



M•PACT
GLOBAL ACTION
FOR GAY MEN'S HEALTH & RIGHTS

BUILDING THE CULTURAL FOUNDATION

MPact Advocacy Toolkit to Stop the Criminalization of Consensual Sex Between Gay and Bisexual Men Who Have Sex with Men

mpactglobal.org



ABOUT MPACT

MPact Global Action for Gay Men's Health and Rights was founded in 2006 by a group of activists concerned about the disproportionate HIV disease burden shouldered by men who have sex with men. MPact works at the intersection of sexual health and human rights and is linked to more than 120 community-based organizations in 62 countries who are leading innovative solutions to the challenges faced by gay and bisexual men around the world.

This product has been funded by:



INTRODUCTION

Around the globe, the sexual behaviors of gay and bisexual men who have sex with men (GBMSM) are often the subject of restrictive laws and policies that criminalize consensual sexual activities. This criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual acts (CSSSA) leaves our communities highly vulnerable to violence, poor health outcomes, incarceration, and death. Activists fight daily to change these policies so that they and their loved ones have opportunities to find community, sexual connection, love, and a chance to thrive.

Decriminalization advocacy is ultimately about changing laws and policies; however, many GBMSM are living in contexts where direct lobbying or protesting of leadership is unlikely to result in meaningful change or may even provoke a backlash. This publication is meant to briefly provide suggested activities for advocates to strategically focus their efforts on social and cultural change-makers who have the potential to shift culture, are more likely to respond to community advocacy, and build momentum for eventual policy change.

The guide is broken into the following sections:

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|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) Background | 5) Choosing Tectics To Change |
| 2) Advocacy Basics | Hearts And Minds |
| 3) Moving The Needle: Developing | 6) Taking Time To Reflect And |
| Strategic, Meaningful, And | Adjust |
| Realistic Goals And Objectives | 7) Conclusion |
| 4) Mapping The Landscape: | 8) Resources |
| Choosing Moveable Targets | |

We are grateful to Yuri Yoursky, Axel Bautista, Dr. Nikolay Lunchenkov, and Elie Ballan for sharing their advocacy advice from their work in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East and North Africa.

1. BACKGROUND

In this section we will review some of the basics on criminalization of consensual same-sex acts (CSSSA), human rights, and political hostility to GBMSM advocacy.

Criminalization Context:

