

RWANDA NETWORK OF PEOPLE LIVING  
WITH HIV/AIDS (RRP+)



ADVOCACY  
POLICY

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## LIST OF ACCRONYMS

RRP+	Rwanda Network of people Living with HIV/AIDS
MoH	Ministry of Health
RBC	Rwanda Biomedical Center
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization
RCSP	Rwanda Civil Society Platform
SMART	Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant and Time-bound
SWOT	Strengths Weakness Opportunities and Threats
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GIPA	Great Involvement of People Living with HIV
NGO	Non-Government Organization
AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
RGB	Rwanda Governance Board
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus,
PLHIV	People Living with HIV





## FORWARD BY THE CHAIRPERSON



On behalf of the Rwanda Network of People Living with HIV (RRP+), it is my honor to present this Advocacy Policy. This document is a commitment to strengthening advocacy for People Living with HIV (PLHIV) and other vulnerable populations.

RRP+ is dedicated to promoting awareness and defending the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of all those affected by HIV. This policy provides a clear roadmap for inclusive advocacy, ensuring no one is left behind and fostering stigma-free workplaces and communities.

Knowledge is our most powerful tool. This guide aims to empower individuals and communities with the confidence to demand their rights and participate fully in the national HIV response.

We extend our deep gratitude to the team and partners who helped develop this document. Their work reflects our shared vision where people living with and affected by HIV are healthy, free from stigma, and leading the response.

We urge all stakeholders to read, share, and implement this policy. Through collaboration, we can build a future where every person, regardless of HIV status, is respected, protected, and empowered to thrive.

**Sylvie MUNEZA**  
**Chairperson,**  
**Rwanda Network of People Living with HIV /RRP+**





## FORWARD BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

It is with great pleasure and a deep sense of commitment that I extend my heartfelt greetings to all the readers of this advocacy policy. As the Executive Secretary of the Rwanda Network of People Living with HIV (RRP+)], dedicated to raising awareness about HIV/AIDS and advocate for the rights of affected or infected by HIV/AIDS, it is an honor to introduce this comprehensive guide on promoting enhancing the advocacy of PLHIV and most vulnerable population.



In our collective pursuit to combat the HIV epidemic, knowledge and integrity becomes a powerful tool. This publication serves as a beacon of information, offering insights into the promotion of leave no behind and developments HIV awareness, prevention strategies, and the importance of fostering a supportive working environment.

Through the pages of this policy, we hope to empower individuals with the knowledge needed to advocate for their rights and needs.

I commend the dedicated team and contributors who have worked tirelessly to compile this valuable resource. Their commitment reflects the shared vision of RRP+: to see that Rwandans living with and affected by HIV are healthy, and free from stigma and discrimination, as they are also fully engaged in the HIV response. I encourage you to delve into the contents of this gender policy document, share the information within your co-workers, and actively contribute to the ongoing conversation surrounding HIV response. By working together, we can make strides towards a future where HIV is no employee is harassed or threatened.

Thank you for your support, engagement, and commitment to the cause.

Sincerely,



**Dr. MUTAMBUKA Deo (PhD)**

**Executive Secretary**

**Rwanda Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS - RRP+**



## I. RRP+ BACKGROUND

RRP+ is a Rwandan civil society organization whose members and beneficiaries are People infected and affected by HIV. It was founded in March 2003 when representatives of 175 associations of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) from across the country came together and formed the RRP+ to serve as coordinating organ for activities supporting people infected and affected by HIV as well as to promote Greater Involvement of PLHIV(GIPA) in the national HIV response.

Early before the inception of RRP+, many people in Rwanda still lacked sufficient knowledge about HIV and linked HIV with immoral behavior and consequently this fueled HIV related stigma and discrimination against people infected and affected by HIV. From that issue, RRP+ promoted advocacy for PLHIV and supportive environment free of stigma and discrimination through networking among associations and support groups of PLHIV.

RRP+ continued to grow and today NGOs, Cooperatives and Associations are active across the country. RRP+ activities have been targeted towards advocacy, HIV prevention, impact mitigation and mobilizing PLHIV to form NGOs, Cooperatives and associations to support their livelihoods and thereby actively participate in HIV response. RRP+ was officially recognized in Rwanda as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) under Registration N<sup>o</sup> 54/RGB/NGO/2016.

### **Vision:**

Rwandans infected and affected by HIV are healthy, live in a socio economic environment free from stigma and discrimination and are fully engaged in the HIV response.

### **Mission:**

The RRP+ exists to contribute to the process of preventing HIV, Improve adherence to continuity care and treatment for HIV infected patients and restores hope and improves the quality of life of persons, families and communities affected by HIV  
RRP+.

## II. ABOUT THIS POLICY

This policy has been developed to guide RRP+'s advocacy work. The development of this policy was preceded by an advocacy needs assessment, which highlighted



the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and key challenges and gaps that inhibit advocacy work in civil society organizations. The policy was developed in collaboration with RRP+ members and key stakeholders. The content of this policy has been adapted from a number of advocacy tools developed by several agencies, like UNAIDS, UNICEF, WHO, and taking into consideration the findings in the advocacy needs assessment.

### III. DEFINITION OF ADVOCACY

The English Oxford Dictionary provides the meaning of advocacy as “public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy”<sup>1</sup>.

Advocacy is defined as any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others<sup>2</sup>.

For purposes of this policy, advocacy is defined as all deliberate processes, based on demonstrated evidence (scientific or anecdotal), to directly and indirectly influence decision makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences to support and implement actions that contribute to the fulfillment of human rights and the rights of People Living with HIV including..

#### Lobbying

Lobbying is only one kind of advocacy. Not all advocacy is lobbying but all lobbying is advocacy.

Lobbying focuses on gaining access to and influencing a decision-maker/power holder who can help bring about the desired change. Negotiating involves advancing the issue by presenting a position and debating with the decision maker to convince him understand and support your advocacy cause. Both can be informal or formal, and require a good understanding of power dynamics within and between institutions.

