ADVOCACY INTERNATIONAL

CUTTING THE DIAMOND

How to shape a movement to make transformational change

BY ANN PETTIFOR
with MAZ KESSLER

“It’s easy to make a buck. It’s a lot tougher to make a difference.”

Tom Brokaw

Photo by Jon Enoch, The Times

Ann Pettifor

Dear fellow advocates,

In the 1990s I was appointed by a group of British charities to help build a campaign that would lead, ultimately, to the cancellation of more than $100 billion of debt owed by 35 of the poorest countries.

This was one hell of a goal, and at the interview I argued that it was not achievable without a huge campaign. “Ah” I was told “that’s not possible. No one has ever executed an effective national and global campaign on sovereign debt and finance before. This is a complex and arcane subject, not easily communicated. We don’t think a public campaign is feasible.”

I’m an African by birth, and, incensed by the way debt payments were draining Africa of her wealth and talent, was desperate for the job. Rashly and probably a little rudely I asserted that a big public campaign was possible.

“All it takes” I recollect saying “is belief in those millions of people out there that loathe economic injustice, and the backing of an adequately resourced campaign”.

The interviewing panel looked a little sceptical, and I walked away disheartened.

To my surprise they agreed to appoint me. Grateful for the confidence expressed, and with my own rash words ringing in my ears, it slowly dawned on me that I had no idea where to start.

There was no text book. No guidelines awaited me in the office on my first day at work. While I had some experience of campaigning, and knew much about both individuals and organisations that had campaigned successfully on a range of social issues, there was no source I could turn to for advice on how to achieve this daunting task.

Now ten years after the successful culmination of the Jubilee 2000 campaign, and after observing closely the success and failures of similar campaigns, it is clear that there is still no guide for would-be visionaries and campaigners, determined to change the world.

What follows is first and foremost a steer for those who want to win in the public arena. To change the world. Those who may want to ensure that our planet has a future. But it is also intended to help those that want to strengthen civil society; give voice to citizens that are often ignored - the poor and marginalised. Those who want to improve local and national governance; hold politicians and officials to account; achieve improvements in local services or national policies.

Second, this publication gives me a chance to discuss campaigns more broadly; to analyse, comment and draw lessons from other big, important advocacy efforts. These include campaigns on poverty reduction; climate change; global health as well as great political campaigns such as that of presidential candidate Barack Obama. Watch out for some stinging criticisms, but also generous praise where it is due.

Lastly, it provides me with the opportunity for a more personal reflection and commentary on the achievements and failures of the Jubilee 2000 campaign.

So dive in, and soak up inspiration, ideas and guidance on how to go about changing the world. For, as someone once said, it's not enough to interpret the world. The point is to change it.

Muhammed Ali gets his Jubilee 2000 pin

Why public advocacy?

Effective public advocacy can change lives. It can change the future. For good.

But how do you win support from the public for change? For innovation? For transformation? How can you galvanise the base of the pyramid? How do you draw the public's attention to what government is doing? Or what your organisation is achieving?

This introductory guide gives you some idea of how to get started - and shares some core principles that can help you succeed at the art of public advocacy.

Advocacy that will invigorate and harness public opinion and apply pressure on decision-makers and institutions – to follow through, deliver and implement. Advocacy that will have impact. What follows are the fundamentals of any successful advocacy strategy.

These fundamental principles have been applied to every triumphant public advocacy win – from Clarkson and Wilberforce's anti-slavery movement in 1783 through to Barack Obama's successful presidential election campaign in 2008; from the Votes for Women campaign to the Fair Trade movement.

So read on, and unearth the foundation stones of an effective advocacy strategy; one that will win in the public arena – whether local, national or international.

Mobilisation of supporters at Birmingham G8 summit, July 1999

What *is* Cutting the Diamond?

Cutting the diamond is the process of analysing (cutting) the issue (the diamond) – to determine strategy and illuminate the true story.

Think of diamond cutters in Antwerp. They can look at a stone for two years before they make the cut that results in a luminous gem. A gem whose facets and proportions reflect brilliance and are 'true'.

Cutting the diamond correctly will lead to a strategy that rings true with potential campaigners and will galvanise a broad-based movement.

Get it wrong and the campaign may fail to gain traction and fade away...

Ugandan campaigners, Jubilee 2000

Winning in the court of public opinion

Let's be clear: the purpose of public advocacy is to give voice, particularly to those who are marginalised and who want to bring about change. To win arguments in what I call 'the court of public opinion'; and then to achieve the desired outcome.

For such advocacy to be effective, campaigners have to adopt some of the skills, discipline and rigour of the legal profession. To recognise that while the 'court' in which they operate may be different from judicial proceedings, nevertheless they face the same challenges as lawyers do. They must win over first, the 'jury' or key experts and stakeholders; second, the 'public gallery' and third, the 'judge' or key decision-makers – and achieve a result.

Examples of successful public advocacy campaigns include the Kenyan Greenbelt movement - led by women - which has planted 30 million trees: the Greenpeace ozone layer campaign for the Montreal Protocol; ACT UP and other campaigns for gay rights; the South African Treatment Action Campaign for equal access to HIV prevention and treatment services; the campaign for the banning of land-mines; for an international criminal court, for fair trade.

And also a campaign close to my heart, the north-south Jubilee 2000 campaign for the cancellation of debts owed by more than forty of the poorest countries.

What does it take to achieve results?

To build a campaign or movement, to give voice to and mobilise large numbers of people and achieve lasting social change takes first and foremost a belief in others; but also the fuel of passion, creativity and drive.

Great campaigns take huge ambition, intelligence, creativity, skill and hard work. They require the commitment and participation of dedicated supporters and stakeholders. Vital too, is sound leadership – individual as well as organisational leadership - essential elements if the power of advocacy is to electrify the public and jolt key decision-makers into action and change.

And effective advocacy takes, of course, careful thought and planning, clear goals, connection with key audiences, brilliant design, and dedication.

So, how to achieve such public interest goals and results?

Birmingham 16 May 1998 - 100,000 people gather to call on the G8 to cancel debts

The fundamentals of successful advocacy

There are several fundamental principles that I deem necessary to creating effective advocacy campaigns.

These principles underly almost everything you will do - forming the foundations of your campaign strategy, whether it is deployed in the halls of government, on the streets, or online.

Survey the landscape

Carefully, and continually SURVEY THE LANDSCAPE – social, political and economic.

Cutting the diamond

This the immersive process of researching and analysing the advocacy challenge, developing strategy, devising 'the ask' and marshalling arguments.

Leadership

SOUND LEADERSHIP is vital to a successful advocacy campaign.

Communication

Connection with clearly defined audiences is essential – use effective and carefully chosen LANGUAGE and DESIGN and available channels of communication.

Opportunity

While adhering to the strategy the campaign must be TACTICAL; 'fleet of foot' and alive to opportunities.

Strong, guiding institution

All advocacy campaigns need a STRONG, GUIDING and COHESIVE INSTITUTION.

Impact

Monitor and evaluate the IMPACT of your campaign. Hold decision-makers and the advocacy community itself to account for decisions, commitments and the delivery of results.

Above: Then Finance Minister of Nigeria Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Director of the Debt Management Office Dr. Mansur Muhtar prepare to address the Paris Club of OECD creditors, 2005.

“Above all good advocacy needs leaders that inspire, engage and mobilise their supporters and the wider public.”

Left: Yoko Kitazawa leads a demo in advance of the 2000 Okinawa G8 Summit, Tokyo, Japan 2000

1. Survey the Landscape

"Examine the political, economic or social terrain - with an experienced eye and sound judgement, in much the same way a general might explore the terrain before battle."

It is always important, when preparing to launch a campaign, to analyse existing or potential support as well as potential opposition.

In other words, to map the power relations in your community or society, in order to determine effective pressure points, and identify how, why and where change might happen – and where it might be blocked.

That means working closely with supporters to gauge, first their readiness to commit to a campaign. It also means making an assessment of where power lies, and the degree of support and/or resistance you are likely to encounter. There may be potential threats in the shape of big institutions, like the government, a corporation or an international organisation, that might resist, discredit and undermine your campaign. You will want to be prepared for that.

Your 'enemy' could be public apathy or hostility, local customs and prejudices. Knowing and understanding in advance how such institutions, customs and discrimination can block the progress of your campaign, as well as mapping potential areas of support will be vital to the development of your strategy.

'Know your enemy' as well as your friends, is wise counsel, and will help in the development of an effective campaign. However remember this always: power constantly re-aligns itself to accommodate and respond to new pressures, creating new spaces for action and closing others. This means that you have to constantly reassess your strategy and identify new forms of pressure, if you are to achieve your goals.

Together with your supporters it will be important to explore the broader context your issue will confront when inserted into the public domain.

We call this process 'surveying the landscape' – continuously examining the political, economic

and social terrain with an experienced eye and sound judgement. In much the same way as a military general might explore the terrain before a battle. Does the 'zeitgeist' favour your campaign, or will you be up against it?

When we launched Jubilee 2000 (J2k) the public were supposedly suffering from 'aid fatigue' under a Conservative government. In the late 1980s, Harry Enfield, the legendary comedian had introduced a new character into the British national consciousness: 'Loads-a-Money'. It seemed our key audience was far more engrossed with making loads of money, and unlikely to be engaged by a campaign for economic justice for millions of people in poor debtor countries.

We were subsequently to prove 'the zeitgeist' wrong; but it took hard work and much skill to engage a public immersed in the comedy of Loads-a-Money and others.

Further down the scale, events may occur that could eclipse your own. We launched J2k one thousand days before the millennium, but were eclipsed by the decision of the Royal Observatory in Greenwich to mark that date too, with wonderful images of time-keeping. The media ignored our campaign launch, and focussed on the time-pieces that would mark the transition to a new millennium.

We had not surveyed the landscape for likely media conflicts.

Nobel Prize-winner Wangari Maathai
Leader of the Kenyan Jubilee 2000 campaign

2. Cutting the Diamond

"We were confident enough as an organization -- and a lot of this was based in research and data, it wasn't just flying by the seat of our pants..."

David Plouffe, Obama Presidential campaign manager, 2 February, 2009.