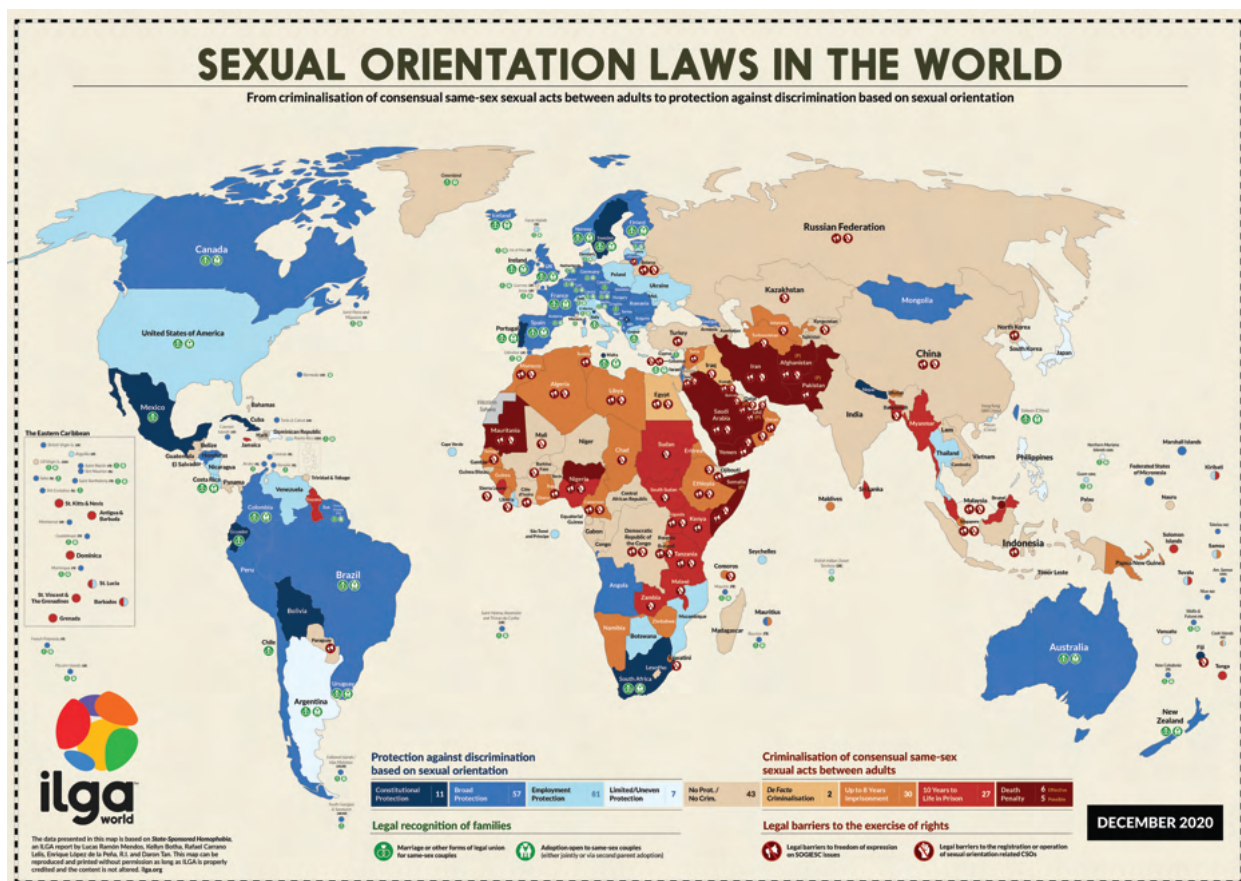


Image Courtesy of ILGA: <https://ilga.org/maps-sexual-orientation-laws>

Since 2006, ILGA has been issuing the State-Sponsored Homophobia Report and user-friendly maps to track the status of criminal laws and protections around the globe. The report looks at all 193 member states of the United Nations as well as some non-independent territories. Tracking law and policy is a useful indicator of how CSSSA is treated in a country, but as ILGA notes in its methodology “the nuances of lived realities cannot be fully captured simply by highlighting what is written on paper by governments. (pg. 9)”

The 2020 report found that a total of 69 countries criminalize CSSSA. Sixty-seven had explicit provisions, while two had de facto criminalization. One non-independent region (Cook Islands, NZ) also criminalizes CSSSA. Six of these countries have the death penalty as the legally recommended punishment for CSSSA, while five other countries say that the death penalty may be imposed.

The consequences of criminalization laws go beyond incarceration and the death penalty. MPact’s Fourth Global Men’s Health and Rights Survey, made available online between November 2019 and March 2020, found that criminalizing laws were significantly associated with poor access to health care and prevention services and less community engagement with other GBMSM.



However, when criminalizing laws are dropped, we can see enormous transformation for GBMSM and other queer people:

Human Rights

The criminalization of CSSSA exists firmly outside of key international human rights documents. Several advocacy guides go further into the larger body of international human rights law and policy. Many of the advocacy guides recommended at the end of this publication go extensively into the link between international human rights and LGBTQIA+ rights.

“When on September 6, 2018, in a historic verdict, the Supreme Court decriminalized Section 377 and allowed same-sex relationships between consenting adults, it was like a giant roar was heard around India....Things have certainly changed since then. For one, there’s far more positive representation of LGBTQ people in the media. Several corporations have started including policies that are LGBTQ-friendly. The spotlight of inclusivity that the world is focusing on is being taken more seriously, especially when it comes to transgender people. Even Bollywood has gotten woke in making more realistic gay content, dropping the caricatures of yore.”


- Farhad J. Dadyburjor in The Advocate

Political Barriers to GBMSM Advocacy

The rest of this guide will explore what advocacy might look like when direct policy change is highly unlikely and where advocacy may itself be limited or prohibited by the government. The most recent ILGA report looks at two kinds of specific kinds of legal barriers to advocacy: Legal barriers to freedom of expression on SOGIESC issues and legal barriers to the registration or operation of sexual orientation related civil society organizations (CSOs). These and other barriers may require choosing different advocacy targets, strategies, objectives, and tactics compared to less hostile political climates.

2. OVERVIEW OF ADVOCACY

Advocacy can be defined in many ways; here is one useful summary from ILGA Europe:




“Strategic advocacy is a sequence or series of actions that are carefully conceived, planned and executed by the actors who wish to see particular goals achieved. It is a process, likely to take years to fulfil entire strategies, and often multi-layered. At its foundation, the process of identifying relevant issues on which to advocate is tied to the goals and capacity of the organization carrying it out.”

While the vision for decriminalization advocacy is generally the same– for laws and policies to change– this guide is focused on what can turn the tide of public opinion in favor of that change.

Who does advocacy and why?

