

What is Advocacy?

As Franciscans we have a special duty to advocate for peace, protection of creation, the well-being and human dignity of all people, especially those in a situation of poverty or on the margins. Even amidst those who consider advocacy to be their main job, there are different definitions and connotations that exist for this word.ⁱ The Latin root of the word “advocate” is *advocāre* “to summon, call to one's aid,”ⁱⁱ or “to invoke”, coming from *ad* - “to” + *vocare* - “to call”. In Middle English, the word “advocate” was used as “one who intercedes for another,” and “protector, champion, patron.”ⁱⁱⁱ The definition of *advocacy* that we choose to embrace is one that both “calls” and “intercedes” *in favor* of someone or a just cause, rather than *for* that person or group because interceding for another takes away their opportunity to be the actor and relegates them to being only beneficiaries (instead of supporting them in being agents of change as well). That said, it is important that advocacy efforts be intentionally *inclusive* of all the people who support the just cause.

As people particularly inspired by the examples of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi, we have a rich Franciscan tradition of “ad + vocare” – to call out, to invoke, to intercede in favor of someone or a just cause.

- In 2019, we honored the 800th anniversary of St. Francis’s encounter with Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil of Egypt during the Fifth Crusade. Francis interceded in various ways along his journey for the sake of peace. At the Battle of Damietta, Francis tried to stop the Crusaders from attacking the Muslims to no avail. Once Francis and Brother Illuminato crossed over the battle line and eventually got to meet with the Sultan, Francis again used his voice in favor of peace.^{iv} In addition to the incredible example of peaceful interreligious dialogue their encounter left to us, we also see a man moved so deeply by his love of God and God’s people to risk his very life to intercede in favor of the well-being of his fellow man and the just cause of peace.
- The legend of St. Francis taming the wolf who was terrorizing the people of Gubbio is another example of intervening for the good of the people and the cause of reconciling the harm that was happening. Whether you want to believe that the wolf was real or that the wolf was a metaphor for the violence and hatred present in the divided townspeople’s hearts, it was through Francis’ intercession that the two factions in Gubbio were able to find a peaceful way forward as it was Francis’ intention that their well-being was restored and their needs met.
- In the year 1220 Francis wrote A Letter to the Rulers of the People, in which he called upon the leaders of his time to reflect and not turn away from God’s commandments. “This text exemplifies Francis’s practice of encouraging civil authorities to be mindful of Gospel truths,”^v as these Gospel truths were what motivated Francis to intercede before those with power in favor of the just cause of the Gospel message of love, mercy, peace and justice for God’s children.

These examples demonstrate how “ad + vocare”, interceding in favor of the well-being of God’s people and creation is really a prophetic action. In seeking to be a living Gospel, Francis couldn’t help but intercede where God’s people were suffering unjustly. This Franciscan tradition we’ve inherited is what continues to guide our commitment to being involved in advocacy efforts today.



What is **advocacy** in our current time and place?

Strategic and deliberate **process** to bring about change in policies and practice^{vi}, the political system or public attitudes and behavior^{vii}, all while being “a means to help people realize their power and give effective input in the decision making processes”^{viii} that impact them. This is done by “calling on leaders (whether corporate or governmental) to make public commitments to use their power in ways that respond accurately and effectively to the needs of those affected by their decisions....Taken together, organizing and advocacy ensure that fishermen have access to the water, so they can eat for a lifetime, rather than depending on the random act of kindness of someone with an extra fish.”^{ix}

What makes advocacy effective?

- Clearly conveys the problem
- Based on evidence and thorough analysis (gives legitimacy)
- Offers plausible alternatives
- Is a means to reach a goal, not the end in itself
- Follows through to make sure policy changes lead to improvements in practice^{xxi}

When putting together a strategy for advocacy, you work to answer these main questions:

- **What change do we want to bring about?** -- What is going wrong? What is the evidence? What must change? What is the proposed alternative?
- **Who can make the change?** –Who has the power to make the change? Who are our allies and opponents?
- **How can we influence them to change?** –How are we going to achieve our goal? How will we be able to tell if the change has happened?^{xii}

While flexibility and adaptability are necessary in carrying out an advocacy effort, taking the time to thoroughly plan is essential for both reaching your goal and not burning bridges along the way.

Overview of the Advocacy Planning Cycle:

1. Identify and understand the **Issue** by gathering information and doing comprehensive analysis
2. Name specific **Problems** and assess them; Choose one or two on which to focus (your priorities)
3. Define broad advocacy **Goal(s)** and specific **Objectives**
4. Identify who can make the needed changes (**Primary Decision Makers**) and who can influence them (**Stakeholders**)
5. Assess your **Resources** and **Capacity** (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats). Determine how to address the **Gaps**.
6. Develop key **Messages** and policy asks
7. Effective **Communication** Planning: Assess what kind of approach is best for influencing different targets (cooperative, confrontational, persuasive), opportunities and ways to get message out, who will deliver message, how, when and where?
8. **Action Plan** and **Implementation**: what activities will be done for each objective/audience, by whom, by when, where, using what resources?
9. **Monitoring** and regular **Evaluation**

Please see the document *Advocacy Planning Cycle* for in-depth information on each step.



ⁱ UNICEF Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States' (CEE/CIS), "Ch. 2 Laying a Conceptual Foundation", in *Advocacy: People's Power and Participation Guide*, Accessed May 6, 2020, http://www.advocate-for-children.org/advocacy/laying_a_conceptual_foundation/what_is_advocacy

ⁱⁱ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "advocate," accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advocate>

ⁱⁱⁱ Online Etymology Dictionary, "advocate," accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/advocate>

^{iv} Br. Robert Lentz, OFM, "St. Francis and the Sultan. Artist Narrative", accessed May 7, 2020, <https://www.trinitystores.com/artwork/st-francis-and-sultan>

^v "Introduction to *FA:ED*, vol. 1, 58, A Letter to the Rulers of the People", Commission on the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, accessed May 7, 2020, <https://www.franciscantradition.org/francis-of-assisi-early-documents/the-saint/writings-of-francis/exhortations-to-the-clergy/73-fa-ed-1-page-58>

^{vi} Advocacy Toolkit Mini-Site, Sustainable Development 2015, <https://www.sustainabledevelopment2015.org/AdvocacyToolkit/index.php/post-2015-what-it-is-and-how-you-engage-2/introduction>

^{vii} James Georgalakis, "Advocacy Strategy Planning Workshop", EveryChild, April 15, 2009, <https://www.slideshare.net/Bloggs74/advocacy-workshop-final>

^{viii} UNICEF Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States' (CEE/CIS), "Ch. 2 Laying a Conceptual Foundation"

^{ix} Alexia Salvatierra and Peter Heltzel, *Faith-Rooted Organizing, Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press. 2014), 8

^x "Section 3: Introduction to Advocacy Planning", Womankind, <https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/resources/briefings/section3.pdf?sfvrsn=6>

^{xi} James Georgalakis, "Advocacy Strategy Planning Workshop", EveryChild, April 15, 2009, <https://www.slideshare.net/Bloggs74/advocacy-workshop-final>

^{xii} Georgalakis, "Advocacy Strategy Planning Workshop", EveryChild