A fundamentally important stage of any successful campaign is the critical and intellectually immersive process that I define as 'cutting the diamond'.

Thinking of the diamond cutters of Antwerp helps describe this process.

Diamond-cutters can spend up to two years carefully studying a single rough diamond, before analysing where the stone should be cut. It takes this long for them to decide where the knife must fall to illuminate the natural shape of an octahedral raw diamond crystal. They then 'cleave' the stone in a way that reveals clean surfaces, and reflects brilliance.

The diamond of advocacy comes out of a parallel process, perfected by deep, empirical analysis.

It takes immersion in both the issue and strategy by a small, astute and trusted group of stakeholders, working with ruthless concentration and focus. They work together for as long as it takes. They engage in rigorous research. They unpick arguments and put them back together again.

They cut away their own prejudices and positions. They pay acute attention to the campaign's intended audiences; to their values and beliefs. They challenge and may even have to change their own cherished beliefs. They turn the issue over and over and look for every possible weakness or flaw. They end up with an analysis that is clear and robust; one that stands up to all kinds of scrutiny and that rings true with a wider audience.

Once the core group has 'cut the diamond' they will have the foundation of a campaign: a solid case that can then be communicated widely. The hard work will provide the campaign with a coherent analysis and strategy; achievable goals and 'the asks'.

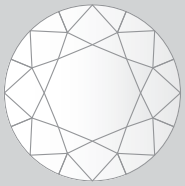
'Cutting the diamond' correctly helps campaigners frame the arguments and communicate the case in ways that are authentic, so that arguments resonate with a broad range of audiences. This will help galvanise a broad-based movement. This impact on wider audiences will in turn influence decision-makers.

Above all it will ensure that the campaign is solid and invulnerable because all angles will have been carefully examined.

'Cutting the diamond' need not take more than a week, if the issue is not weighty. For a major issue – like climate change - analysis and framing could take a great deal longer.

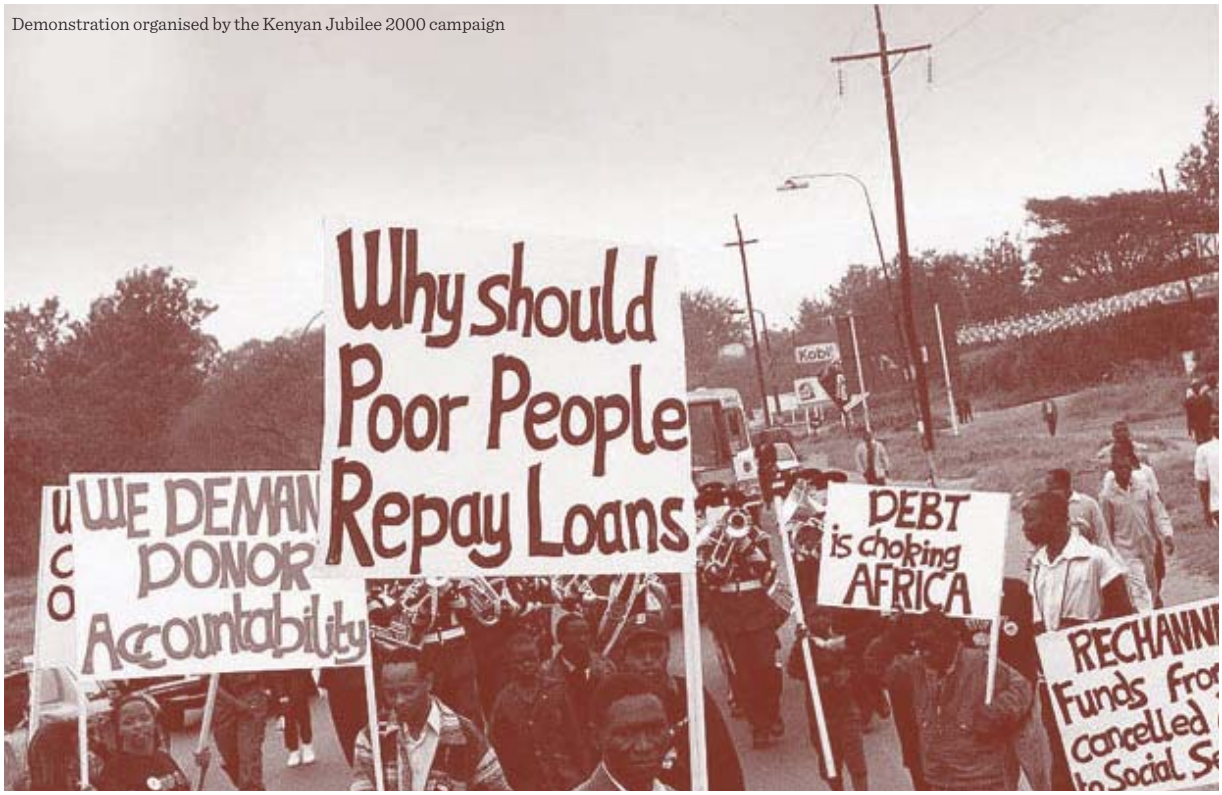
Cutting the diamond correctly:

- **Helps identify clear goals**
- **Defines the 'ask'**
- **Illuminates the framing of the issue**
- **Marshals the arguments**
- **Clarifies the messaging**



Armed with these insights, work can begin on strategy.

Demonstration organised by the Kenyan Jubilee 2000 campaign



How to Cut the Diamond?

There is no prescribed set of steps that can be applied in an overarching way to the deep immersive process of Cutting the Diamond. Complex issues such as climate change, the Robin Hood Tax, the AIDS pandemic, maternal survival, healthcare reform or the financial crisis each represent a unique intellectual challenge that must be addressed rigorously. Tackling every one requires a creative, multi-disciplinary and non-linear process. One's approach must be totally customized to the challenge at hand.

That is not to say there are no steps that can be applied systematically to the practical side of the work.

First, it helps to have a small, dedicated and trusted group to undertake the sustained research and rigorous analytical work of 'cutting the diamond'; of paying attention to audiences; and of devising the winning frame or pitch.

This group has to be balanced, and open to all perspectives – to explore all 'facets' of the issue. This openness requires acute attention to the views and analyses of those experts and stakeholders with whom the team identifies. But it is also vital to be open to those whose understanding of the issue may be in conflict with your own, and whose values and beliefs may conflict with that of the team.

Research, experiment and test in 'the laboratory'

Next, it is vital to involve, consult and test the analysis, the framing and messaging with a range of target audiences. The most important of these are your stakeholders –on whose active support and participation the campaign depends for success. But it is also important to test the analysis, framing and messaging with those likely to be hostile.

Does your analysis and messaging ring true? Can it be challenged?

Check on all angles.

The biggest test of all: will it galvanise a public wary of 'change-makers'? Is it radical or challenging enough to get supporters out of bed in the morning to go out and work for the campaign? Where will it fit across the spectrum of campaigns absorbing public attention? How will it square with the social, political and economic landscape of the day? Will it be squeezed out by other major concerns/events?

Finally: is the timing right?

CASE STUDY

Obama cuts the diamond on race

A recent example of how a campaign was correctly analysed and framed, so as to render its members less vulnerable to attack, was Barack Obama's intervention at a critical stage in his Presidential election campaign with the speech on race: "A More Perfect Union".

Before this carefully cut diamond of a speech, the campaign was in trouble because of controversial remarks made by Obama's former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright – which were then used to undermine the candidate's support amongst white voters.

Obama had to balance his support amongst black people with an appeal to white voters, those who thought he was 'too black'. He had undoubtedly studied the beliefs and attitudes of his target audiences, but his speech is not just an appeal to their values and beliefs, although it is that too. It is above all an authentic statement about his own character and his deeply thought-through approach to the issue of race in America.

It was a statement that rang 'true' with his audience, and helped alter the direction of his campaign; that was both principled and responsive to target audiences. Too often politicians bow to audiences, but fail the test of principled, well-thought-out beliefs and behaviour.

The Pew Research Center called the speech "arguably the best political event of the campaign so far" noting that 85% of Americans said they had heard at least a little about the speech and that 54% said they heard a lot about it.

If candidate Obama had 'cut the 'diamond' in the wrong way, the overall presidential campaign may well have faltered and failed.

Setting goals, devising 'asks'

Clear, measurable goals and objectives should emerge from the deep, participatory process of 'cutting the diamond'. Without such a process organisations can waste time, effort and money on elegant plans and lofty aspirations that push campaigns into a dead-end.

Once your goals are clearly defined e.g. 'Save the Whales' – a key question then arises: what is 'the ask'? What precisely do we, must we demand – and of whom – to save the whales? Campaigners often confuse these two and make the goal the 'ask'. Peace might be a goal, but: 'We demand Peace, and we demand it Now' is not the appropriate 'ask' to achieve the goal.

An example of a great campaign that failed, in our view, to 'cut the diamond' correctly, even while it communicated brilliantly with its target audiences, was the 'Make Poverty History' campaign of 2005. An advocacy campaign whose goal it was to make poverty history at the G8 Summit of world leaders in Gleneagles in 2005 was supremely ambitious but is widely perceived to have failed in its goal – even while it succeeded in communicating effectively with a range of audiences.

So while measurable, quantifiable and achievable goals are vital, it is important also to formulate specific demands - the 'asks' - that if implemented, will help achieve the goals.

Both goals and demands will emerge from an analysis that is deep, considered, logical and rigorous.

Goals – principled goals – are particularly important in holding together a coalition or alliance, and reminding partners of the overarching ambition and potential scope of the campaign. Too often such ambition can be dissipated because goals are not clear, radical or inspiring enough to persuade campaigners to make sacrifices in support of the campaign. But ambition can also be dissipated in bureaucratic wrangling, and by a narrow focus on self-interest and self-promotion.

Once you have your goals, your 'ask' and strategy – commit to them. Don't be buffeted by internal or external pressures. That's a tough challenge, as you and fellow campaigners may come under enormous pressure. But commitment to a well thought-out strategy is a great test of leadership – individual and collective, and vital to your success. Of course tactical flexibility is necessary – but only within the strict confines of your principles, goals and overall strategy.