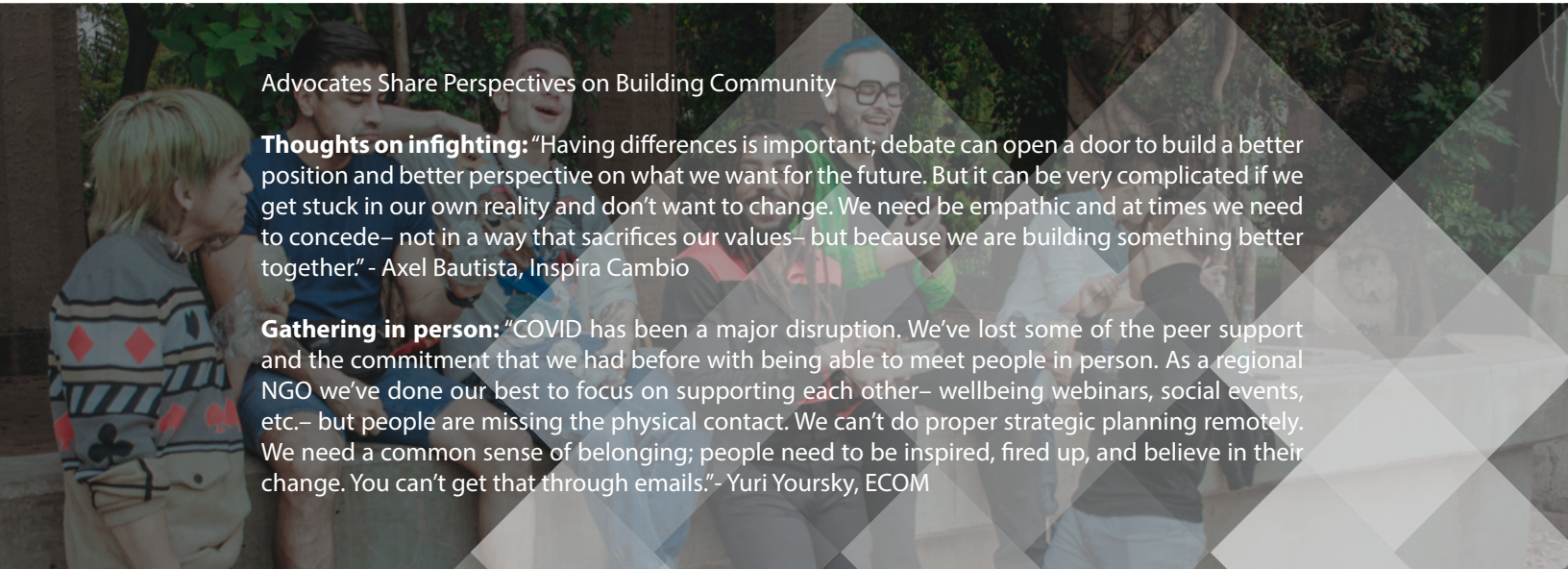
Just about anyone can be an advocate against criminalization of CSSSA for any number of reasons. An advocate may be someone personally affected by oppressive laws who has great speaking skills and can lead a rally. An advocate may also be an artistic ally who can help create eye catching media displays. Advocates might also be individuals who are good with paperwork and finances and can contribute those skills to an organization.

There are many reasons to advocate for sexual freedom, and just about any skillset can be useful for advocacy. We encourage you to think broadly when conceiving of who and what is useful in a movement.



“We need to dare to dream bigger. Because we come from oppressed groups, we don’t always feel like we have the right to dream; our focus is on survival. But it is our challenge and our duty to propose a better future.”

- Axel Bautista, Inspira Cambio



Advocates Share Perspectives on Building Community

Thoughts on infighting: “Having differences is important; debate can open a door to build a better position and better perspective on what we want for the future. But it can be very complicated if we get stuck in our own reality and don’t want to change. We need be empathic and at times we need to concede– not in a way that sacrifices our values– but because we are building something better together.” - Axel Bautista, Inspira Cambio