### IV. PRINCIPLES FOR STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY

Building and maintaining a foundation for advocacy is a continuous process, it extends throughout the stages of creating and implementing an advocacy strategy.

<sup>1</sup>English Oxford Living Dictionary also available on <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/advocacy>

<sup>2</sup>Alliance for Justice, What is Advocacy? Definitions and Examples, also available on [https://mffh.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/AFJ\\_what-is-advocacy.pdf](https://mffh.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/AFJ_what-is-advocacy.pdf)





There are eight selected foundation principles that will guide RRP+'s advocacy work. They have been adapted from the UNICEF advocacy toolkit<sup>3</sup> as follows:

1. Credibility
2. Skills
3. Coordination and leadership
4. Capacity to generate and communicate relevant evidence
5. Ability to assess risks
6. Capacity to work with rights holders
7. Long-term partnerships that can form a broad base for advocacy
8. Sufficient resources

### Principle 1: Credibility

As an advocate, it is crucial that government institutions and the communities that you work with trust the organization and value what the organization has to say. In other words, the organization must break all barriers that lead to legitimacy crisis already identified as a challenge to many CSOs in Rwanda. What makes RRP+ an effective advocate is the legitimacy to speak for and on behalf of the People Living with HIV. Credible research and good analysis and articulation of issues are strong tools for building credibility with the government while engaging communities particularly rights holders strengthen organizational credibility with constituents.

**RRP+ will evaluate the following key elements to ensure consistency with its credibility:**

- Legitimately speak on behalf of those affected by the issues to be advocated for
- Continuously engage with policy makers/decision makers to be known and appreciate stakeholders who contribute meaningfully to policy improvement
- Continuously build RRP+'s image as an objective and trustworthy, and non-partisan organisation
- Fully comply with all ethical standards of engagement with our partners

### Principle 2: Skills

<sup>3</sup>UNICEF advocacy tool kit, a guide to influencing decisions that improve children's welfare, New York, 2010.





Advocacy is a skill that combines knowledge, good judgment and creative problem solving. Building skills for advocacy requires organizational commitment to training, capacity building and promoting staff ability to engage with a wide range of people, both within the office and with partners.

**RRP+ will strive to improve skills by taking into consideration the following key elements:**

- Equip RRP+ staff and Members with core advocacy skills including analysis, research and communication
- Equip RRP+ staff and Members with knowledge about Human Rights and the Rights Based Approaches
- Engage with like-minded organizations to support and reinforce in-house advocacy skills
- Periodically assess and test internal capacities particularly technical knowledge to develop advocacy strategies and implement them
- Broaden and empower the organization's Monitoring and Evaluation framework including strengthening the capacity and skills to effectively monitor and evaluate advocacy as well as advocacy impact

### **Principle 3: Intra-office coordination and leadership**

Organizations with advocacy in their mandate must consider at all times that advocacy is a collective undertaking – everyone in the organization is an advocate, even if their job title does not include 'advocacy'. However, advocates engage in a variety of related activities; and so, it requires strong collaboration between staff members and strong leadership to pave the way forward.

**RRP+ will strive to build and sustain intra-office coordination taking into consideration the following elements:**

- Develop and sustain a strong degree and culture of coordination and communication across departments within RRP+.
- Build committed leadership in the office for advocacy, including support to senior and junior staff to effectively engage in advocacy.
- Ensure that each staff member within the organization understands his or her role or contribution to advocacy work
- Put in place information sharing mechanisms for all staff to be aware of advocacy priorities and messages. This will include; periodic meetings to discuss advocacy issues, advocacy strategies and plans





and ongoing advocacy work and their intended outcomes.

#### **Principle 4: Capacity to generate and communicate evidence – evidence based advocacy**

Evidence for advocacy provides credibility and authority allowing the organization to convince decision makers to support an issue. Data collection, research, analysis, organization and management provide the basis for solid evidence. This evidence, however, must also be interpreted and then communicated at the correct time and in the correct format, to relevant audiences. Using the best format implies that the knowledge is packaged in layman's terms and is easy to understand by the targeted advocacy audience. The evidence needs to highlight the issue, the causes of the issue and the solutions to the issue. Being transparent about methodology is important along with not overstating the findings but merely providing the evidence.

##### **A number of elements will be taken into consideration as follows:**

- RRP+ recognizes that research is very expensive to conduct. RRP+ will continuously develop internal capacities for collecting, analyzing and packaging data for advocacy purposes. RRP+ will also continuously mobilize resources for research especially on sensitive advocacy issues that require scientific evidence. Moreover, RRP+ will endeavor to access other forms of reliable data and evidence and package that information for advocacy.
- RRP+ will put in place internal consultative processes to assess the validity of information and the potential risks of using different types of evidence.
- RRP+ recognizes the need for and will strive to ensure that the internal communication capacity is strengthened to translate research into shorter, non-technical materials, and to develop multiple messages to reach diverse and pertinent audiences.
- Communication will be guided by RRP+'s communication strategy.
- Support staff with skills to identify risks will be aided with means to build their confidence allowing them to take calculated risks
- Put in place effective processes for risk mitigation and risk management. It could include securing political allies, for political risks, resource mobilization strategies for financial risks, outsourcing of competent human resources for risks associated with human resources, etc.
- Be cautious about the long-term and short-term risks and gains, especially with regard to the impact on People Living with HIV, staff, and credibility as well as





funding.

## **Principle 6: Capacity to work with targeted rights holders**

Advocacy must ensure that all rights holders of RRP+'s advocacy work are reflected in policy dialogue and decision-making. When supporting People Living with HIV, their participation or involvement in advocacy processes will be given priority. RRP+ already provides holistic services to its target rights holders. RRP+ will build on their experiences and regular engagement with the rights holders to identify key advocacy issues. RRP+ will always need to work with rights holders to understand the change they want to be achieved, and work with them or using their feedback to design advocacy messages.