Marshalling Arguments

It is my experience that while stakeholders in your campaign may be aligned with your values, your principles and goals, they may be too busy, may not know how, or may lack the confidence to campaign, and persuade their friends and neighbours to join in too. Simply outlining the goal and the 'ask' – no matter how clear - and calling for support is seldom enough. Your stakeholders must be actively involved in the development of the campaign; must be offered clear, and do-able tasks, and regularly provided with support in carrying out these tasks.

Marshalling arguments in support of the campaign's case, and presenting these in an easily adapted format, is one of the most useful campaigning tools. It is what lawyers and barristers take pains to do in preparation for an appearance in court. Data and evidence is collected, and assembled in a logical way to build up, and fortify the case and argument – and make it persuasive.

Data and evidence is also assembled to prepare rebuttals. So sensitivity to how your opponents think, research into how your arguments are likely to be attacked, is vital. It helps you put together arguments not just in ways that you find persuasive; but in ways that rebut and respond to the attacks of your enemies.

Making already-marshalled arguments (or rebuttals) available in short, bulleted points on one side of A4, or as a slide presentation is a sure way of providing meaningful support to a campaigner called upon to give a local radio interview; to address a local church community, or to respond to the campaign's opponents.

It provides them with accurate information and data, and short-circuits the work stakeholders would normally have to undertake themselves, to explain and evidence the campaign's arguments.

However, without 'cutting the diamond' correctly in the early stages, it can be hard to marshal coherent and persuasive arguments in support of your case.

> **A coherent analysis, with a clear 'ask' will resonate with a broad range of audiences**

Meeting with the Pope in September, 1999, with the then Msgr Diarmuid Martin in the background.

A young Haitian dons the 'Yes to life, No to debt' bandana.

Jubilee 2000 demonstration outside the UK treasury: 'Stop taking the money'.

CASE STUDY

Cutting the Diamond: Jubilee 2000

For the co-founders of the international Jubilee 2000 campaign to drop the debt of the world's poorest countries - the process of analysing the issue/cutting the diamond took some time. There were long meetings, heated discussions and arguments. We sought the advice of, and worked closely with renowned experts. We immersed ourselves in the literature of debt and finance. We linked up with campaigners against IMF structural adjustment programmes in poor, heavily indebted countries. We examined the evolution of earlier campaigns – including the anti-slavery campaign of the 19th century that began life in the sugar plantations of the Caribbean. We undertook much independent academic work, but also studied research, data and reports issued by organisations we were not aligned to: the Paris Club of OECD creditors; the World Bank and IMF.

We reviewed what had gone before – advocacy that had worked, and advocacy that had failed.

We noted that in the past, campaigns had framed the issue as one that called on governments to be 'charitable' to debtor nations, by writing off debts. Opponents of debt relief, had in contrast, focussed on debtor nations as corrupt and incompetent. After much deliberation we chose instead to focus on both creditor and debtor co-responsibility for the crisis. Debtor nations were not victims. Neither were they wholly responsible for the crisis. After all, we argued 'it takes two to tango'. Rich, creditor nations were equally responsible for the debt.

CASE STUDY

This altered framing of the debate, which emerged from our immersion in the issue, had a dramatic impact on the long-term dynamics of the campaign, and in particular the relationship between northern and southern supporters of Jubilee 2000. People in debtor nations no longer believed that the debt was solely due to the incompetence or otherwise of their governments. Campaigners in creditor countries came to understand the complicity of their governments and societies in both the corruption surrounding international lending and borrowing, but also in the build-up of the debt. In other words, the framing of the issue then re-balanced power relationships between campaigners in creditor and debtor countries – even if it did not ultimately re-balance power relationships between sovereign debtors and creditors.

The Biblical framing

The idea of using the biblical Jubilee principle to frame the debate on debt had already been attached to a campaign, named Jubilee 2000 and launched in 1990 in Warwick by Martin Dent.

From 1994, and on behalf of UK NGOs, I led a small 'brainstorming' group tasked with designing a bigger, and ultimately global campaign, that would reflect the outcomes and insights obtained by the process of 'cutting the diamond'. Because a small group of evangelical Christians became heavily involved, we spent a great deal of time arguing over the theological and historical implications of the Jubilee principle and Martin Dent's campaign. We considered its symbolism and resonance; above all its likely relevance to the challenge of the sovereign debts of poor countries, and to modern audiences in creditor countries.

Some, including myself, expressed deep reservations about the idea of linking sovereign debt crises to the biblical Jubilee principle – and to a modern, high-profile campaign that had to explain the issue, persuade a huge public audience and influence powerful creditors, within four to five years! (I wanted to call the campaign 'drop the debt' but was outvoted.)

Finally we came to an agreement. The name Jubilee 2000 was agreed. We wrote up our analysis and framed the arguments in a short leaflet, and in one-page, bulleted briefings. We marshalled arguments in 'The Debt Cutter's Handbook' so that our supporters had history, facts and data at their fingertips.

CASE STUDY

Co-responsibility and the symbol of chains

The analysis and framing proved crucial to the development of our communications and messaging – and in particular the development of the themes of debt-slavery and chains. It was the content, analysis and framing that powered the campaign and won over supporters.

As for testing the analysis with a varied audience, we tried ours out on a range of individuals from different organisations first, and then on about 100,000 members of one development agency, whose members were often sceptical. The response was overwhelming support.

Our analysis was straightforward. There was (and is) co-responsibility for sovereign debt crises – responsibilities to be shared between international creditors and sovereign debtors.

However, we also recognised that most of the debt was unpayable. We therefore called for debt cancellation; for creditors to 'drop the debt'. We sought an end to creditors placing blame and losses placed solely on the debtor, thereby causing the debtor to be 'enslaved'.

This led to the concept of the debt as 'chains', and to extensive messaging associated with slavery.

By accepting the principle of co-responsibility and by persuading creditors of their joint responsibility for the crisis, campaigners in debtor and creditor countries could co-operate to resolve the crisis.

Recognising that chains can be both burdensome, but can also act as links between people - as in 'human chains' - transformed the chains into positive co-operative linkages and action.

We then made the link to the biblical principle of periodic correction to imbalances – the Sabbath and Jubilee principles. (Every seventh day, on the Sabbath, economic activity came to a halt. Every seventh year, the land was rested for a year (and some enjoyed a 'sabbatical').

Every seven times seven years – in the forty ninth year – debts were cancelled, and the event celebrated in the fiftieth, or Jubilee year.) The year 2000 became the high-point of the campaign, providing a clear time-line for campaigning and results.

CASE STUDY

Trade union, faith and community leaders gather outside St Paul's Cathedral, London 1999

We worked closely with campaigners in debtor and creditor countries, who provided us with news, intelligence and data. We analysed and assembled this research and data, and tailored it to the interests of respective campaigners in both poor and rich countries. For those in debtor countries we pulled together data on their nation's creditors, often very difficult to obtain. For those in rich, creditor nations, we assembled data and information on sovereign debtors, which, before the days of 'freedom of information' could be hard to extract from Finance Ministries and Export Credit Guarantee departments.

While we offered carefully marshalled arguments, data and analyses, we left campaigners free to adapt, translate and apply the information in ways they considered most appropriate to their local contexts. All they had to do was commit to the principles underpinning our campaign 'franchise' – principles embodied in the short Jubilee 2000 petition, which was eventually signed by more than 24 million people.

Nairobi, children join the demonstration and hold up a paper chain

American campaigners demonstrate outside Congress

3. The Exercise of Leadership

Contrary to the views of many in not-for-profit organisations, I believe that sound leadership is fundamental to successful public advocacy. Unity and cohesion in a social movement are often the result of an effective individual: women and men with the vision and optimism to inspire others.

Nobel Prize-winner Wangari Maathai addresses the crowd outside Nairobi

Organisational leadership

For public advocacy to be effective, there must be cohesion and unity - and it must be demonstrable. Shared agreement on the issue and on its solution must be forged in advance, and behind the scenes. This enables the campaign's united front to present a clear and achievable 'ask' to the public, opinion-formers and decision-makers. Achieving unity and cohesion is the toughest discipline of all. Ask climate change campaigners; or those involved in the long struggle for civil rights, or those who fought apartheid.

If advocacy is undertaken by more than one organisation, by a coalition or an alliance, then it is vital that the group has leadership to unify the diverse stakeholders, and ensure that the coalition acts cohesively.

Trade-offs

Coalitions need to understand the trade-offs between leadership and consensus. Planning strategically for the long term is different from tactically responding to external conditions. Coalitions need to do both. While a campaign is in full flood, decisive tactical action is vital. Decisions often need to be taken in a short time frame by a leader or leadership group. Co-ordinating responses in broad coalitions can be daunting for spokespeople and leaders. But it becomes nigh impossible in the absence of a lead organisation or central spokesperson.

Climate change disunity

When organisations fail to cohere and exercise effective leadership, the consequences can be disastrous.

It is my personal view that environmental coalitions failed the leadership test in preparation for the Copenhagen Summit of December, 2009. The growing worldwide social movement supporting measures to limit climate change was diverse and fractured. Thousands of small and large well-meaning organisations stumbled leaderless, disunited, and without a clear achievable and deliverable 'Ask' into the United Nations' Copenhagen process.

Of course their disunity was reflected in divisions between the world's most powerful nations, but a more cohesive social movement would have applied intense pressure, in particular on US decision-makers. Back in the 1990s the world's creditors were equally powerful, and equally divided on the question of debt relief for poor countries. But a cohesive global Jubilee 2000 movement, united behind a simple ask – drop the debt by 2000 - was able to apply pressure on the US as well as Europe and Japan - and achieve results.

Disunity and lack of agreement (e.g. between north and south; between Europe and the US, between development and environment organisations) on ambitious goals for Copenhagen meant the climate change movement applied little real pressure on decision-makers, and provided an easy target for climate change sceptics.

Individual Leadership

Unity and cohesion is often the result of the effective leadership of an individual: strong women and men with vision and optimism to inspire others. Leaders who are loyal to, and connected with their stakeholders – their 'base'. Leaders willing to risk unpopularity, make personal sacrifices, exercise responsibility and demonstrate integrity.