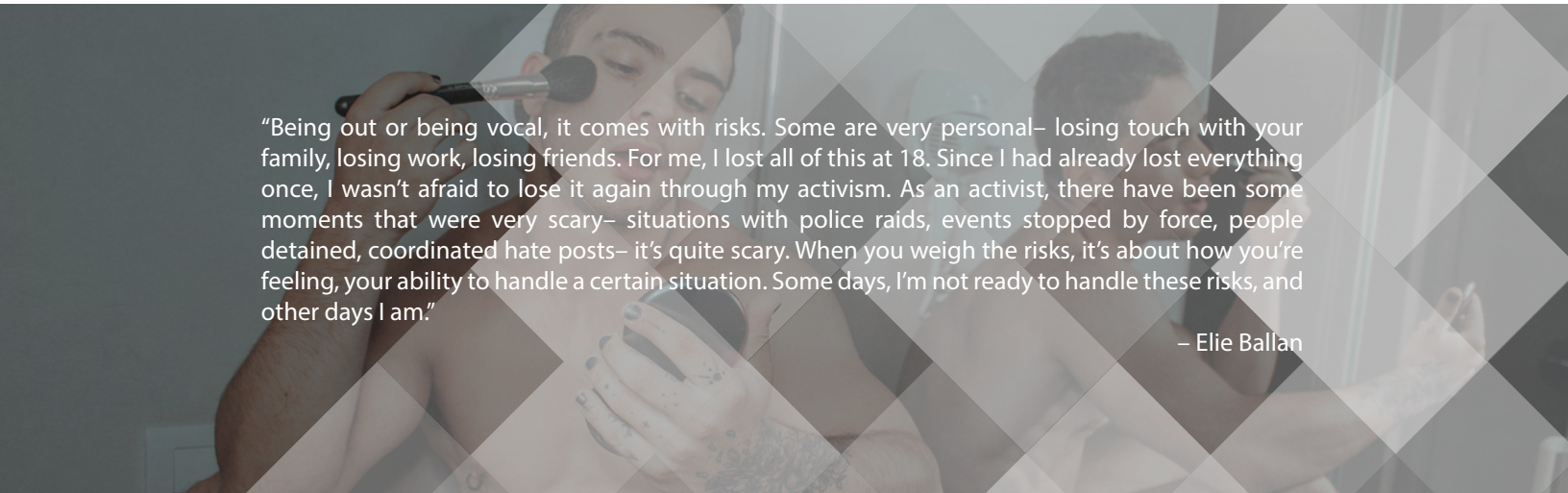
Gathering in person: “COVID has been a major disruption. We’ve lost some of the peer support and the commitment that we had before with being able to meet people in person. As a regional NGO we’ve done our best to focus on supporting each other– wellbeing webinars, social events, etc.– but people are missing the physical contact. We can’t do proper strategic planning remotely. We need a common sense of belonging; people need to be inspired, fired up, and believe in their change. You can’t get that through emails.” - Yuri Yoursky, ECOM

Facing the Risks of Advocacy

For many GBMSM around the globe, simply existing is a risk. This is why we engage in advocacy: to ensure that we and our communities no longer have to live in never ending danger.

Advocacy, however, can bring additional risks for physical, emotional, legal, and– in this day and age– digital dangers. This should not deter us from fighting for our collective safety, but we might ask ourselves some questions before we begin our planning process:

- Recognizing that we cannot totally control outcomes, **what risks are we willing to take** for advocacy? What are we not willing to take?
- If risks must be taken, **how do we lessen the potential for harm** to ourselves and our communities? How do we minimize the possibility for backlash?
- **Who in our movement are best positioned to take risks?**
- Are the risks **worth the potential strategic pay off** and the potential harms?
- What are our practices to **minimize the emotional and spiritual harms** of advocacy?
- How do we safeguard ourselves in virtual spaces?



"Being out or being vocal, it comes with risks. Some are very personal– losing touch with your family, losing work, losing friends. For me, I lost all of this at 18. Since I had already lost everything once, I wasn't afraid to lose it again through my activism. As an activist, there have been some moments that were very scary– situations with police raids, events stopped by force, people detained, coordinated hate posts– it's quite scary. When you weigh the risks, it's about how you're feeling, your ability to handle a certain situation. Some days, I'm not ready to handle these risks, and other days I am."

– Elie Ballan

IF YOU FEEL AT RISK: <https://protectdefenders.eu/protecting-defenders/> is a website with resources for human rights defenders who feel they may be at risk.

BOTTOM LINE: Anyone can be an advocate, and many skillsets can be useful in advocacy. By readying ourselves through self-care, connecting with community, and becoming familiar with the risks of advocacy, we can be better prepared to develop a strategic advocacy plan.

3. MOVING THE NEEDLE: DEVELOPING STRATEGIC, MEANINGFUL, AND REALISTIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

With a sense of advocacy and criminalization of CSSSA basics, we're ready to discuss the cultural and social changes we want to see. In this section we will briefly look at some key suggested steps in developing goals and objectives to influence and change cultural and social norms and barriers around GBMSM and consensual sex.

Getting informed

Before we start planning, we should have a good sense of the landscape for our advocacy.

- **Understanding the full policy landscape:** even though this guide is about cultural and social norms, we should have a sense of what we hope to eventually change. Where do the oppressive policies exist, what do they say, and who has the power to change them?
 - **Incorporating lived experience:** our movements often start with a lot of firsthand experience with criminalization. But what other perspectives are missing? Are there specific groups of GBMSM or key allies that aren't being included?
 - **Assessing counter-messaging:** What are the main arguments of our opponents and how can we best counter them?
- Looking at the socioeconomic and cultural context: who are the financial, social, and cultural leaders when it comes to perceptions of GBMSM and our sexuality? Who are our known and possible allies and enemies?