### **RRP+ will take the following into consideration:**

1. Engagement of People Living with HIV requires particular advocacy; RRP+ will continue to provide staff and managers with the skills and understanding of what meaningful, ethical and safe participation by People Living with HIV, and other soft advocacy issues entail.
2. RRP+ will continue to provide staff members with appropriate training, tools and other skills development opportunities to enable them interest People Living with HIV to participate meaningfully in advocacy initiatives that concerns them.
3. People Living with HIV remain reluctant to pursue legal remedies. RRP+ will continue to support rights holders with confidence building skills to freely express their views on rights violations and encourage them to actively pursue legal remedies.
4. RRP+ will always strive to ensure that relations between individual staff and between staff and management are based on consultative and participatory practices, treating each other with respect and honesty.

## **Principle 7: Partnerships and networks for advocacy**

The ability to build relationships – personal, public and institutional is very important for effective advocacy. Good relationships allow organizations to reach target audiences, or overcome gaps by connecting with influential 'secondary' audiences, as well as generating critical mass behind the causes and issues that advance the rights of advocacy rights holders. Building such relationships requires



understanding the dynamics of power and having the capacity to engage audiences through multiple platforms and forums.

RRP+ is a member of Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) with a large membership base. This relationship will be sustained and others must be built. This will include effective mobilization of membership to various organizations and effectively participating in them to the benefit of RRP+.

**RRP+ will consider the following elements in developing and keeping partnerships:**

- Creating a venue for and maximizing available opportunities to engage with relevant line ministries, and government agencies including the MoH and RBC.
- Will endeavor to be consistent in engaging other like-minded human rights organizations including think tanks through regular updates, email correspondences, participating in invited spaces and inviting partners in all RRP+ advocacy events.
- RRP+ will seek partnerships and memberships with others coalitions, alliances or networks within and outside Rwanda and effectively participate in these memberships.

**Principle 8: Sufficient resources**

RRP+ recognises that advocacy is resource intensive. It requires investment of funds, staff time and materials over an extended period of time. Resource availability often changes the shape of an advocacy strategy and how it is planned. RRP+ will always undertake a cost analysis of every advocacy initiative and the likelihood of what resources will be available for an advocacy issue at the outset.

**RRP+ will assess the following key elements:**

- Availability of adequate resources – financial, time, skills, and knowledge for conducting advocacy
- Existing efforts for mobilizing additional resources, both financial and non-financial, through donors, individual supporters or the private sector
- Available efforts and strategies to ensure and demonstrate that resources for advocacy could yield substantially larger gains than the cost in money and time
- Available efforts and strategies to demonstrate realization of advocacy objectives and sustainability of advocacy outcomes





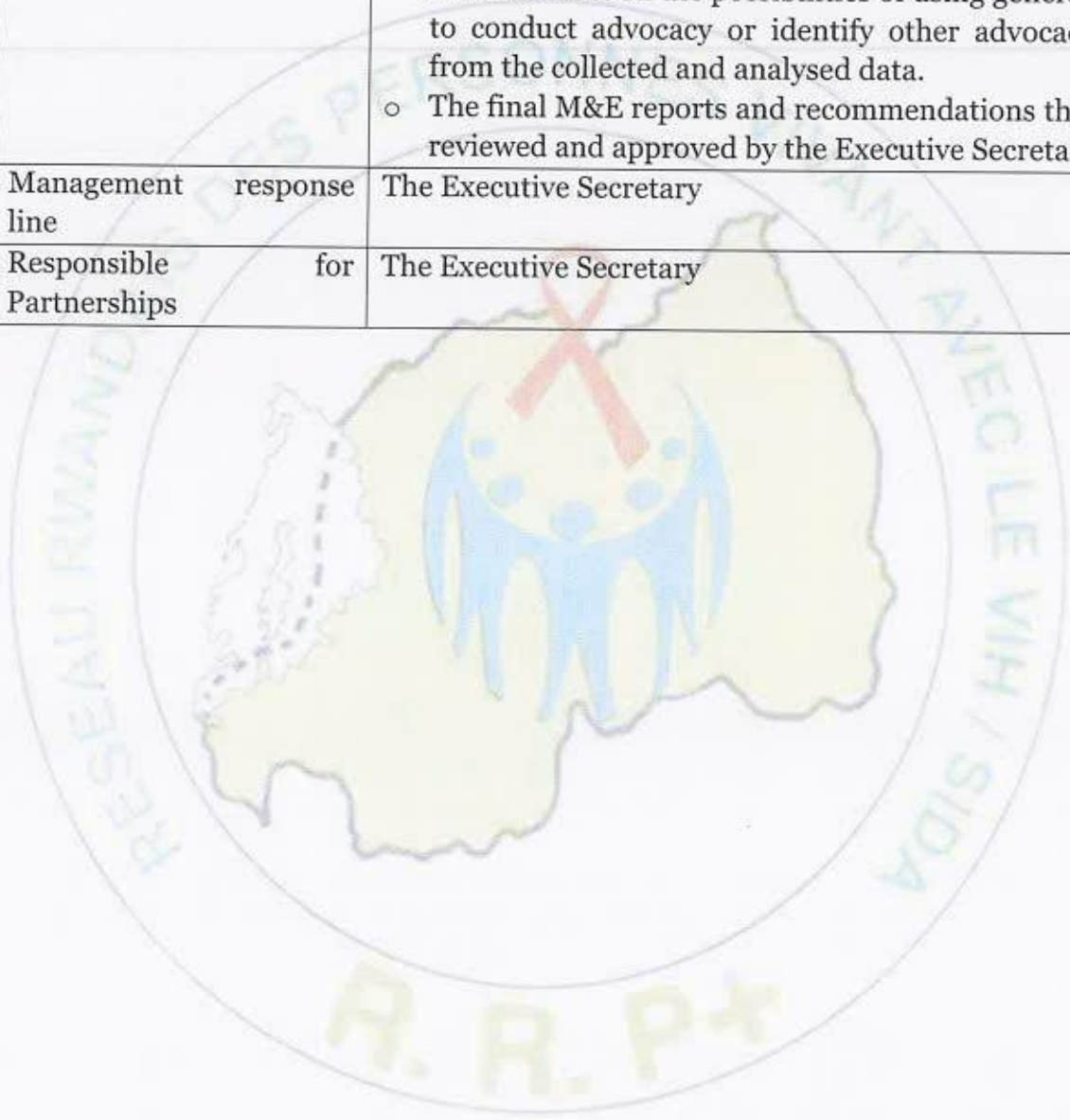
## Advocacy tasks and responsible persons/organs at RRP+