Leaders that open up frontiers of both debate and action previously considered impassable. Leaders that remain true to their mandate while acting decisively. Leaders who under pressure, maintain high standards of excellence; and remain resilient in the face of setbacks and failure.

Above all good advocacy needs leaders that inspire, involve and mobilise their teams, their supporters and the wider public.

Think of Jodie Williams of the Land Mines campaign; Wangari Maathai of the Green Belt Movement; Candidate Barack Obama, Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma, Harvey Milk of the Gay Rights campaign, Mahatma Gandhi of India's non-violence campaigns, Rosa Parks of the civil rights movement; Nelson Mandela of the anti-apartheid movement or Mahbub ul Haq, the Pakistani founder of the UN's Human Development Index and Report.

However, leadership is not a burden lightly worn, because the personal costs and the price of failure are high. Both Wangari Maathai and Aung San Suu Kyi have been stigmatised, hounded and jailed by dictatorial governments. Howard Dean, a pioneer of the first digital political mobilisation stumbled and lost massive public support at a critical stage of his bid for the American presidency.

As a result, many, and in particular women, shun the role.

Add to that the fact that leadership is not widely tolerated in organisations or communities steeped in egalitarian, co-operative cultures, and it is clear why many baulk at the opportunity to lead. Britain's Green Party members were dead set against electing a leader – someone that could reflect the identity of the party as a whole, someone who would make tactical moves decisively. The result has been consistent public invisibility and weakness at the polls. All that changed in 2009 with the election of Caroline Lucas, the first ever Green Party leader. The outcome of the general election and the election of Lucas to the first-ever parliamentary seat for the Greens, has shown that the decision was right.

The truth is that for want of effective leadership, most campaigns fail.

Lima, Peru: Women carry posters declaring that 80,000 have signed the Jubilee 2000 petition.

4. Communicating with Audiences

Effective communication is at the heart of all successful advocacy; analysing the problem and its resolution correctly, consulting widely and then framing goals in ways that are persuasive, and in language that can easily be understood.

For such communication to connect with those we wish to influence, it is vital to be humble before your audiences. To know who they are, to understand and above all, respect what they think.

To have belief in those that will support you - in their intelligence, their capacity, and in their ability to change the world.

It is extraordinary how many organisations and individuals ignore their stakeholders; patronise, or talk right over the heads of a key audience, and often fail to notice that people are not listening and instead are shifting restlessly in their (metaphorical) chairs.

Connecting with stakeholders or an audience is an active and dynamic conversation, for both the communicator and the audience. Never let it become one-way.

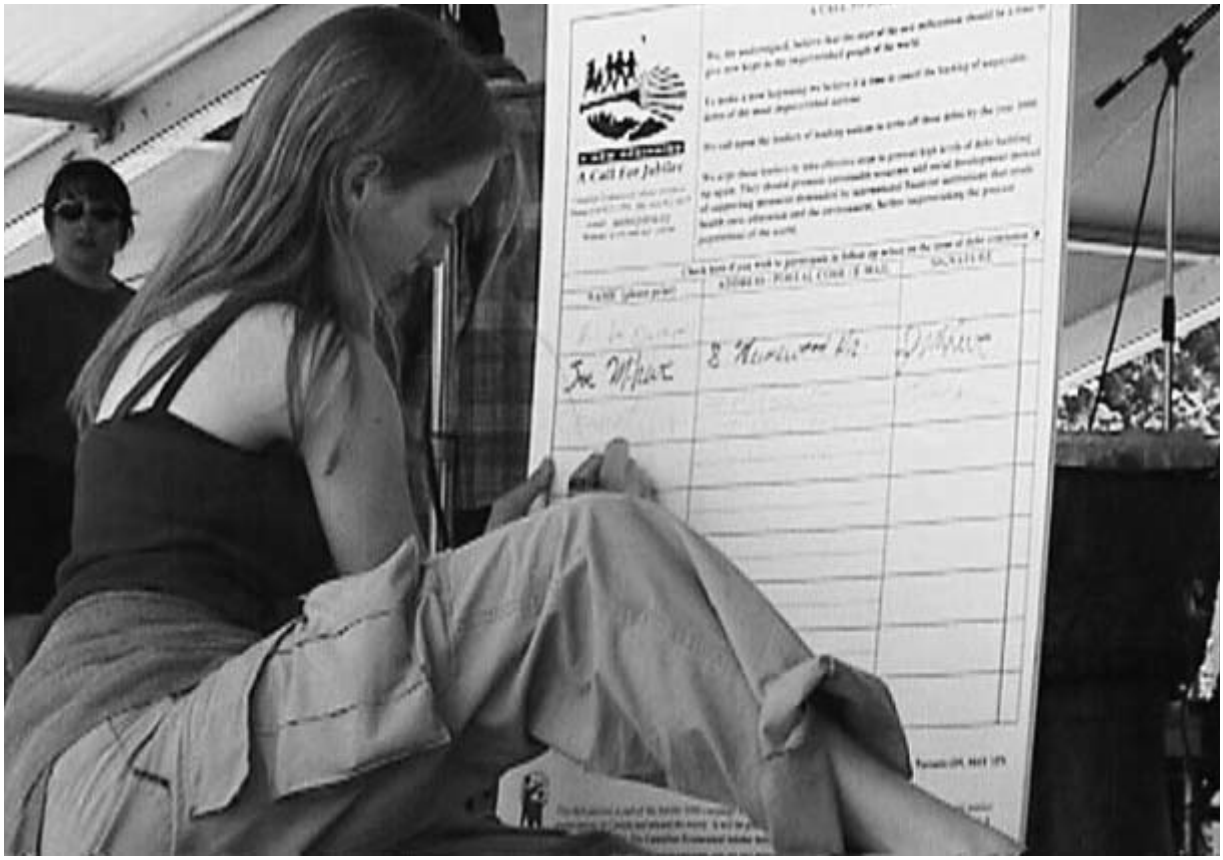
First, mobilise your key constituencies

Journalists and decision-makers will only take you seriously if you are perceived to be part of, and represent a sizeable constituency of public opinion: the bigger the constituency the greater the credibility of your campaign. So the first priority in communicating with bigger audiences is to target and mobilise your base - the already converted, those most committed, and most likely to support your goals. Identify these first, share your ambitions and goals, and invite their participation and support. They will in turn act as your informal agents, and will talk to, and persuade others – constantly widening the circle of campaigners and supporters.

To be encouraged to act volunteer supporters, who often give up more money and time than they can afford, need to be inspired, acknowledged, listened to, and motivated. Periodically they will need clear advice or instructions on what to do next to translate their ambitions into impact on decision-makers and so bring about the change sought.

If they are to make sacrifices and go that extra mile for the campaign, then you must reach, listen, involve, inspire and move them. Above all, the campaign must empower them – give them ownership not just of the campaign's strategy and activities, but also information and knowledge that will deepen their capacity, build their confidence and enable them to act independently and on their own account.

So, inspire listen to, motivate, and empower your stakeholders. Above all treat them with the greatest respect. They are the shoulders on which you stand when addressing new and perhaps more hostile audiences: opinion-formers and decision-makers.



> **Empower your stakeholders. They are the shoulders on which you stand when addressing new and perhaps more hostile audiences.**

Demonstrators march through the streets of Pragu at the World Bank/IMF annual meetings 2000. (Right)

The digital sphere - vital to your advocacy

I am proud of the ground-breaking use we made of the internet at Jubilee 2000. Back in the 1990s it was still a novel way of communicating with global audiences, and connectivity was not what it is today.

So, for example, we did not put our petition on a website. Instead 24 million signatures were painstakingly collected by hand from supporters all over the world – which greatly increased the value and impact of the petition. However, we quickly realised that the internet would become the cheapest and most effective way of communicating with, and mobilising activists around the world, particularly in Africa. Campaigners on the continent struggled to purchase PCs and battled unreliable dial-up connections, but in the end, dial-up proved more reliable for communication than either the post, fax or telephone calls.

One of our most remarkable activists, Mara Vanderslice, who helped lead the American campaign, then took her experience of Jubilee 2000's internet mobilisation to the Howard Dean presidential campaign of 2004 – the campaign which made a major breakthrough in digital political mobilisation.

Dean laid the ground for candidate Obama's superb mobilisation of a 13 million strong 'digital army' which used social media and the internet to re-define modern political campaigning. Today Mara plays a key role in President Obama's White House.

Mobile technologies are now powerful tools in the hands of campaigners – and full use is being made of affordable mobile devices and social networking platforms. The power of citizen-generated reportage and video was demonstrated vividly in the Iranian elections campaign, where a twitter site became an aggregating point for both those wishing to communicate and advocate and those hungry for news. Links to articles such as 'cyberwar for beginners' - aimed at telling Iranian users how to protect the identity of protesters from the authorities – proved vital.

Social media tools and mobile devices are democratising media and putting more control into the hands of campaigners, as coverage of the G20 protests in London in 2009 demonstrated. Nik Gowing argues that, "these technologies and dynamics are together driving a new wave of democratisation and accountability.'

The pioneering mobilisations organised by Moveon.org, Mumsnet.com and the Obama presidential campaign provide us all with examples of, and lessons in, the effective use of the internet for mobilisation. However, all these campaigns relied heavily on good old-fashioned face-to-face connections made in living rooms, town halls and on the streets.

As effective as Twitter and You Tube are for messaging, campaigners must still rely on the tried and tested methods of discussion and mobilisation: face-to-face meetings in town or church halls, at the workplace and in homes, and even the old megaphone.

While never underestimating the power of the web, communication through traditional print, online and broadcast media remains a vital part of any advocacy strategy, and should not be neglected in favour of direct digital communication.

What the Reuters reported cited below shows is that citizen generated media complements, rather than replaces traditional media.

"Iranian citizens uploaded pictures to Persian TV or CNN, in the knowledge that mainstream coverage had the power to move opinion at the scale and speed required. And as for social networks, most of the information and links being passed around during the G20 and Iranian protests came from, or pushed people to, the work of the mainstream media itself."

Targeting wider audiences

Start with existing communities. A first step in communicating with the wider public may well be by channelling your information through existing organisations (e.g. faith organisations, university clubs, youth groups, women's organisations, NGOs etc.). This is a reliable way of reaching wider audiences; a powerful and trusted channel for broadcasting and amplifying your messages, and for recruiting and mobilising.