"Advocacy planning is rarely systematic, and often it is a response to opportunities and threats emerging in the political scene. Even though some significant experiences have resulted from such projects, our potential for success increases if we implement the project after a sound planning process".

- ARASA Guide 60 pg. 41

"Always make sure to watch what is happening and adjust. What are the issues that everyone is talking about? Have some idea of what you want to happen in the coming days, months, and years as best you can. We have to think about the short-term impact, but what will the long-term impact be?"

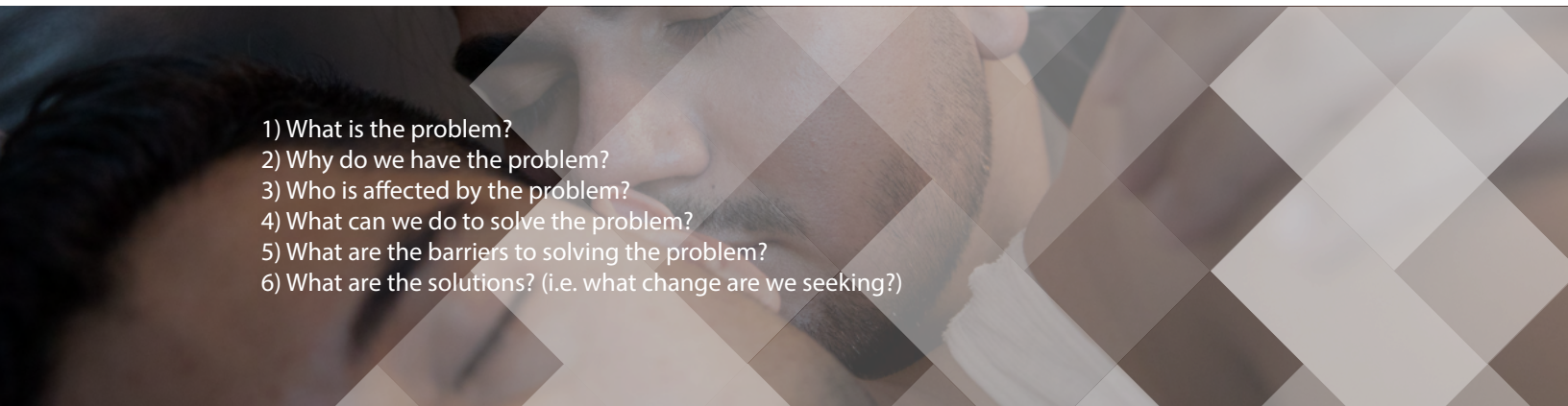
- Axel Bautista, Inspira Cambio

Before Tactics: Drafting potential vision, strategy, goals, and objectives

Once we have the lay of the land, taking time to establish specific goals and objectives can help anchor our actions. At this point, we may be tempted to jump right into tactics and actions to raise awareness, but make sure you have an idea of your vision, goals, strategy, and objectives:

- **Vision (Longer term):** What kind of society do we want to live in?
- **Goals (Medium term):** What and/or who needs to change for us to achieve our vision?
- **Objectives (Shorter term):** What are the SMART (Specific/strategic, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound) changes we need to meet our goals?
- **Strategy:** How do our objectives and goals work together to achieve our vision?

Or you might find it easier to start with the problem first (adapted from ARASA pg. 040)

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- 1) What is the problem?
 - 2) Why do we have the problem?
 - 3) Who is affected by the problem?
 - 4) What can we do to solve the problem?
 - 5) What are the barriers to solving the problem?
 - 6) What are the solutions? (i.e. what change are we seeking?)

Assessing likelihood of success and the potential consequences of failure

Poorly planned actions can backfire and make our work harder than it needs to be. We encourage you to take some time to ask:

What is the likelihood that our strategy and our actions will succeed in creating the change we seek?
What are the consequences of our failure? What is the possibility for a backlash?

BOTTOM LINE: Clearly listing the short-, medium-, and long-term changes you hope to see will help anchor your advocacy and help you build an overall strategy map for where you hope to go. Assessing risks can also help you recognize where you don't want to go.



4. MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE: CHOOSING MOVEABLE TARGETS

"Our process started with a mapping of activists in 2018. As an international organization, getting to know people in person was very important. We wouldn't be the first to start building advocacy in Uzbekistan, so we needed to do this external environment mapping. We found that other external advocates would start work but then suddenly stop, so we realized we needed to be very strategic and assess our available resources to build long term hope and energy for decriminalization support."

- Yuri Yoursky, ECOM

Once we have our vision, goals, objectives, and strategy, we likely have a sense of who our advocacy targets might be. However, doing some additional mapping of our advocacy landscape can ensure that we are making our most informed decisions.