The table below provides some basic guidelines relating to the tasks and persons or organs responsible for implementing those tasks. The guidelines designates who identifies advocacy issues, approves and sign off advocacy products, risk management procedures and monitoring of advocacy initiatives.

Tasks	Responsible persons/organs
Identification of advocacy issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identification of advocacy issues is done by technical staff who implements RRP+'s programmes or projects.</li> <li>○ Identified issues are addressed to Executive Secretary who reviews them and submit them to the board.</li> <li>○ Advocacy issues may also be identified by RRP+ members. With this approach, technical staff discuss and provide inputs to the identified issues</li> </ul>
Approving advocacy issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All advocacy issues are approved by the board after collecting the views of the General Assembly, irrespective of whether they were identified by staff or senior management team.</li> </ul>
Developing advocacy plan of action (design, approval, implementation and monitoring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Once the advocacy issue is approved, the technical staff develops the action plan, the finance reviews it for alignment with required or available resources and the Executive Secretary approves it.</li> <li>○ Programme staff implements the advocacy plan.</li> </ul>
Risk management matrix (design, approval, implementation and monitoring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Executive Secretary and the board identifies and analyses the risks and collectively put in place mitigation measures.</li> </ul>
Sign off of advocacy products including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media briefs,</li> <li>• Policy briefs</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The legal representative /chairperson of the board signs off all advocacy products and any other documents that engage the organisation with the public. This mandate is derived from RRP+'s organisation statutes. However, this mandate is mostly exercised in proactive lines of engagement.</li> <li>○ Under certain circumstances, the responsibility of signing off can be exercised by the Executive Secretary depending on the magnitude of the issue involved.</li> <li>○ Communication and responding to the media is performed by the Executive Secretary (reactive lines)</li> </ul>



<p>monitoring advocacy initiatives and leading data collection, analysis and dissemination for advocacy purposes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ M&amp;E department is responsible for data collection and analysis. The M&amp;E team develops tools and This tasks must be accomplished in collaboration with programme staff. The M&amp;E team is responsible for developing M&amp;E tools and organising reflective meetings. This task must be exercised in collaboration with programme staff who should reflect on the possibilities of using generated data to conduct advocacy or identify other advocacy issues from the collected and analysed data.</li> <li>○ The final M&amp;E reports and recommendations therein are reviewed and approved by the Executive Secretary.</li> </ul>
<p>Management response line</p>	<p>The Executive Secretary</p>
<p>Responsible Partnerships for</p>	<p>The Executive Secretary</p>






## V. DEVELOPING ADVOCACY STRATEGY

For every advocacy issue, RRP+ will develop its advocacy strategy and plan. The strategy and plan should provide sufficient time to plan, implement and monitor whether advocacy objectives have been realised. The strategy should always identify the issue(s), articulate the desired impact, advocacy objectives, strategies to realise the intended outcomes, monitoring of progress and impact, amongst others.

### Why develop an advocacy strategy?

Strategic advocacy is the backbone of effective advocacy. It is a disciplined effort to generate fundamental decisions and actions that guide and shape the course of a specific issue. RRP+ recognizes the need to have an advocacy strategy and plan as guiding tools to its advocacy work. With an advocacy strategy, planning is indispensable and the following are some of the reasons why planning helps:

- Put resources (time, funds, and skills) to effective use
- Minimize risks and maximize opportunities for advocacy
- Social advocates plan for and navigate through complex and different environments
- Align advocacy with other areas of work and organizational goals, both long term and short term

**Note:** As civil society organization, you may want to work on numerous advocacy issues regarding Human Rights in general and education right in particular, but it is important to be very selective. Advocacy efforts often require a lot of time and resources. You are more likely to succeed if you focus on one issue at a time. Your advocacy issue must be clearly linked to your mission, program priorities, and strategic focus areas.

### Steps for developing an advocacy strategy

This section presents ten (10) steps to developing an advocacy strategy. These steps **do not** have to be taken in sequence, as advocacy planning is a cycle, rather than a linear process. Pick and choose which steps can be focused on, depending on the existing level of planning and resources.





## **Step 1: Selecting advocacy priorities**

Every advocacy strategy needs to start with a decision on what it is that RRP+ wants to achieve. The decision must always be clearly linked to RRP+'s vision, mission and program.

### **Narrowing down advocacy choices**

Through the implementation of programs, RRP+ identifies many potential issues for advocacy. However, to ensure that advocacy is effective and targeted, RRP+ will prioritize advocacy issues through internal consultative processes as well as consultations with like-minded organizations.

Deciding how many issues to address will always depend on the capacity of the organizations well as the interest and support from like-minded stakeholders to plan and implement a national advocacy agenda.

RRP+ is cognizant of the fact that tackling a small number of strong, focused issues will have a much greater impact in the short and long term while addressing a long list of different issues can stretch the organization's capacity and dilute the effectiveness of RRP+'s advocacy work.

