive presentations; Think of what they want to say and how they want to say it
- Coalitions of support/allies; Collaborative efforts are necessary to bring together the resources, time, energy and talent of many different people and organizations.



4.0 ADVOCACY FOR TB IN THE MINES

Recognizing the economic importance of the mining industry and the associated negative impact of TB on the health of mineworkers and their communities, advocacy can be instrumental in highlighting the slow progress in TB control through influencing change in workplace policies, human rights and access to compensation and health services in order to achieve positive changes in TB control in the mines.

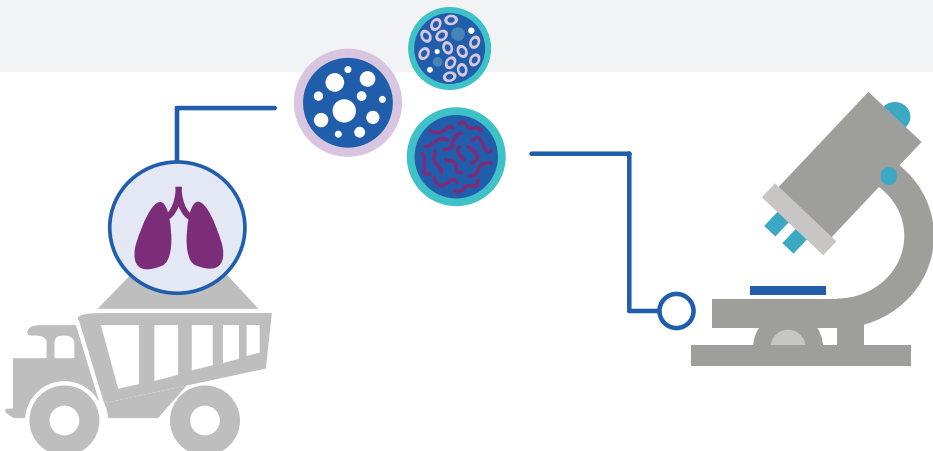
Miners, ex-miners, families and mining communities are often not aware of their rights and lack knowledge of what these rights are and how to demand for them. This prevents them from being active participants in the process of developing their communities and in improving their living circumstances. EANNASO will provide mentorship to 20 CSOs in 10 countries on way in which they can help communities understand their rights. Through trainings, communities will gain knowledge on social, economic, and civil human rights, how to define violations of rights and carry out needs assessment in their communities as well as how to develop action plans to work to solve these issues. The CSOs will learn how to raise miners and the communities' awareness of their rights in order to empower them to demand for these rights. The ability for miners and the communities to know and exercise their rights is critical in mining, where safety is crucial and mistakes can cost lives.

4.1 Objectives of Advocacy Plan

1. To raise awareness of miners on their rights (information, access to health services & benefits and how it relates to TB infection).
2. Build the capacity of CSOs to prioritise key issues and develop and implement an advocacy agenda in the mining community.
3. To provide advocacy techniques, methods and support in developing of advocacy roadmap for the communities.
4. To work with decision makers in ensuring rights of miners are considered and policies reflect the needs of the communities.