Who holds influence? Determining potential allies and adversaries who hold social and cultural power

Many advocacy guides include some version of "power mapping." In cases where national political movement is unlikely, we encourage you to focus on potential targets with social and cultural influence outside of the national government. Some examples of targets might be:

- **International targets:** The United Nations and affiliated entities can hold influence. Specifically, the Universal Periodic Review mechanism at the United Nations can be very useful in raising visibility. ILGA has an extensive guide to UPR. Embassies of other nations, regional governmental bodies, and international NGOs all have the potential to carry forward advocacy in a way that may not be possible from within your country.
 - **National Human Rights Institutions.** "NHRIs are official, independent legal institutions established by the State and exercising the powers of the State to promote and protect human rights." For more on NHRIs you can access the Asia Pacific Forum guide Promoting and Protecting Human Rights in relation to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Sex Characteristics: A Manual for National Human Rights Institutions.
 - **Donors:** Sometimes the first step is to advocate for more attention from major foundations that can provide sustainable resources, connections, and influence.
- **Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):** Building coalitions and strategic partnerships with other organizations both inside and outside of your country can open additional opportunities.
 - **Religious Allies:** Be aware of opportunities with faith-based institutions.
 - **Media:** Prominent television and print journalists can strongly influence attitudes and beliefs. Documentarians can provide significant visibility.

(continued)

- **Social Media Influencers and Users:** Advocates connected to social media influencers see potential successes and dangers:

“We had a popular Youtuber who made a documentary about HIV that was very powerful. He brought the issue into public view, and lots of people started to think about testing and treatment. There were about 20 million views. However, another gay community blogger with a Youtube channel made a video about HIV in Russia that provided some bad information from a medical perspective even after working with community organizations. So that can be a risk.”

-Nikolay Lunchenkov, MD, ECOM

- **Cultural leaders:** Heads of prominent cultural institutions can create outlets for advocacy. Leaders in prominent professions (e.g. doctors, lawyers, scientists): Establishing a network of speakers from respected professional fields can help with media visibility.
- **Ministries of Health (MoH):** While legislators and heads of state may be hostile, health and other ministries may be better aligned with human rights principles.
- **Entertainment Leaders and Celebrities:** Connecting with entertainers can dramatically increase the audience for your message; they may also have creative ideas to help the public connect to advocacy. However, it's important to be clear on messaging.
- **Sub-National Political Leaders:** When national leadership can't be influenced, friendly political leadership in strategic provinces and cities may help shift cultural attitudes.

Think outside of the box. Sometimes, unlikely individuals can become important allies if they are approached in the right way. We also recommend that you focus your energy on a subset of strategic targets rather than trying to take on your entire map. Ensure that your plans can realistically fit within the resources you have available to you.

Determining moveability

The more you know about the people you are trying to influence, the more effective you're likely to be. Ideally, we want to get **the right message, to the right people, at the right time.**

- Where are your potential targets on the issue right now, and where do you think they could move?
- What are the messages that might move them? Try to read between the lines, and think about what your target is most interested in.
- What will be the best timing? Depending on who you're trying to influence, they might be more likely to move in a more or less public setting, or they may be more open to influence in connection with another event.

Table 6: Identifying allies and how they can help you. ⁶⁹

Type of power	Rationale	Example
Members – are they a large organisation with many members?	A group with many members is less likely to be ignored by decision makers, the media and the public	Trade unions can mobilise their members to attend demonstrations
Money – will they donate money to your organisation or cause or do they have strong connections with donors?	Access to donor funding gives organisations the resources they need to do advocacy	Large international NGOs can introduce you to donors overseas that you would not otherwise have access to
Credibility – are they an organization that has a good reputation, and has acknowledged expertise?	A group or individual who is viewed as respected and credible can lend that credibility to your cause	A well-known and well-liked activist can speak out about LGBTI issues
Appeal – do they have a special appeal for the media?	Some groups e.g. those working with children, or public personalities can have universal appeal and connecting with them can help advance LGBTI rights	Some groups e.g. those A celebrity or national sports person can be an important spokesperson for LGBTI issues
Network – are they part of an organized network?	Working with a group that is part of a larger network can give to access to other organisations that are part of the network, their resources and credibility	An international network can amplify your advocacy efforts in international settings
Reputation – are they well known as a group who does high quality work and who will not back down?	Working with a group that is recognized as an expert can enhance your credibility	An ally that has already successfully made change will be seen by the media and decision makers as an effective voice on your issues
Skills – do they have skills that your organisation does not have?	An ally can bring technical, media, legal and other skills that will advance your advocacy	A coalition that includes lawyers can make credible arguments on law reform
Newsworthy – is the organisation newsworthy or does it have strong relationships with the media?	Some groups will already have strong relationships with the media that you can build on	A group that is already doing advocacy on high profile issues, often being cited in the media or having published opinion pieces, can more easily provide visibility in the media on LGBTI issues through its existing relationship with the media