For such communication to work requires consideration, co-operation and compromise.

Templates and other material tailored to the interests and priorities of each organisation must be carefully prepared, so that they carry out their primary tasks, as well as support the campaign. While communicating your messages and goals, ensure they are in a shape easily adapted for transmission by the partner organisation. This often implies sharing (some would say, diluting) your identity with theirs. The sacrifice, in my opinion, is worth it.

At Jubilee 2000 we worked with organisations like the British Medical Association that linked us up to the World Medical Association, which in turn is linked to 95 national medical associations and reaches a vast global network of trained doctors.

Medical associations had a vested interest in increased public spending on health, and believed, as we did, that debt cancellation would free up public resources for health. So they willingly offered space in their journals for our well produced, considered articles about the key themes of the campaign. We in turn tailored our materials to ensure they were relevant to, and appropriate for their members.

This was a win-win strategy. Together we had leveraged a much bigger audience for an issue – sovereign debt - often considered obscure and arcane, and irrelevant to the medical profession.

Opinion formers

Opinion-formers include journalists, bloggers and other influencers in the print, broadcast, online and media new and old.

It is they who, if persuaded, and if given a good story backed up with sound evidence, will amplify and broadcast your message more widely, simultaneously giving it 'third party endorsement' and credibility. The impact of the recent Wikileaks release by a whistleblower of an Afghan War dossier, was massively amplified by the decision of the site's director, Julian Assange, to share the revelations with three mainstream newspapers: the New York Times, the Guardian and Der Spiegel. Working together digital, print and broadcast media were able to reach audiences that Wikileaks alone could not reach.

This target group, like all your target groups has to be treated with the greatest consideration. They have deadlines to meet, editors to satisfy and pages to fill.

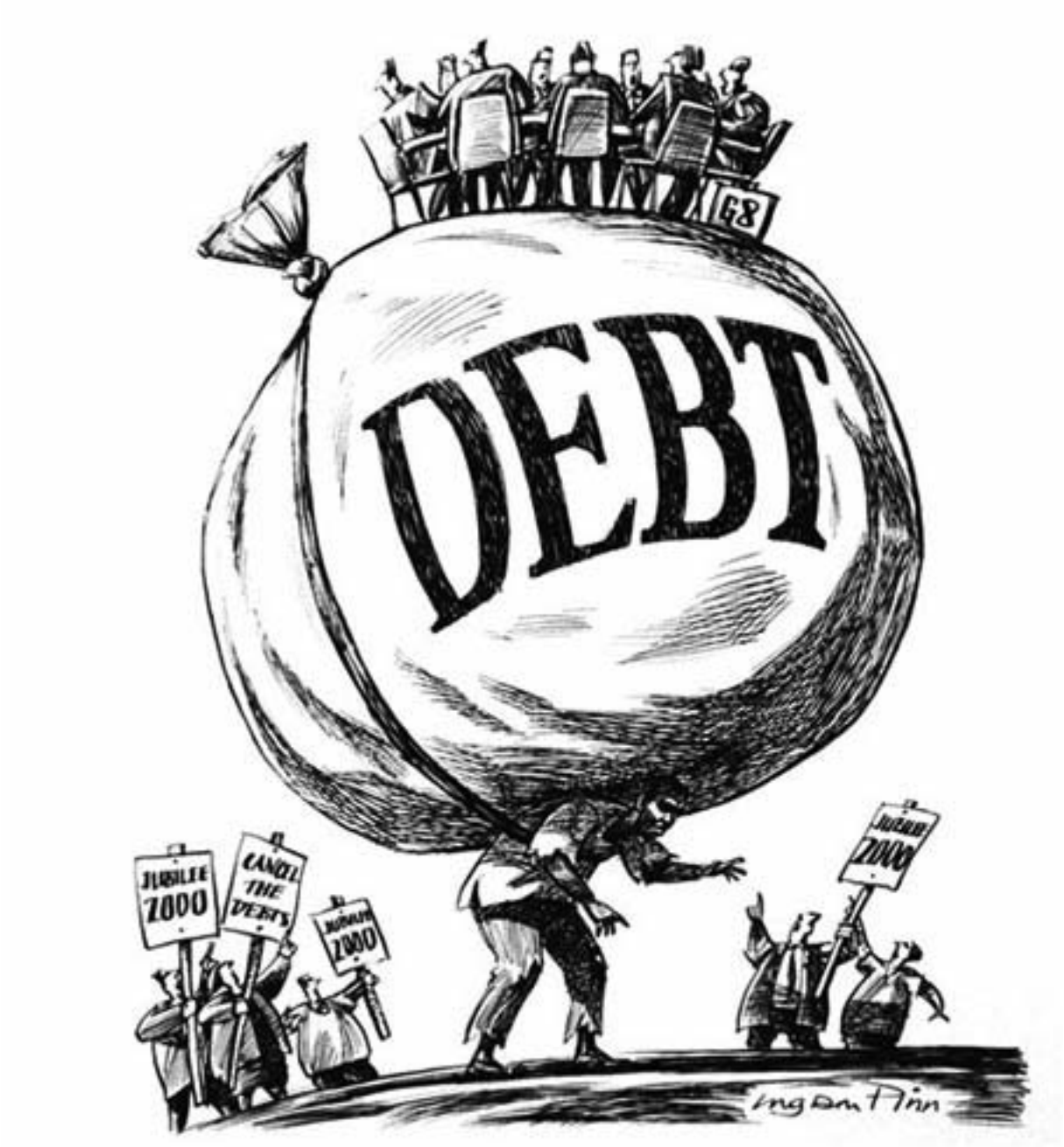
They are easily irritated if you contact them and have no story to tell, or if you fail to produce a good sound-bite (which can take hours of brain-storming and thinking to get right) or do not take the trouble of getting your facts right.

They will be charmed if you take the trouble to build up a mutually helpful relationship, based on consideration for their reputations, deadlines, requests for information, for quotes or interviews. A member of the team must be dedicated to resourcing and informing the media about your campaign. The work is not entirely different from recruiting supporters. But remember, as soon as one journalist is briefed, she is bound to be moved to another desk, and the process will have to start all over again.

In this way an ever-widening circle of media professionals must be regularly resourced, updated and kept informed.

In dealing with the media always remain truthful. Judge carefully what it is you want to share, and then be open and communicative. Confess errors and mistakes, and take action to correct them. Never obfuscate or hide. Offer simple, concise stories, with clear messaging and sound evidence to back it up.

Understand when a major event – like a volcanic eruption – wipes your story off the front page. That, as they say in Hollywood, is show business. And draw on your 'diamond cutting' process to get the language and framing right.



Cartoon by Ingram Pinn first published 12 June,1999 in the Financial Times. It is of an African bent over double by a burden of debt, while G8 leaders sit at a table perched precariously on top. They are surrounded by campaigners, hollering at the G8 with banners proclaiming: "Cancel the Debts" "Jubilee 2000".

Targeting decision makers

This can be the hardest aspect of any campaign: high-level advocacy that gains the ear of powerful decision-makers, persuades them to give your case a hearing, helps to change their minds, and results in changes to policy.

We know that powerful corporations can gain the attention of decision-makers using economic power. But most non-profits lack that lever. There are therefore only two other strategies that could open doors. The first is the presentation of a powerful case backed up by evidence; made public through the media or through Congressional or Parliamentary debate and followed up with an approach to the decision-maker.

The second is a case that is obviously backed up by a large and influential constituency.

Providing evidence of the scale of this constituency and of its support for your cause is a door-opener to the most intransigent of political and official decision-makers.

Decision-makers are well resourced and backed up with researchers and assistants. They will be expertly briefed before you set foot inside their doors. This is the moment when your work on 'cutting the diamond' pays off most. By the time you meet up with decision-makers your case must be water-tight, with all angles covered. Your arguments will have been distilled into simple, clear and powerful messaging.

Making an impact

However advocacy is not just the communication of arguments, of goals, news, information and events. Advocacy can be both inquisitorial and adversarial.

Grabbing attention when one's adversary is the most powerful club in the world – seven of the world's most powerful leaders – is enormously challenging, as the story below demonstrates. So how did we at Jubilee 2000 go about it? We juxtaposed and conflated two apparently conflicting ideas and used them to illuminate a third point, which helped ignite – and excite – the public imagination.

CASE STUDY

So we stuck with simple phrases like: 'drop the debt', 'cancel the debt' or 'debt cancellation'.

But most controversial was the metaphor: 'debt forgiveness'.

Our campaign was rooted in the biblical concept of Jubilee; on biblical notions of debt as sin, and of forgiveness as essential for new (economic) life to begin. But the term 'debt forgiveness' implied that the debtor had to be forgiven by the creditor; that the debtor had sinned. We had stressed co-responsibility for the debt – between both the lender and the borrower. Using the term 'forgiveness' – unconsciously shifted responsibility for the debt to the borrower. So we vowed to banish the term.

One of our co-founders, Martin Dent objected. He was absolutely determined to use the phrase 'debt forgiveness', and regarded our strictures as 'political correctness gone mad'.

Nevertheless we persevered. To restore balance in the burden of responsibility for the debt, it was vital to ensure that both parties accepted responsibility, and that borrowers were not defined as solely responsible for the crisis.