4.2 Key Issues to Advocate for

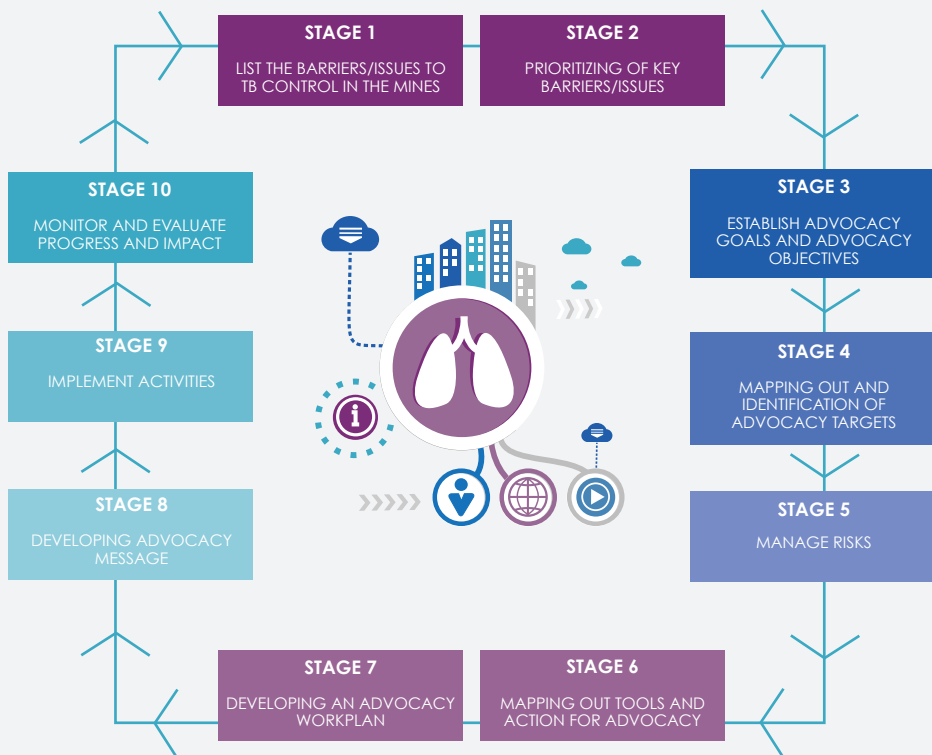
CSOs will during the training identify which are the most pressing issues based on the steps highlighted in 5.1 below and EANNASO will support in prioritising and developing an advocacy agenda. The overall issues in the region will be identified from the country advocacy plans.



5.0 DEVELOPING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

5.1 Stages in Developing an Advocacy Plan

We encourage that the CSO identifies a team of 8-10 pax who should participate in this exercise of developing the main underlying issues. We should remember that this process should be as participatory as possible and that representation to this group has to be considered. A separate one-day meeting will be required to develop the plan. There are 10 key stages to develop an advocacy plan which are listed in the diagram below.



Stage 1: List the barriers/issues to TB control in the mines

This is the stage where communities list all the issues they experience which has an influence in TB control. These issues will be derived through the trainings.

Exercise: Problem Identification ²introduce the module objectives and ask the group if they have any questions or comments. Hand out the cards, one per participant, and ask them to write down the problem they wish to solve (or contribute to the solution of) with an advocacy strategy.

When they are finished, each participant places their card on a wall or flipchart located in front of the group. If someone wishes to write more than one problem, they can do so in another card. Once all ideas are on the flipchart, ask the group to analyze the proposals, identifying which are similar, so they can group them.

Stage 2: Prioritizing of key barriers/issues

After you have identified the issues in stage 2, you will need to agree on the main priorities to ensure your advocacy is effective and targeted. You might have identified so many issues in step one but keep in mind that tackling a small number of strong, focused issues will have much greater impact than having so many because addressing a long list of different issues can stretch your capacities and dilute the effectiveness of your advocacy work.

Introduction to the Problem tree³

Problem tree analysis is central to many forms of project planning and is well developed among development agencies. Problem tree analysis (also called Situational analysis or just Problem analysis) helps to find solutions by mapping out the anatomy of cause and effect around an issue in a similar way to a Mind map, but with more structure. This brings several advantages:

- The problem can be broken down into manageable and definable chunks. This enables a clearer prioritisation of factors and helps focus objectives;
- There is more understanding of the problem and its often interconnected and even contradictory causes. This is often the first step in finding win-win solutions;
- It identifies the constituent issues and arguments, and can help establish who and what the political actors and processes are at each stage;
- It can help establish whether further information, evidence or resources are needed to make a strong case, or build a convincing solution;
- Present issues - rather than apparent, future or past issues - are dealt with and identified;
- The process of analysis often helps build a shared sense of understanding, purpose and action.

Problem tree analysis is best carried out in a small focus group of about six to eight people using flip chart paper or an overhead transparency. It is important that factors can be added as the conversation progresses. The first step is to discuss and agree the problem or issue to be analysed. Do not worry if it seems like a broad topic because the problem tree will help break it down. The problem or issue is written in the centre of the flip chart and becomes the 'trunk' of the tree. This becomes the 'focal problem'. The wording does not need to be exact as the roots and branches will further define it, but it should describe an actual issue that everyone feels passionately about.