Image from ARASA: pg. 046

Table 6: Factors to consider in Advocacy Targets

Target	Ease of contact	Ease of convincing target	Target makes decisions by...	Target listens to...	How to influence target	Any existing connections?	Rating
Assess whether they are allies, supportive of LGBTI issues or opponents	Assess how easy / difficult it will be for you to access them	What kinds of arguments would the target be receptive to? Personal appeals?	What is important to the target? Are they influenced by voters, supporters?	Who can influence the target? Other politicians? A celebrity? An international policy maker?	What does your target care about? The opinion of voters? His political connections? Should you try to meet directly with the policy maker or have an interlocutor meet on your behalf?	Who do you know that knows your target?	

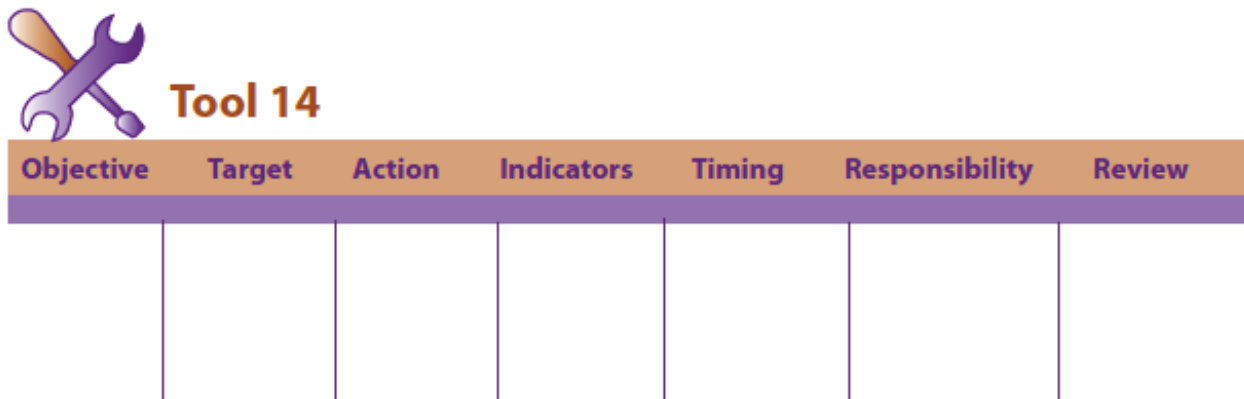
Image from ARASA: pg. 044

BOTTOM LINE: Even if national political leadership is unlikely to help you with your vision, goals, and objectives, other influential individuals may be willing allies if they are approached in the right way at the right time. Mapping the landscape can help you see the whole picture.



5. CHOOSING TACTICS TO CHANGE HEARTS AND MINDS

With objectives and key targets chosen, we can move into discussing strategy and tactics to change influential individuals' hearts and minds. We also encourage you to treat your action planning like chess; have a full series of moves planned out and try to predict your opponent's countermoves as much as possible. Advocacy planning guides have several useful templates for action planning. Here is a useful example:



Tool 14

Objective	Target	Action	Indicators	Timing	Responsibility	Review

Image Adapted from ILGA-Europe: pg. 55

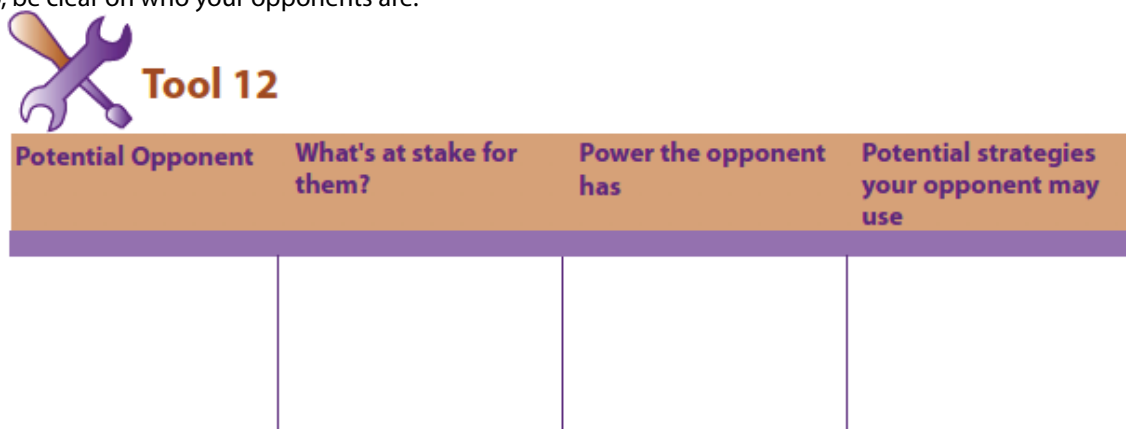
Tone, Messaging, Counter-messaging, and Risk Assessments

Keep in mind the kind of tone and messaging you determine to be most effective for influencing your targets, and make sure that that tone is reflected in the actions you plan. Effective advocacy gets:

The **right message**
 To the **right people**
 In the **right way**
 At the **right time**

Creating **specific talking points and a media toolkit** can help ensure that your messaging is specific, clear, and effective. Unclear and unpersuasive messaging can have real consequences.