A number of criteria are suggested to include the following:

1. Level of concern for the issue (how important is it that it should be addressed?)
2. Does the issue align with the organization's vision, mission and program advocacy choices?
3. Potential for you and your partners to add value to other stakeholder voices (are many others already working on this issue, is the space overcrowded?)
4. Do you have the resources to tackle this scale of issue?
5. Does this issue fit with the expertise of your organization?
6. More criteria can be added depending on the operating environment.

## **Step 2: Defining advocacy impact and objectives**

Once advocacy priority issue(s) are identified set out how RRP+ advocacy strategy will address it (them).

Decide on what the organization wants to see happen, and by when. Set desired 'impact', which will help to clarify what RRP+ wants to achieve, how it will be achieved, and design 'objectives' along the way. In the longer term, clearly prescribe objectives will allow evaluation and monitoring of advocacy strategy and



understand whether advocacy objectives were successful or not and why.

### **TIPS: SMART IMPACT AND OBJECTIVES**

A common method to ensure that the advocacy impact and a set of objectives are realistic is to use the **SMART** analysis:

- **Specific:** what exactly do you want to see happen? Does it require initiating new, modifying the existing or changing the existing:
  - Legislation
  - Policy
  - Regulation
  - Programs
  - Funding
  - Strategies or plans
- **Measurable:** will you know when you have achieved it?
- **Achievable:** is it realistic or even possible to achieve your objective, given your resources and time?
- **Relevant:** is it relevant and appropriate to all stakeholders, and to the problem itself?
- **Time-bound:** by when do you want it to happen?

### **Step 3: Identifying advocacy target and power analysis**

Once the advocacy impact and objectives are set, RRP+ will identify which people and institutions to influence to make sure the desired impact is achieved.

#### **Identifying and analyzing stakeholders (power analysis)**

It is very important to understand how government operates and particularly, who to engage concerning a particular public policy. This allows one to target the relevant ministries and departments, identify parliamentary processes as well as the workings of the judiciary to understand power relations of each arm of the state and the involved checks and balances. The analysis must equally take into consideration the power holders within these arms of the state in order to appreciate whom to target. Some government officials or technocrats welcome external pressure while others are not forthcoming. RRP+'s task is to build relationships that allow for an understanding of how to operate in these types of environments.

RRP+'s many years of working experience and its distinctive competence offers an



opportunity to know and build relationships with various stakeholders relevant to the mission and mandate of the organization. These stakeholders including the power holders are in the following categories:

- Central and local government
- International NGOs
- National CSOs
- Faith Based Organizations
- Advisers to decision-makers
- Influencers

RRP+ will conduct a stakeholder's analysis to understand positive and negative allies including undecided key actors. This will be done with the purpose of understanding which institutions and individuals have a 'stake' in RRP+'s identified advocacy issues. The analysis will include understanding stakeholders' interests, support or opposition to RRP+'s advocacy issues as well as their influence and importance.

A simple stakeholder analysis is also important in providing relevant information for other stages in advocacy planning - particularly those related to developing appropriate and effective messages and choosing who and how to deliver these messages.

While conducting power analysis, critical reflection will always focus on the extent to which identified power holders are willing to be associated with RRP+'s advocacy goal or issues.

RRP+ will identify real change-makers on the chosen advocacy agenda, with the power and influence to deliver the desired change, and whether entry points for advocacy are realistic.

#### TIPS

- Identify those with the most influence and who are most in favor of RRP+'s advocacy issue (positive allies).
- Identify those who have most influence but are most anti-RRP+'s priority issue (negative allies). Those will require more convincing.
- Identify those with high influence, who are neutral on RRP+'s priority issue.
- Pick only a few targets to direct energy and focus.
- Pick ones that might be able to influence each other.
- Pick ones that RRP+ has the ability to influence.



#### **Step 4: Developing advocacy messages (evidence based advocacy)**

A strong overarching message holds the entire advocacy strategy together. Influencing decision-makers will require investment in terms of time and resources to develop compelling advocacy messages. RRP+ is conscious that messages that lack evidence are numerous and vague or too complex might not attract the attention of the target audience or have a real tangible impact. Evidence based advocacy (both scientific research and anecdotal) is very important in informing advocacy messages.

#### **Step 5: Choosing advocacy messengers**

Advocacy messages can have a very different impact, depending on who is delivering it. Messengers are those who may not have the direct power to make decisions or achieve advocacy goals themselves, but have influence over the advocacy target audience and therefore may be best placed to deliver advocacy messages. In Rwanda, there are personalities and organizations that have these characteristics. Identification of advocacy messengers will be guided by a typology of political scientists who classify people with power to influence in the following categories: coercive power (influential politicians), power to know (experts, renowned scholars, and scientists), and the power to have (business and private sector), power to be (celebrities including artists and sports personalities), youth mobilizers, spiritual and religious leaders. The choice will always depend on issues at stake, chosen tactics, type of space, among others.

Messengers will be chosen strategically and where applicable, different messengers for different forums or audiences and at different geographical or political levels will be chosen.

#### **TIPS: A list of basics be taken into consideration while identifying advocacy messengers:**

- Knowledge of the messenger about the advocacy issue.
- The messenger position in relation to the advocacy issue.
- The level of influence possessed by the messenger over the target audience.
- Credibility of the messenger in the eyes of the target audience
- RRP+'s capacity to engage and bring on board the messenger.
- Relationship between the messenger and the target audience
- Potential risks of engaging the messenger
- The ability and skills of the messenger to deliver advocacy message with clarity and with





empathy

## **Step 6: Identifying opportunities and activities for delivering advocacy messages**

### **Identifying opportunities**

There are a number of opportunities; events and forums in which advocacy messages can be best delivered. It is important for RRP+ to map out all these opportunities at national, regional and global levels to decide how best to get the message delivered and heard by target audiences. While RRP+ acknowledges that there are a number of constraints mainly human and financial resources to engage in all available national and supra-national advocacy opportunities, the organization will strive to optimize opportunities within the available means.