2 https://www.riseuptogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/LGL_curriculum_CH8.pdf

3 <https://www.odi.org/publications/5258-problem-tree-analysis>

Next, the group identify the causes of the focal problem - these become the roots - and then identify the consequences, which become the branches. These causes and consequences can be created on post-it notes or cards, perhaps individually or in pairs, so that they can be arranged in a cause-and-effect logic.

The heart of the exercise is the discussion, debate and dialogue that is generated as factors are arranged and re-arranged, often forming sub-dividing roots and branches (like a Mind map). Tip: Take time to allow people to explain their feelings and reasoning, and record related ideas and points that come up on separate flip chart paper under titles such as solutions, concerns and decisions.

Stage 3: Establish advocacy goals and advocacy objectives

- The goal is the subject of your advocacy effort. It is what you hope to achieve over the next 5-10 years.
- The Advocacy objective is an incremental step towards the achievement of your goal. An advocacy objective is what you want to change, by how much, by whom and by when.

Advocacy objectives should be "SMART"; Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound.

Stage 4: Mapping out and identification of advocacy targets

How can you build the support you need to achieve your advocacy goal and objective? Need to know who can help you reach your goal and objectives - that is, identify key individuals and organizations who have power and/or influential over your goal and objectives.

A target is a person or group of persons to whom your advocacy message is directed and whose perception you wish to influence in order for them to take the desired action. This will involve mapping and analysing your target audience. This can be done through conducting a stakeholder analysis which can help in understand which institutions and individuals have interests or stake or supports or influence your issues. Some may include:

- Government (at local, national); Local government officials, policy makers, etc, are often important advocacy targets)
- Media (newspaper editors)
- Community; Communities are the primary audiences and beneficiaries of advocacy efforts.
- Civil society; CS can be allies in advocacy initiatives.
- Private sector
- International donors and multi-lateral organizations
- The Government,
- Religious institutions

The table below can help in analysing your advocacy targets.

TARGET/ INFLUENTIAL	WHAT DO THEY KNOW ABOUT THE ISSUE?	WHAT IS THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ISSUE?	WHAT DO THEY REALLY CARE ABOUT?	WHO HAS INFLUENCE OVER THEM?	WHAT INFLUENCE OR POWER DO THEY HAVE OVER THE ISSUE?

It is important to identify who are the real change-makers on your chosen agenda, who has the power and influence to deliver what you want, and whether entry points for advocacy are realistic.

Stage 5: Manage Risks

No matter how much you planned, there are still a number of risks you could face. For example, when you decide to put the issues in public there is always the risk that reputations, relationships and partners will be affected. It is therefore important to identify and analyze potential risks that could affect your advocacy strategy. Risk analysis can help in assessing what risks might be encountered and they might be mitigated.

This can be done through;

- Identifying risks: This involves identifying in the operating environment e.g at your proposed geographical and political levels. The risks can be barriers to success, tricky timescales and other stakeholders’ activities in the field.
- Analyzing risks: Examine the likelihood of a possible threat occurring and the impact that it might have on your activities and success. This can help in determining how best to plan and implement advocacy in order to minimize risks through careful selection of activities, messages and messengers.
- Managing risks: Risk management is often about weighing opportunity costs, and certainly about working in partnership as much as possible. For example, sometimes deciding to speak out may be better than missing an opportunity or losing your legitimacy by remaining silent; whereas speaking out when not properly prepared or without the right channels could result in you appearing naïve. Draw on your partners’ and network’s experience as much as you can in making decisions, or follow the lead of others if you’re confident you can add value.

The table below provides an example of how the risks in advocacy can be analyzed.

ISSUE	TARGET AUDIENCE	RISKS	RISK MITIGATION STRATEGY

Stage 6: Mapping out tools and action for advocacy

There are various mediums that can be used to deliver advocacy messages;

- Choose appropriate channel or medium - examples include policy seminars, meetings with organization's leaders and staff, informal conversations at social, religious, political or business gatherings, briefing meetings.
- Select format appropriate to audiences - examples include policy presentations, interactive computer modeling programs, overhead or slides, fact sheets, pamphlets or brochures, graphics or illustrations, short video presentations, newspaper articles or advertisements, broadcast commentary or coverage

How do you reach your target group?