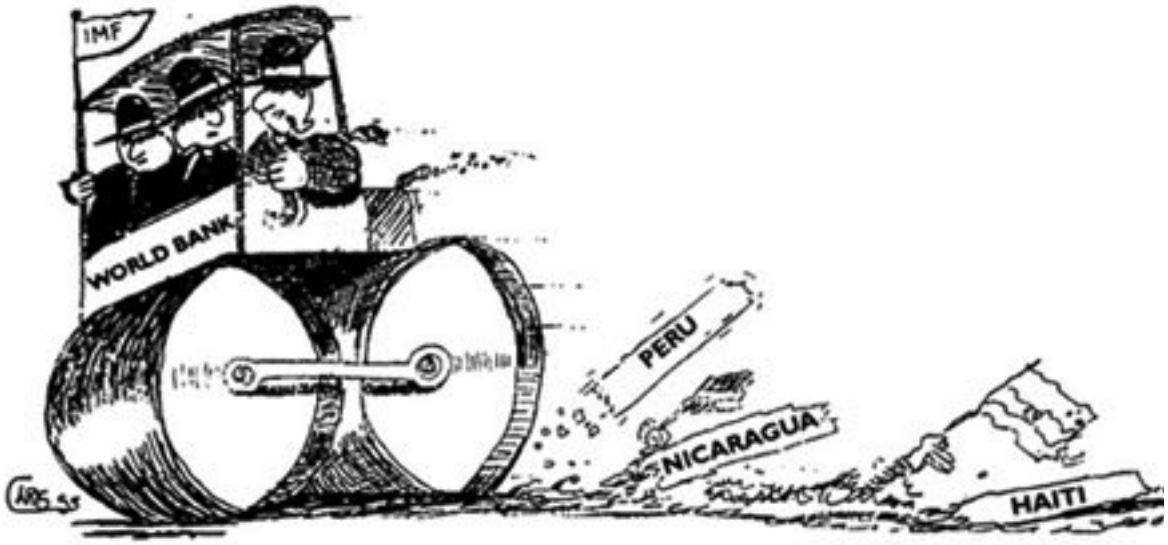
Then, and as a result of pressure from campaigners in debtor nations, we also stipulated that the proceeds from any debt cancellation should be made publicly transparent – and that politicians in debtor countries should account for the way in which those proceeds were spent. By these means we aimed to not just cancel the debt, but also strengthen democracy and accountability in debtor nations.

But first we had to choose our words carefully.

Jubilee 2000 and the power of language

As George Lakoff, the cognitive linguist has shown, the use of conceptual metaphors can have a powerful impact on advocacy. If the terminology used in your campaign supports an alternative point of view, you will unconsciously be promoting that alternative, and not your own.

We had many arguments about language and terminology in the Jubilee 2000 campaign. We opposed the term 'debt relief' – widely used by the World Bank and IMF - because it implied limited relief, while the overall burden of debt would remain on the shoulders of the poor. That suited the creditors, but not the campaign.


IMF
WORLD BANK
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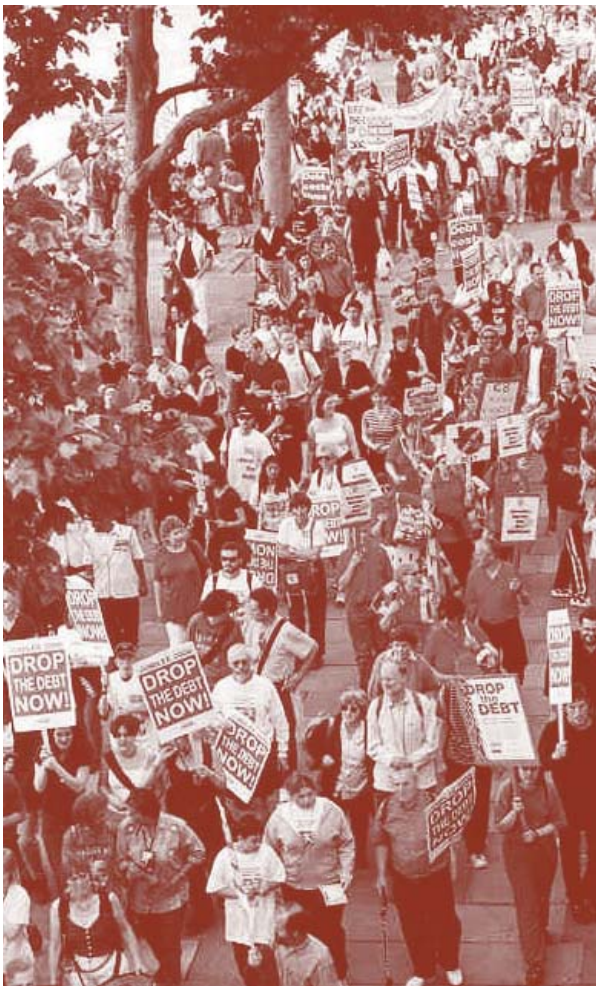
Christian Aid
Break the chains of debt
Drop the Debt
NOW!


DROP THE DEBT NOW!
DROP the DEBT

CASE STUDY

Okinawa Summit of world leaders, 2000

Debt, the digital divide and a burning laptop

At the Okinawa Summit of world leaders in Japan in 2000, we found ourselves in a strange and distant location. It had not been possible to mobilise thousands of protesters in Okinawa, because, to preclude that possibility, the Japanese government had deliberately located the Summit on a remote island.

Add to that the mighty forces of the G8's media machine - an army of journalists in Okinawa for the sole purpose of reporting the activities of world leaders. It was clear our chances of making an impact were slim.

To cap it all, we had limited resources: four full-time staff, a couple of expensive mobile phones (still quite brick-like back then) some stationery, and two laptops. And not a lot of time: the summit would be over in three days.

We brainstormed both before and during the trip on how to ignite media, and therefore public attention on our issue from that remote island. We wrestled with the problem for hours. Third world debt was not an easy subject to illuminate creatively.
Inspiration simply eluded us.

Then the G7 came to our rescue. They issued an extensive document, the Okinawa Charter on Global Information Society which dealt with the "Digital Divide and the need for "Global Participation" by developing countries.

The team was immediately galvanised, and hatched a creative way to link and contrast the issues of sovereign debt and the 'digital divide'.

The plan was bold: at sunset we would burn a laptop computer on the meticulously swept Okinawan beach outside the conference centre. We would first inscribe these words on its screen:

"This is worth nothing until you drop the debt."

CASE STUDY

The hardest part in implementing the plan was persuading Tomoo Machiba, our valued Japanese colleague, to sacrifice his beloved laptop.

We alerted journalists and broadcasters, and were astonished at the response. The world's media flocked to our little corner of the beach to film the four or five minutes it took for the laptop to burn to a cinder. They were excited by the strange juxtaposition of debt, the fire and the digital divide.

In what seemed like an instant, the image went around the world, ricocheting around the corridors of power, and touching public opinion in ways we could never have dreamed of.

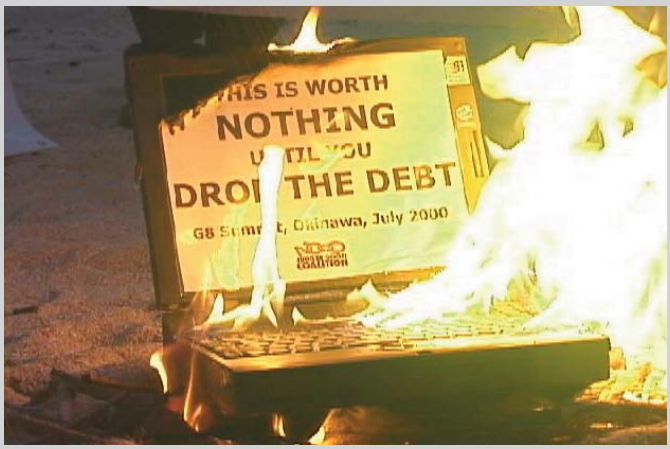
Thom Yorke the lead singer of Radiohead was incensed by "the G7's decision to prioritise the digital divide at the expense of lessening the burden of debt." He published the image of the burning laptop on Radiohead's website and penned an angry missive:

"You can't eat the ******* web."

Our creative juxtaposition had fired the imagination of others in ways quite unexpected.

The G8 then issued a communiqué which reaffirmed their "commitment to make available as quickly as possible the resources pledged" for debt relief.

Result.



Advocacy by Design

Effective campaigns are never bureaucratic. While rigorous research, planning, organisation and discipline are essential – these must never be allowed to crowd out the creative dimension, essential to effective communication.

This is the stage at which the individuals and/or the cohesive community promoting a campaign should call on the skills, talent and genius of creatives. Designers, artists, writers and producers that can help communicate with a range of audiences. They can fire the imagination of supporters unwilling to read your carefully researched reports, petitions and briefings, but whose curiosity might be whetted by a brilliantly designed website or informative design, by the colour, fonts, images and diagrams that light up your communications. Designers, artists and writers can help deliver advocacy and messaging with power, style and clarity.

They can make the complex powerfully simple. They can visualize abstract data and simplify issues in ways that stir the emotions and engage a wide range of audiences. By doing so indirectly, they can fire up and engage the public imagination, in ways that more confrontational communication fails to do.

Thomas Clarkson & the Slave Ship "Brooks"

"...A landmark in the understanding of visual propaganda. It manages to communicate, at a glance, an incontestable evil. It could carry its message into the minds of those who weren't willing or able to read the committee's carefully mustered petitions and witness statements."

A classic example of such indirect 'advocacy by design' – is the work of the granddaddy of all public advocacy: Thomas Clarkson – the unrecognised but true leader (if not always the spokesperson) of the British anti-slavery campaign.

As Tom Lubbock has argued, Clarkson's diagram (above) took a great deal of espionage and research to find.