RRP+ understands that the Government of Rwanda has put in place different commitments and strategies that promote the rights of People Living with HIV. These commitments set their monitoring standards/requirement of implementation. RRP+ will use these standards as essential tools for advocacy. Moreover, there are a number of annual and periodic events/days that RRP+ could use to communicate advocacy messages.

#### **A. Examples of relevant commitments**

- Rwanda's constitution of 2003 with amendments through 2015
- Rwanda Nat. Health Sector Plan 2024 – 2029
- National HIV Guidelines – Edition 2022

## **step7. Packaging and delivering advocacy messages**

Packaging and delivering advocacy message is a skill. It is important that advocacy messages are structured carefully and strategically thought. It is equally important that RRP+ is aware of multiple communication strategies that might be needed to deliver advocacy message to different target audiences.

There are three common ways for delivering an advocacy message. They are:

- Lobbying/negotiating policy makers /power holders



- Public campaigns
- Working with the media

## **1. Lobbying and negotiating**

Lobbying is about trying to influence decision-makers on a chosen issue. Negotiating involves advancing your issue by presenting a position and debating with opposition. Developing good relationships is really important to both.

Lobbying can be formal (e.g., arranging a meeting with a key decision-maker) or informal (e.g., meeting decision-makers in the corridors or during the margins of an event).

Sometimes, a choice has to be made about working 'inside' or 'outside' official government processes. RRP+ will assess and decide where to focus its advocacy efforts and evaluate whether resources are available to engage at this level.

Lobbying at the UN and International level on human rights issues is one of the key entry points for influencing human rights actions and decisions at country level. Presenting relevant alternative reports and researches to the Local and International institutions and participating in sideline meetings will be part of RRP+'s interest to increasing advocacy opportunities.

## **2. Advocacy campaigns and popular mobilization**

While RRP+ is acquainted with the benefits of public campaigns and popular mobilization around any given advocacy issue, the organization is equally knowledgeable about the operating environment and the potential consequences of advocacy campaigns.

Before engaging in any advocacy campaigns, RRP+ will always conduct a reality check focusing on the following key aspects:

- How will public support/popular mobilization help to achieve advocacy goals? –is an advocacy campaign really needed?
- What are the chances of having a successful public campaign in Rwanda?
- Can RRP+ achieve the intended outcomes of the campaign or will be counter-productive?
- Aren't there other means of achieving the intended advocacy goal without involving the public?



### TIPS: RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN

- The best public issue campaigns are based on hopes and dreams, rather than fears and problems. People must be inspired to generate enthusiasm for the campaign. They must feel that something will improve if they support your campaign.
- Campaigns will only succeed if you can make your target audience identify with your issue – make sure you know your target audience and have evidence about their concerns, values and views on the issue.
- Every successful campaign needs a clear identity and a message that the public understands. This means that you need slogans that people identify with.
- You must be clear and consistent about the message that you want to get across in all the speeches you make or media you produce.
- Develop a community mobilization strategy.
- Do not get diverted by other issues, especially by opposition attacks. Stick to the positive message you want to get across, regardless of what other people say. This enables you to set the agenda.

*Adapted from CIVICUS (2011), MDG Campaigning Toolkit. Available at: [www.civicus.org/new/media/MDG\\_Toolkit\\_complete.pdf](http://www.civicus.org/new/media/MDG_Toolkit_complete.pdf)*

### 3. Media and advocacy

#### WHY USE THE MEDIA?

- Facilitate to get the advocacy issue onto the political public agenda;
- Makes the issue visible and credible in policy debate;
- Inform the public about the issue and proposed solutions;
- Recruit allies among the public and decision- makers;
- Change public attitudes and behavior about the advocacy issue;
- Influence decision-makers and opinion leaders;
- Facilitate to mobilize money for the cause.

*Adapted from Civicus advocacy tool kit: Influencing the post -2015 development agenda.*

It is paramount for advocates to maintain an ongoing relationship with national and international media given the key role they play in raising awareness and giving visibility to advocacy issues beyond national territorial boundaries. Involving international media adds extra indirect pressure/ influence on national





decision makers to grant one's advocacy objective, to avoid being exposed or badly perceived by the international community.

One of the best ways to maintain a sustainable relationship with the media is to position oneself as a reliable source of information/knowledge by sharing with them information about the advocacy issue of interest to their journalistic work. Regular or consistent strategic release of new information especially during a day of symbolic meaning or a period of the same to the cause defended will keep the momentum going between advocates and the media.

With the proliferation of smart phones, the use of the Internet, and social networks like Facebook and Twitter, has become a highly impactful communication tool. Rwanda is progressive in the use of social media including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs among others. Indeed, all officials, as a matter of practice are encouraged to be on social media forums especially Twitter. Each social media platform has certain strengths, and some platforms are more popular with certain target audiences. For example, policy makers and government officials at both central and decentralized levels use mainly twitter. The table below highlights key social media platforms and their strengths:

#### **Proposed approach/Tactics of how to use the media**

- Choose the right communication tool (Radio, TV, Print, online, Social media)
- Use press releases, pictorials, features, press conferences, and letters to the editor, documentaries, adverts, and editorials
- Use positive language
- Make sure sources are credible
- Make sure information is timely
- Localize the issue
- Emphasize the human-interest angle
- Demonstrate support of the advocacy issue
- Designate a person to work with the media

RRP+ will need to develop a communication strategy. The communication strategy is needed to guide how the organization intends to engage with stakeholders as well as the media.

RRP+ needs to guarantee that the communication strategy provides insight concerning how best to use a variety of social media tools to meet advocacy objectives.