- Through:

» **PRESS RELEASE STATEMENT**

Press releases convey information to the news media. A well written press release can help in presenting the message in way that that obtains maximum exposure. Press releases can be;

- ✓ Report news and make announcements (e.g., call for passage of legislation, respond to speeches made by political leaders, announce study results).
- ✓ Publicize events (e.g., conferences, public education campaigns, congressional testimony).
- ✓ Announce results of events (e.g., recommendations of a task force, agreement on key issues during high-level meetings).

A sample press statement can be downloaded at: <http://www.eannaso.org/tb/tb-reseources/240-press-statement-world-tb-day/file>

» **POSITION STATEMENT**

Position statements convey the opinion and recommendations for an issue based on contemporary, relevant, and evidence-informed research. They are developed for issues of particular importance or in response to new developments.

» **EDITORIALS**

Editorial the use print or online publications (newspaper or magazine), radio, television, and other forms of mass communication to further issues. However, as advocates we need to investigate opportunities to reach the public in other ways, such as radio call-in shows, public service announcements, on-air editorials, community radio, or local public access cable stations. A sample Editorial is available in the toolkit manual or refers to Annex 2.

» **DIRECT LETTERS**

A well-written letter may be the most effective tool to communicate with the decision makers. Decisions makers for example MPs may not understand how a particular decision affects their constituents. A well-written letter describing experiences, observations, and opinions may help persuade an official in your favor.

Remember

- ✓ Be sure your letter is brief, clear, respectful, and direct.
- ✓ Stay focused on one pertinent issue; do not keep adding additional items or requests.
- ✓ Make sure to follow up after you send your letter until you get a response to your request.

» **DIALOGUE**

A dialogue involves people from different interest groups sitting around one table to focus on an issue in which they have a mutual though not necessarily common interest. It assumes that people in different positions will have different perspectives on the same problem. For example

- ✓ A person providing a service may have a more complete level of information about the services available than an informal worker seeking out the service.
- ✓ A government official responsible for public health may have a different judgment about the quality of a service than a person who relies on public health services.
- ✓ A female informal worker may have different health needs than a male informal worker.

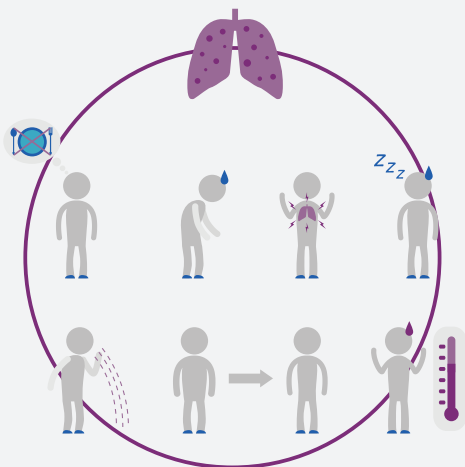
Dialogue can help to see problems from each others' perspectives. The dialogue tries to identify areas and spaces where it is in the best interests of all to make improvements and reforms.

» **TOWN HALL MEETING**

Town Hall Meeting is where members of a community come together to discuss an emerging issue or issues of common concern and are usually open to the public and encourage participation from the audience. The primary purpose of these town hall meetings is to provide information to the community, care providers, other stakeholders, policymakers and interested citizens to bring forward an emerging issue and collect feedback. A significant key to a successful town hall meeting is the inclusion of qualified, informed and influential individuals to serve as moderator, panelists and guest speakers.

» **OTHER MEDIUMS THAT CAN BE USED TO DELIVER ADVOCACY MESSAGES INCLUDE;**

- Exhibitions
- Demonstrations
- Testimonies
- Drama/song/cartoons
- Case Studies
- Information sheets
- Brief meetings
- Etc.



Stage 7: Developing an advocacy workplan

This is the stage in which you pull all the pieces together. Not only state advocacy goal and objective, list target audience, articulate the message, and choose channels and formats, now also need to assign responsibilities, establish timeline for activities, and determine if you have enough resources.

There is no substitute for thorough planning in advocacy! Good planning not only helps us identify potential bumps in our road to success, but also helps to make sure that we are asking the right questions, advocating with the right people in realistic ways, and addressing the root causes of the problems in our communities. To carry out a successful advocacy campaign, we need to be fully aware of our own capabilities so that we can form strong allies to help compensate for our weak areas and amplify our assets. Once we are clear about what problems we are addressing and how we can advocate best for that problem, we can identify our Expected Advocacy Result (EAR) and the objectives and indicators that will guide our strategy. Focusing on defined SMART objectives will make our work manageable and measurable. A sample advocacy workplan is attached in Annex 1.