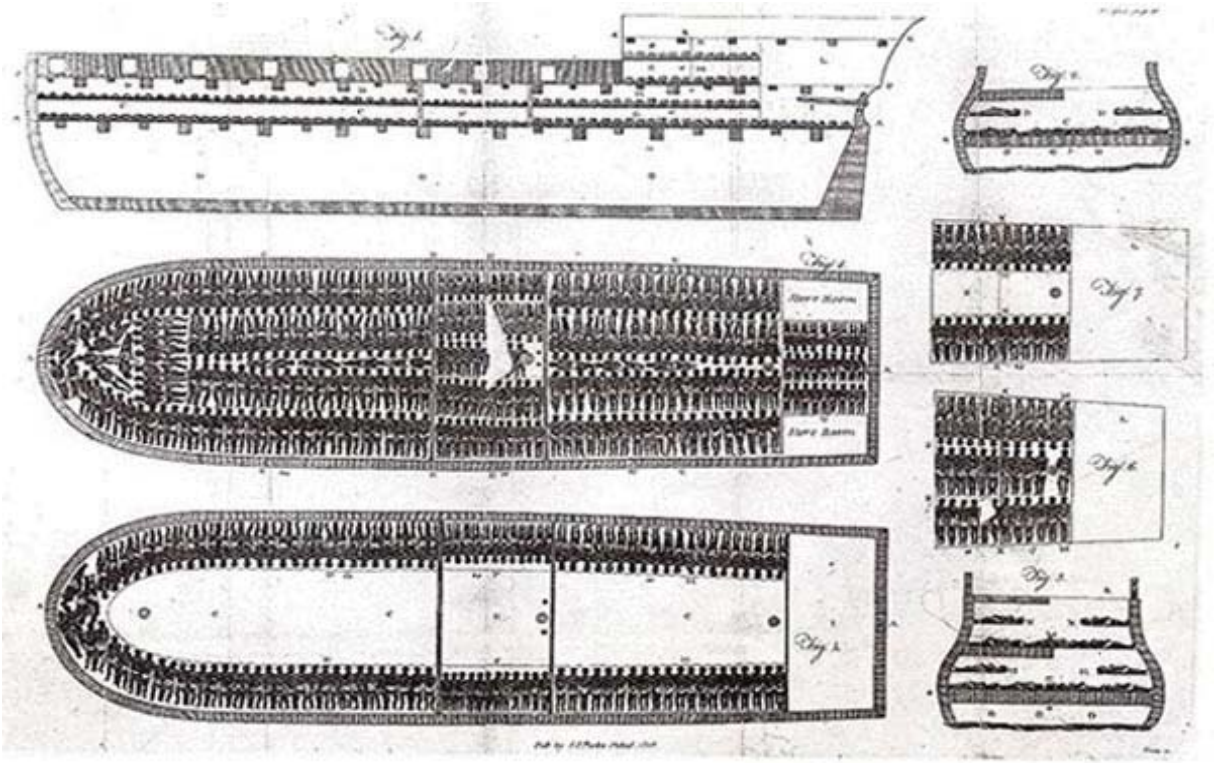
It was the result of Clarkson's rigorous research (for which he was nearly killed by plantation owners) and was made accessible to the British public by a simple, direct and powerful set of images.

This simple diagram of hundreds of slaves laid side by side in the bowels of a ship did more to galvanise public opinion in Britain, than any parliamentary petition, speech, media campaign or public meeting.

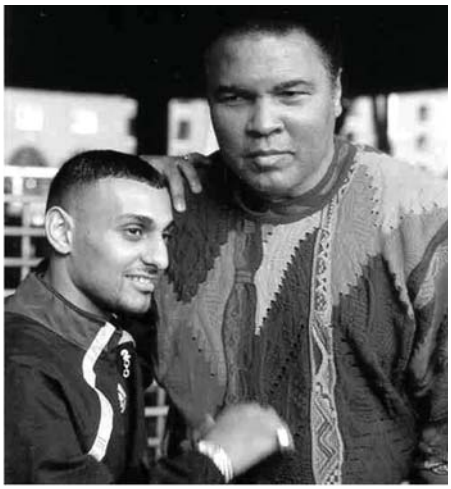
Bow humbly before, and trust the artistic judgements of your creatives and graphic designers. They can interpret abstract research and data and present them in ways that are meaningful and compelling. They bring colour, imagery, music and drama and add huge value to every aspect of a campaign. So give your own creative juices, and those of the team, free rein.

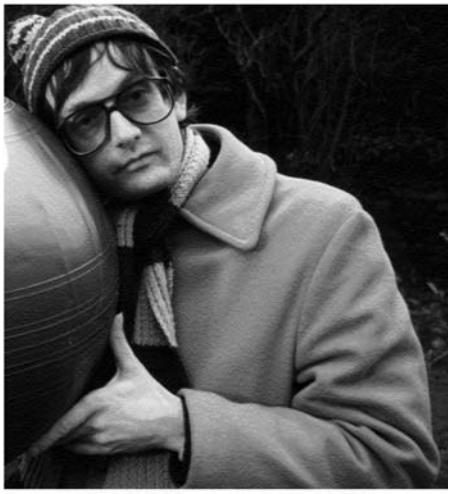
And be both generous and ruthless with the time and space needed to release creative potential.

However, while trusting and respecting the artistic judgements of creatives, never forget that you are in the lead. Always make sure they remain true to your 'cut diamond'; the analysis, values and framing of the debate.



Tom Lubbock on Thomas Clarkson's famous diagram "Stowage of the British Slave Ship Brooks under the regulated Slave Trade"





Their ability to access the highest levels of power is a gift...

Jubilee 2000 vigil, Central Hall Westminster, Prince Naseem with his hero Muhammed Ali at a J2K press conference in central London before the Brit awards, 16th February 1999, Members of the Worldwide Mother's Union prepare to demonstrate for debt relief, Jarvis Cocker drops the debt, Delegation to meet the Pope, 23rd September 1999 Castel Gandolfo.

Communication and celebrities

Involving a celebrity in an advocacy campaign is now a given for organisations wanting to communicate quickly and effectively with a wide audience.

Celebrities can undoubtedly help reach mass audiences - well beyond the 'already-converted' or 'usual suspects'. Their ability to reach huge audiences and access the highest levels of power is a gift and a power often liberally bestowed on a campaign. If they do lend their reputations and brands to your campaign, their generosity should be thankfully acknowledged and accepted.

However, beware of the risks too. Celebrities are often brands in themselves, and as such are owned by their managements and companies. Depending on the public profile of the celebrity, and of their relative autonomy, these managements exercise varying levels of power over the ability of the celebrity to participate in your campaign.

If managements do support the celebrity's participation, then it will often be at an undisclosed 'price'. Sometimes that price or condition is simply that the celebrity's brand must a) not be damaged and b) preferably be enhanced by the association, so that s/he may boost her reputation/profile/album sales/film sales etc. This means that their managements, and not your campaign, will control the timing of

Delegation to meet Pope John Paul II at his villa, Castel Gandolfo, September 1999. From right to left: Monsigneur Diarmuid Martin, Ann Pettifor, Professor Adebayo Adedeji, Bono, Bob Geldof, Randall Robinson, Quincey Jones

appearances and those alongside whom the celebrity will appear.

But managements may also take the opportunity to ensure that the association with a charity or campaign assists the celebrity in modifying/improving their public image, and/or selling or promoting goods associated with the celebrity. In those cases, your campaign may be subordinated to their goals.

Finally, if you do work with celebrities, be prepared to lose control of the agenda. Because unlike the press releases you draft, or the TV interviews you give, or the demonstrations you organise, communication via a celebrity is often well beyond your influence and control – and can go off at an unwelcome tangent. Indeed in some cases celebrities have been known to take over the campaign altogether. Bob Geldof's initiative to stage a global concert in Hyde Park on a date (2 July, 2005) already agreed by the Make Poverty History coalition for a massive mobilisation at the G8 Summit in Edinburgh, was a magnificent attempt to extend the campaign beyond the already-converted to reach a global audience. Geldof achieved that, but the concert also eclipsed the demonstration of 300,000 people gathering at the G8 Summit in Edinburgh – a huge mobilisation that had taken months of hard graft, scarce resources and precious time to organise. It was a classic example of a celebrity taking over, and upsetting, a campaign agenda . It was also an example of how the lead organisation failed to maintain the cohesion of a campaign.

So try and arrange time in their very hectic schedules to brief and inform the celebrity - and their managements – of your campaign strategy, priorities and of the way in which your campaign has 'cut the diamond'. Be firm, no tough, about your priorities and commitments. Maintain the campaign's cohesion at all times. But above all, remember that you, not celebrities or their managements, are in the driving seat. Assert that leadership at all times.

Below: Ann with dedicated J2K supporter Youssou N'dour at his studio in Dakar, Senegal

Above: Ann Pettifor at a party to celebrate J2k's achievements with Bob Geldof and Thom Yorke of Radiohead.

5. Opportunities

"One's tactics are not repeated. One should always respond to circumstances in an infinite variety of ways", said Sun Tzu, in the Art of War.

While surveying the landscape for planning purposes and for identifying potential roadblocks, it is just as important – once your campaign is launched - to scan the horizon for opportunities.

These can be global, national or local level opportunities. Seizing opportunities to amplify your message requires that campaigners be constantly alert, alive to their contexts, flexible and 'fleet-of-foot'.

That's hard too – because opportunities arise when you least expect them to, and when you are least ready for them. And seizing opportunities requires intelligence, skill and sound judgement – not always present when opportunities arise!

CASE STUDY

The Honduran floods of 1998

As the Jubilee 2000 campaign was gearing up in the autumn of 1998, Hurricane Mitch dropped historic amounts of rainfall on Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Deaths due to catastrophic flooding made it the second deadliest Atlantic hurricane in history; nearly 11,000 people were killed and 2.7 million were left homeless or missing.

The British government immediately offered aid to the stricken countries. Jubilee 2000 quickly calculated that the aid offered was equivalent to, or more than the amount of debt that Honduras was due to pay to the World Bank and IMF that year. Armed with these numbers we prepared a press release.

To our astonishment our story shot to the top of the news agenda, catapulted there by the apparently senseless contradictions in aid and debt policies.

Late at night, still in the office, we watched incredulously as the BBC led with our story on the main news channel. We had made a major intervention in policy debates – because we had seized the moment, quickly responded to the crisis with rigorously assembled facts and in the process highlighted a grave injustice.

Honduras's multilateral debt repayments were promptly suspended.

Result.

6. Strong, guiding institution

"Popular social movements often fail for lack of strong institutional capacity"

Effective leaders, either create, or are backed by, strong, guiding institutions with resources, and with open, accountable procedures and mechanisms. Campaigns without such an institutional framework, invariably fail through lack of organisation and resources.

Strong, guiding institutions can include local and national governments, development agencies, UN agencies, community and faith organisations, charities and trade unions. They can also include a coalition of such organisations. However, coalitions are only likely to be effective if they have the participation and involvement of stakeholders; and if they have sufficient institutional capacity, including the capacity to lead.

Supporters rally at Trafalgar Square before the 1999 G8 summit

Popular social movements often fail for lack of strong institutional capacity. And they can also fail because of competition between institutions, and the failure of the coalition, of one institution or set of institutions, to take, or be given, the leading, guiding role.