## Step 8: SWOT analysis

To be efficient and effective, RRP+ has to undertake a comprehensive and careful analysis of the organization's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats before putting an advocacy strategy into action. The SWOT analysis include: a comparative assessment of previous advocacy work and RRP+'s current advocacy choices. The analysis will focus on existing partnerships and alliances; the capacity of staff and other partners, available resources, as well as the political atmosphere or perceptions about the advocacy issue.

### Tips to SWOT analysis:

#### **Strengths**

- Analyze RRP+'s individual links to policy makers/power holders
- Analyze where RRP+ is in terms of partnerships and networks.
- Assess the existing expertise within RRP+ and within its networks.

#### **Opportunities**

- Assess the existing advocacy spaces (invited, open and closed) and the possibility to influence them.
- Assess the level of interest from other like-minded organizations, networks, and well-wishers to support the advocacy cause.

#### **Weaknesses**

- Assess your level of credibility and reputation and legitimacy towards power holders and rights holders.
- Assess your internal capacity and skills to identify advocacy issues, develop compelling advocacy messages and communicate with impact the advocacy message.

#### **Threats**

- Assess the funding capacity and sources of funding. Does the organization have enough funding to deliver all its planned advocacy activities?
- Assess the level of interest on the part of government as well as the sensitivity around the advocacy issues RRP+ is advancing.
- Identify those likely to oppose RRP+'s advocacy initiative and design potential mitigation measures.



## Step 9: Risks analysis

RRP+'s area of advocacy is not controversial considering the existing government commitment to improve the rights of People Living with HIV. Therefore, political risks are assumed to be low. Nevertheless, RRP+ will evaluate the risks of conducting advocacy to minimize any other potential risks. For example, there are still potential risks associated with strong cultural and religious beliefs, which could affect the realization of intended advocacy objectives.

For every advocacy issue, RRP+ will determine whether or not there are any risks that would result from engaging in advocacy. Working as a team, RRP+ staff will formulate mitigation measures to identified risks. The analysis will focus on political (already rated low), social, financial and human resources needed to carry out advocacy.

### Tips to risk analysis

**Identifying risks:** Conduct research at the start of your advocacy planning to identify potential risks in operating at your proposed geographical and political level. Think about barriers to success, tricky timescales and other stakeholders' activities in the field. Rethink these risks each time you make a proposal or decision.

**Analyzing risks:** Examine the likelihood of a possible threat occurring and the impact that it might have on your activities and success. This assessment, made early on in your strategy development, can in turn help you to determine how best to plan and implement your 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 experiences as much as you can in making decisions, or take the lead if you're confident you can add value.

Also remember that although forming partnerships is a great way to make advocacy more effective, it does not come without risks.



## Step 10: Monitoring and evaluation of progress and impact

Time frames can be unpredictable. Achieving advocacy effort's goals, particularly for policy advocacy, often takes many years. It is particularly true for issues related to human rights and HIV/AIDS in politically sensitive environments and in highly traditional and religious settings.

Strategies and milestones shift. Advocacy strategies evolve over time, and activities and desired outcomes can shift quickly. Monitoring and evaluation tools and approaches must be designed to be relevant and realistic within the advocacy context.

Demonstration of contribution is expected, not attribution. When the purpose of evaluating advocacy is to determine impact, attribution is not possible. Therefore, evaluations that examine the link between advocacy efforts and their results have adopted a standard of contribution over attribution.

Assessing progress is important, not just impact. Advocacy M&E typically focuses on the advocacy journey rather than just the destination. In addition to demonstrating progress, this approach reduces the risk that the evaluation will conclude that the whole advocacy effort was a failure if advocacy goals are not achieved within the evaluation's time frame.

Context should always be considered. Context matters when choosing advocacy strategies. It also matters when choosing M&E approaches and interpreting evaluation data. RRP+ will need to reflect on appropriate approaches of tracking whether employed strategies are working to achieve the intended advocacy objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation for learning is recommended as an effective strategy to assess how well the organization is fairing against the objectives and impact.

### Monitoring and evaluation criteria

- **Efficiency** tells you if the input into the work is appropriate for producing the maximum output. This could be input in terms of money, time, staff, equipment and so on, and should assess both quantity and quality.
- **Effectiveness** is a measure of the extent to which your advocacy activities and outputs are achieving your defined objectives (from Step 1).





- **Impact** tells you whether or not what you did made a difference, relating to your desired impact from Step 1. Before you undertake any advocacy activities, you should consider potential risks to achieving your impact (Step 7) be sure that what you are going to do makes sense in terms of your intended impact. Once you have implemented your advocacy plan, you should evaluate whether you've achieved your impact.

## INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

To simplify monitoring and evaluation and to enable the ability to measure progress, it is important to develop indicators for tracking whether tasks have been completed and objectives towards desired impact achieved.

Indicators should be based on:

**Activities/outputs:** What RRP+ does to influence target audiences and achieve desired outcomes. The results of activities are commonly known as outputs – they are ‘measures of effort’ and count what and how much advocacy activities or tactics are produced or accomplish. It is important to regularly review these activity/output pairs so that adjustments can be made if it is found that the implemented activities are not generating expected outputs.

**Outcomes:** Strategic results achieved between activities/outputs and your advocacy objectives, which can include policy changes, changes in government positions, or changes in organizational dynamics, which affect courses of action on the advocacy undertaking. Advocacy objectives can sometimes take years to achieve; outcomes signal important progress along the way. Unlike outputs, which are measures of effort, indicators associated with outcomes are ‘measures of effect’ and demonstrate changes that happen as a result of advocacy activities.

**Impact:** Success against your desired impact, which is about change in the state of affairs. Remember, your influence at this level is even less under your control than the outcome level, but good advocacy work can always be a contributing factor to the achievement of impact. It is at this point that RRP+ should know its contribution or attribution.

Your monitoring and evaluation work needs to assess progress on all three levels; however, your monitoring work should focus on the activity-output link, whereas your evaluation work – whether this happens mid-cycle, at the end of an advocacy stage, or at the end of the advocacy project - should focus on whether your advocacy work is making progress at the impact level.