Stage 8: Developing Advocacy Message

In order to influence the target audience, advocacy message should be planned in advance. If the messages are too complex or unclear it may not grab the attention of the target audience or have real memorable impact. Having a strong message that powerfully speaks about the issue is very crucial. The EPIC model can help in developing a strong message. The letters in EPIC stand for Engage, state the Problem, Inform about the solution, and give the Call to action.

LETTER	MEANING	EXPLANATION
E	"Engage" Your Audience	Here, you want to get your audience's attention with a dramatic fact or short statement. Keep this opening statement to one sentence if possible. This is where you can bring in the human to show the reality of the matter and how it impacts on people's lives.
P	State the "Problem"	Here you present causes of the problem you introduced in the first section. How widespread or serious is the problem? Again you can use statistics or human/ community story
I	"Inform" about Solutions	Here you inform the listener about a solution to the problem you just presented. Develop your solution with examples of how and where it has worked, how it is proven and cost-effective and how it has benefited the poorest. Or, you could cite a recent study, or report or tell a first-person account of how the solution has impacted you or others you know.
C	"Call" to Action	C for the Call to Action Now that you've engaged your listener, presented the problem and informed him or her of a solution, what do you want the listener to do? Make the action something specific so that you will be able to follow up on whether or not the action has been taken. Present the action in the form of a yes or no question and in one sentence.

Shape the message

- Message should be:
 - » consistent - need to deliver a consistent message to the same audience through a variety of channels over an extended period of time
 - » easy to understand - use language that target audience can understand; keep the message clear and simple, particularly when using data; use words and phrases that have positive images

Stage 9: Implement Activities

The time has arrived to implement your plan and carry out the activities outlined in stage 6 and 8.

Stage 10: Monitoring and Evaluation of the Advocacy Plan

Constant evaluation and adaptation of your advocacy effort is the best way to ensure success. It's important to incorporate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system into your advocacy in order to check if the advocacy strategy has worked to achieve the impact you intended. M&E is all about learning from what you are doing and how you are doing it, and taking action to adjust your strategy accordingly. Regular M&E will help in assessing how well the plan is doing against the objectives and the impact that was set, and ensure that resources are effectively utilized. The table below provides key differences between M&E.

	MONITORING	EVALUATION
TIMING	Continuous throughout the Project	Periodic review at significant point in project progress – end of project, mid point of project, change of phase
SCOPE	Day to day activities, outputs, indicators of progress and change	Assess overall delivery of outputs and progress towards objectives and goal
MAIN PARTICIPANTS	Project staff, project users	External evaluators/facilitators, project users, project staff, donors
PROCESS	Regular meetings, interviews – monthly, quarterly reviews etc	Extraordinary meetings, additional data collection exercises etc.
WRITTEN OUTPUTS	Regular reports and updates to project users, management and donors	Written report with recommendations for changes to project – presented in workshops to different stakeholders

Source: <http://www.wateraid.org/~media/Publications/advocacy-sourcebook.ashx>

6.0 TASKS AND DELIVERABLES

6.1 Tasks to be performed

- Support CSOs to develop advocacy plans and its implementation

6.2 Expected deliverables

- 20 CSOs advocacy plans to support the community advocate and lobby for change
- Monthly CSO Mentorship Reports
- A roadmap/timetable on country visits/mentorships
- Final CSO Mentorship Report

7.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. CSOs - Identify participants and venue arrangements, support in execution and provide leadership and follow-up post the training.
2. EANNASO- Provide mentorship follow-up post the training.
3. ACHAP - Financial support