In Britain the climate change movement suffered from the absence of a strong, guiding institution. Instead a weak co-ordinating body, Stop Climate Chaos (SCC) was created. Far from acting as a guiding institution, SCC was constituted in such a way as to deprive its staff, members and potential supporters of the resources and the ability to lead a social movement. Above all staff were denied the opportunity to formulate and agree a clear and achievable policy 'Ask' in the run-up to the Copenhagen Summit.

The result was predictable. Without a strong, guiding institution, clear strategy and explicit policy goals, the public – millions of whom were sympathetic - could not be mobilised. This weakness was manifest in the the 'Wave' demonstration of December, 2009 ('Make Copenhagen Count') when participants were asked effectively, to provide vibrant images for TV by wearing the colour blue, and joining in a giant 'Mexican wave'.

The attendance was disappointing, given that we know there is a high degree of awareness of the threat of climate change, and many hundreds of thousands are genuinely alarmed at the failure of politicians to provide effective leadership on the issue. A few years before, in February, 2003, the anti-war coalition with its clear leadership and specific ask: 'Stop the War' mobilised 2,000,000 people on the streets of London, in a very short time. That demonstration failed to stop the war, but made (and continues to make) a major intervention in British politics, ultimately bringing down a Prime Minister, and making it harder for any future Prime Minister to go to war without a parliamentary mandate.

The 'Wave' cannot be said to have had the same impact.

The lesson is clear: any big advocacy campaign must have a strong, guiding institution at its heart, an institution that is appropriately resourced to act as a vehicle for the leadership of the campaign.

7. Impact

Evaluate the impact: reflect & learn

It is important that you continually monitor and evaluate your campaign. This is not just for accountability purposes (campaigners too must be accountable to their members and stakeholders); but also to improve the effectiveness of your collective efforts. M&E, as it's known in the jargon, helps you learn from mistakes, sharpen up your arguments and build supporter and state capacity – or capability as some call it.

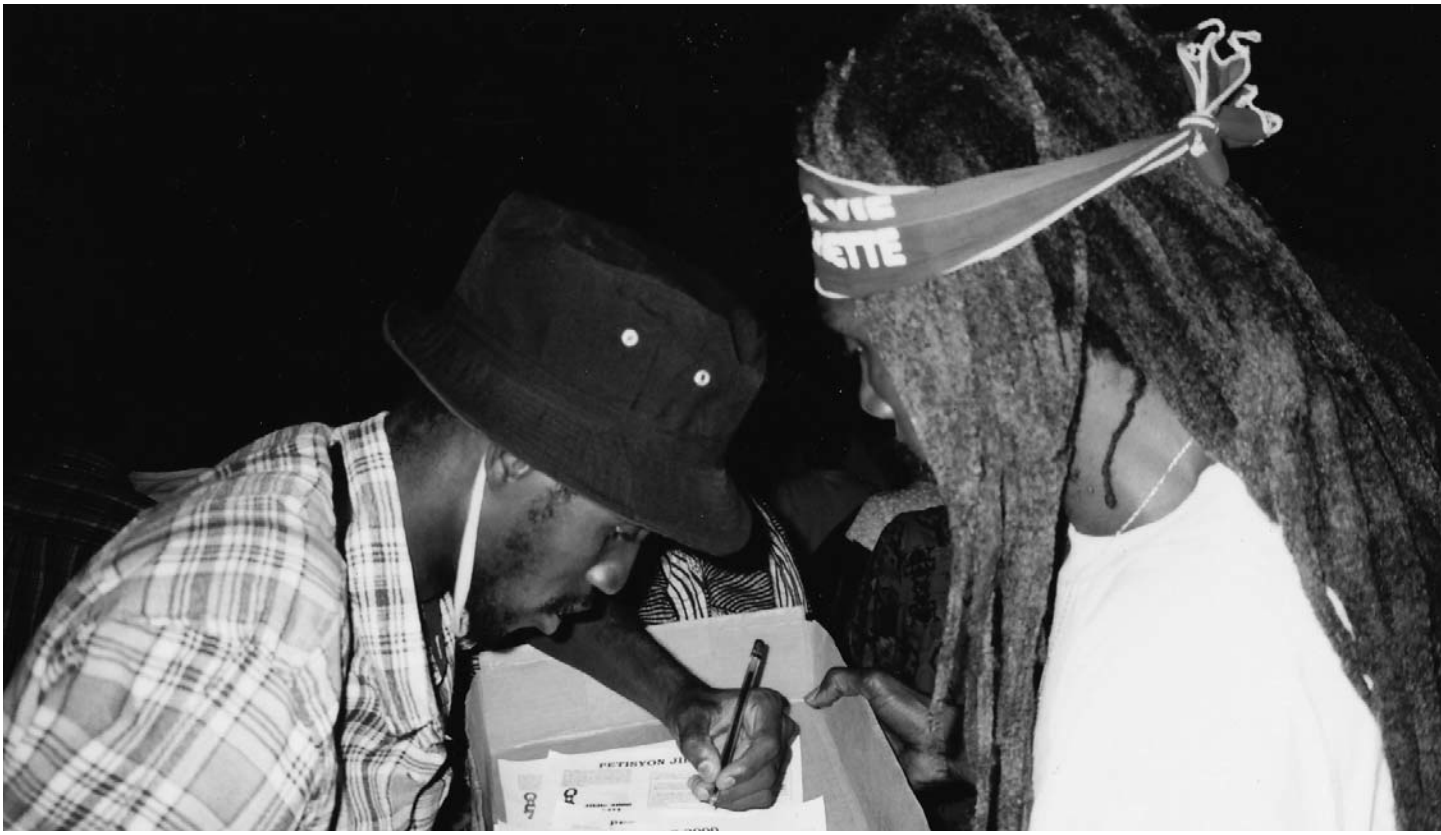
Above all, monitoring and evaluation can strengthen democracy by mapping and recording increased engagement by citizens with the state. M&E can spotlight and showcase the empowerment and leadership of citizens that hold government officials and representatives to account for their decisions. However, never forget: power also constantly re-aligns itself to accommodate and respond to new pressures, creating new spaces for action and closing others. This requires constant re-assessment of strategies and new forms of pressure, as well as new forms of monitoring and evaluation.

Effective M&E means devising and developing indicators for tracking and assessing impact. These indicators must be developed from within the campaign. That is, the campaign itself will throw up what needs to be measured, and how it can be measured.

As Action Aid have argued, the use of indicators, methods, frameworks and tools depends largely on whether they promote critical thinking, participation and effective action. For advocacy this is reflected in part by whether indicators include an examination of how power operates and how change happens.

Campaigners will have to undertake such an examination of the power relations in their community or society, as they develop their own indicators and tools. Once these power relations have been mapped, it will be easier to identify where change might happen, and to record change when it does happen.

Indicators of change can be as simple as counting the 'namechecks' for your organisation or your campaign in print and broadcast media, and online.



Or they can be as complex as measuring the level and quality of behavioural change in the attitudes and actions of government officials and MPs or congressmen and women. Indicators could measure changes to the customs, values and practices of the broader society and culture – especially in conditions of power and gender imbalances, where discrimination on the grounds of colour, or gender or class are major barriers to social transformation.

A campaign to reduce maternal mortality for example, may want to measure the level and quality of behavioural change towards women by medical professionals and government officials.

But it may also need to measure changes to customs and practices that help strengthen the life-chances of women and their infants.

You may want to keep track of the role your campaign is playing in strengthening direct collective or individual engagement with the state. This means keeping tabs on meetings (public and private) between your supporters and state officials; the willingness of individual supporters to engage with powerful officials, and vice versa, and the outcomes of those meetings. How did the supporters feel it went? And was there an impact that was measurable? For example, did the decision-maker promise to respond in writing? To take action?

To take the issue to a higher level of decision-making? If so, keep track of that process, and make sure that the outcome (both positive and negative) is relayed back to supporters, but also to the media, and where appropriate, to donors. You can try measuring the responsiveness of institutions, by measuring e.g. official letters in response to supporters. These can include both numerical checks, but also perceptions of the quality of the response.

Watch out for, and log any changes to official procedures and internal debates within e.g governmental institutions, in order to gauge whether your campaign is leading to more predictable and transparent decision-making by the organisation/institution.

So, in addition to measuring the capabilities of your supporters and stakeholders, you may want to measure the capability of the state to respond to pressure from below. Has there been judicial reform? To strengthen for example, the accountability of government officials and representatives? What about legislation? Have there been proposals, debates and decisions on amending existing, or introducing new legislation? And, most importantly: the role of finance needs to be monitored. In other words, campaigners must 'follow the money'. Are resources allocated in transparent ways? And are the allocations fair and sufficient? These may be vital indicators of the impact of your campaign.

Finally your campaign will want to hold decision-makers, especially elected politicians, at sub-national, national and international levels to account - for promises made.

This means monitoring the follow-through after commitments are made. Not just the promises, but actual and eventual delivery of commitments is important. Many a fine speech is delivered making promises, only to be dissipated in the shifting sands of bureaucratic decision-making.

The Uganda Jubilee 2000 campaign pressured the Ugandan President to ensure that savings made from the cancellation of debt repayments were diverted to education. The President made grand promises, but after the debt had been cancelled, there was no immediate sign that new funds were being disbursed to the education department and to local schools.

So the Ugandan Debt Network kept up the pressure, working both with local and international partners, to raise awareness of the delays and logjams. They did so long after the climax of the campaign at the end of the year 2000. Slowly funds started to trickle through to schools, their teachers and their pupils.

These results could only be achieved because campaigners in Uganda continuously and rigorously monitored and evaluated the impact of their advocacy.

Conclusion

Public interest advocacy can be extraordinary in its impact. It can bring about change – for good. It can reap dividends, by giving voice to the voiceless, strengthening civil society, and with it the democratic process. It can strengthen institutions, making them more accountable and transparent, and inevitably more effective.

It can result in profound social and economic transformation.
I hope that these insights, drawn from my own experience, will provide you and your organisation with some ideas, and with the courage and confidence to undertake public interest advocacy.

Advocacy International Ltd is a consulting company that works with clients to achieve their public interest and social responsibility goals, through advocacy, communications, design and policy development.

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