## MONITORING AND EVALUATION KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to ask yourself (self-monitoring and evaluation) or for your stakeholders to respond to (participatory monitoring and evaluation) regularly and against your indicators for progress include:

- What worked, and how well?
- What did not work, and why not?
- Can it be improved, and how?
- What worked better than expected?
- How and where have your partners/stakeholders been helpful?
- How and where have your partners/stakeholders been a hindrance?
- What disappointed partners/stakeholders?
- What messages have resonated, and have they helped to achieve objectives?
- What were barriers to success (external and internal)?
- What facilitated success, including scenarios, which were not anticipated?

*Adapted from CIVICUS advocacy tool*

## VI. ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

To implement this advocacy Strategy, RRP+ will continue to strengthen its internal human and financial resources to effectively realise its intended objective. To achieve this, RRP+ will strengthen the following key areas:

- a) Develop and sustain RRP+ funding base including sustaining and developing institutional funding, major donor cultivation and public engagement;
- b) Develop staff, management and operational systems of the organisation
- c) Networking through regular and active participation in viable networks for effective advocacy and influence at national and regional level.
- d) Establish good relationships with and trust of many national and regional stakeholders both at the central and local level.
- e) Strengthen internal capacity to generate evidence for advocacy.





## VII. SUMMARY OF ADVOCACY TACTICS/STRATEGIES

Strategy	Example	Required resources
Radio and/or television	Radio and TV are powerful tools of communication in Rwanda. They are effective channels of popularizing the advocacy issue and mobilizing critical mass around the advocacy agenda	Speaking on a television or radio show is free in most cases. However, your organization must select an eloquent person who can articulate himself or herself clearly and knows the subject well.
Create a radio or television ad campaign or documentary	The documentary focuses on the possible negative impact of the issue being advocated for should decision makers not respond to that issue.	Producing television and radio documentaries or films is costly. You need to employ scriptwriters, producers, directors, actors and a host of other film and media personnel.
Write a news article to expose the issue	A news article that puts an issue in the public domain. It must have both compelling and persuasive content regarding the advocacy issues and their potential negative effects if the policy makers do not respond.	This requires people who possess good writing skills and a firm grasp of the advocacy issue. In absence of internal skills, RRP+ should seek the services of skilled journalists, train them and use their services every time they are needed.
Press release	A press release is a communication that is sent to news media and can then be picked up by newspapers, but sometimes television, and should also appear on an organization's website. They	Someone with good writing skills should write a press release. It bears no financial cost and allows the media to pay attention to important issues, which



	provide information on a particular matter of concern.	then alerts society at large.
Convene Press conferences	Press conferences are meetings held by organizations or prominent persons to issue statements about a given issue. Since not everyone can attract interest or have the profile to convene press conferences, the magnitude of the advocacy issue should be well articulated in the invitation of the press conference so that it can attract the attention of the media.	Normally the required resources are the skills to develop the message and to deliver the message. No extra costs involved.
Invite media to attend events	The media may not be aware of important policy issues that are taking place. Inviting the media to attend public events on any advocacy issue amplifies the voice to an advocacy agenda. To achieve this, RRP+ should have strategic partnerships and build good relationships with the media especially media owners, editors and senior journalists. In addition, RRP+ should have a database of media contacts.	The resources required for this is funding to organize advocacy events. Normally this happens at an organized event.
Use Social media	Social media platforms including but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are critical channels that can be used to draw attention to important issues. These platforms have	With gadgets like a computer, smart phone and access to the internet, starting a campaign or group has no cost. It is important however to have someone to monitor and





	a huge following; including policy makers.	manage online activity and content to avoid potential abuse and risks associated with using social media.
Organize and attend meetings with relevant government officials and departments	Equipped with knowledge of power holders, request meetings with identified power holders and department employees and discuss more candidly the advocacy issue. Write follow up letters and emails and then follow up in person the deliberations of such meetings.	Building good working relationships requires constant and consistent interaction. RRP+ will need to designate a person who will attend meetings and other events where they will be required to provide assistance and input in developing policies.
Judicial remedy	Public Interest Litigation (PIL) is a common judicial advocacy tool though not well developed in Rwanda. Since most human rights advocacy issues are born out of human rights violations, PIL serves to remedy the violations by setting legal precedence for future reference.	PIL requires both technical human as well as financial resources to navigate through the whole legal process and its requirements.
Write submissions and position papers based on researched evidence	Submissions are written, or oral, presentations detailing an organization's informed views or opinions on a matter or legislation or policy under consideration by policy makers; especially, the parliament, the cabinet or the judiciary.	Submissions should be written by people who possess good writing skills and a firm understanding of the advocacy issue. If they are being presented orally, such persons should know the issues well and be able to articulate them clearly.
Distribute materials such as pamphlets,	This strategy is particularly useful if you need to share important information with	This strategy requires the production of a wide range of resource materials.



<p>booklets or manuals providing relevant information</p>	<p>community members and raising public awareness. This provides a detailed account of the situation especially within the middle class.</p>	<p>RRP+ must be prepared to develop the content of such materials and pay for design and layout as well as printing, distribution and possibly translation into Kinyarwanda.</p>
<p>Participate in open advocacy spaces and in invited meetings</p>	<p>Government often invites CSOs to provide input into draft laws, policies and programs. Since these hearings are meant to for CSOs to give input into public policies under discussion, it is an opportunity for RRP+ to attend these meetings and participate in the process ensuring that policies do not negatively impact the rights of RRP+'s constituents.</p>	<p>It is important to designate a person or people with the right knowledge and skills to articulate RRP+'s position and share RRP+'s experience as a CSO with interventions in the domain in which the discussed policy falls. Participation in these meetings must be well planned, strategic, meaningful and effective.</p>