8.0 EANNASO WORKPLAN

OUTPUT	ACTIVITIES	INDICATOR	TIMEFRAME
SUPPORT CSOS TO DEVELOP ADVOCACY PLANS	Identifying issues during training using the toolkit	Number of issues identified	September - December
	Prioritize key issues	Number of key issues prioritized	September - December
	Identify advocacy methods and opportunities for advocacy	CS advocacy plan	September - December
	Develop a CSOs advocacy roadmap	CS advocacy plan	September - December
	Implement the advocacy roadmap	Monthly reports	September - December
	Evaluate and document best practices	Best practice documentation	September - December
PROVIDE IN-PERSON AND TELEPHONIC MENTORSHIP TO 20 SELECTED CSOS IN 10 COUNTRIES.	2 days country visits for technical support and guidance	Number of countries visited	September - December
	Online (WhatsApp) mailing list communication	WhatsApp group created	September - December
	2 monthly webinar calls to discuss updates from the countries, case studies and challenges.	Number of webinar calls	September - December

9.0 EANNASO SCHEDULE FOR COUNTRY VISITS

COUNTRY	DATES
BOTSWANA	3 rd – 4 th October 2017
TANZANIA	12 th -13 th October 2017
NAMIBIA	16 th – 17 th October 2017
ZIMBABWE	16 th – 17 th October 2017
SOUTH AFRICA	19 th -20 th October 2017
SWAZILAND	19 th – 20 th October 2017
MALAWI	23 rd – 24 th October 2017
LESOTHO	23 rd – 24 th October 2017
MOZAMBIQUE	26 th – 27 th October 2017
TANZANIA	30 th – 31 th October 2017



10.0 ANNEXES

Annex 1: Advocacy workplan Template

Advocacy Goal:

NO	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	INDICATORS	MOV	PARTNERS	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBLE

Annex 2: Risk Management Template

ISSUE	TARGET AUDIENCE	IDENTIFY THE RISKS	LIKELIHOOD	RISK MITIGATION STRATEGY

Annex 3: Sample Editorial

<p>Establish community responsibility for problem solving.</p>	<p>When's the last time you ate lunch at one of the local schools? Food is the fuel that drives our minds and bodies, yet our local school menu is based on heavily processed food filled with sugar. We expect students to do A-plus work, but we are feeding them C-minus food. Our communities and our schools can do better.</p>
<p>Suggest it wasn't always this way. Introduce Simplifying Model.</p>	<p>The nutritional problems facing schools are just one symptom of an out-of-control food system. The fictional comic philosopher, Alfred E. Newman, sums up the situation well: "We are living in a world today where lemonade is made from artificial flavors and furniture polish is made from real lemons." The priorities are all wrong.</p> <p>During my father's lifetime, the United States food system has changed dramatically and in ways that damage our health and environment. The way we produce food has the power to alter the foundations of our lives. Farming chemicals like pesticides and weed-killer are permanently altering our soil and water. Long-distance transportation of food requires enormous amounts of fossil fuels which surround the earth and trap in heat, leading to global warming.</p>
<p>Include Legacy value.</p>	<p>If things can go so wrong in just one generation, then certainly we can take substantial steps to fix these problems before the next generation inherits something even worse.</p>
<p>Suggest a specific policy solution.</p>	<p>Let's start fixing our food system by starting with schools. Science tells us that nutrition has a direct relation to a student's ability and willingness to learn. As of now, school lunches are not providing the nutrition that students need to become healthy, happy, and productive learners. Part of the problem is that school lunches rely on heavily processed food with little nutritional content. We need school lunches that will provide all of the necessary vitamins, proteins, minerals and Omega-3 fatty acids which are critical to brain function and which are often deficient in Americans' diets.</p>
<p>Provide examples of success.</p>	<p>Schools across the country have succeeded in establishing extremely healthy meals for students within existing school budgets. Several schools have introduced salad bars with fresh, whole foods from local farmers. In Colorado, for example, schools have tested organic foods and farm-to-school programs which have both improved nutritional intake, and dropped the cost of food as much as 30% due to decreased transportation and processing costs. Not only are these programs wildly popular with students, but they have also been greeted enthusiastically by schoolteachers, counsellors and administrators who see the immediate benefits. Everyone agrees: nurturing the future means more than filling our heads with knowledge. It also requires filling our bodies with the fuel we need to process that knowledge. We can't do only one part of this equation and get the desired results. Adults need to step up to the plate and organize our food system in such a way that good nutrition in schools is the norm, not the exception.</p>
<p>Close with Legacy value.</p>	<p>In behalf of my generation and generations to come, I am asking adults to get control of the runaway food system, and begin to pay attention to the long-term consequences of food production decisions made today. If not now, when?</p>