Also, be clear on who your opponents are:




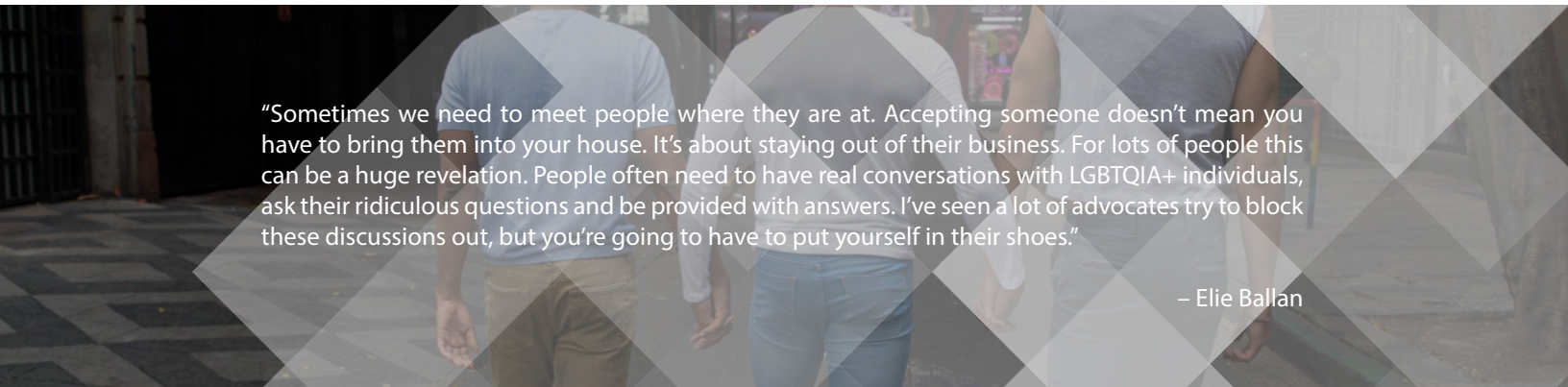
Tool 12

Potential Opponent	What's at stake for them?	Power the opponent has	Potential strategies your opponent may use

Image Adapted from ILGA-Europe: pg. 55

Think through your opponents' counter messaging and make plans to address it. Some useful approaches suggested by ARASA:

- 
- Prevention: if you can convince potential opponents to join you or at least not to oppose your plans, this is worth planning in advance.
 - Labelling: by publicly calling out your opponents' tactics, they will lose power.
 - Frame the debate on your own terms: create opportunities to talk about the issue in the way that you want to; don't always be on the defensive and responding to opponents' arguments.
 - Know when to negotiate: you should always be on the lookout for signs that your opposition is willing to negotiate – sometimes they will not say so openly. When working on LGBTI and HIV issues, compromise is an important strategy. (pg. 047)



"Sometimes we need to meet people where they are at. Accepting someone doesn't mean you have to bring them into your house. It's about staying out of their business. For lots of people this can be a huge revelation. People often need to have real conversations with LGBTQIA+ individuals, ask their ridiculous questions and be provided with answers. I've seen a lot of advocates try to block these discussions out, but you're going to have to put yourself in their shoes."

– Elie Ballan

We also recommend that you undertake **risk assessments** throughout your planning process. Advocating for the decriminalization of GBMSM consensual sex is always a risk but knowing what they are can help us lessen the potential for harm.

Resources and funding

Before, during, and after your planning process, you'll want to assess existing and potential resources. Effective advocacy does not have to be expensive but having more funding does provide you with different options.

Remember: not all funders and donors are the same. Be cognizant of a funder's reliability, potential for long term funding, and any cumbersome reporting requirements. Often, resource limited activists cannot afford to be selective, but it is worth asking:

Will this funder establish a relationship with us? **Are their values aligned with ours?**

Will they **reliably fund a multi-year campaign** to change cultural and social norms?

What will their **reporting requirements** be like? Will the funding amount truly be worth the amount of administrative work required?

In short, is the funding relationship **likely to move us closer to our goals and objectives?**

Kinds of Tactics to Consider

Direct outreach: Sometimes direct communication can be effective. Sign on/coalition letters, in person/virtual meetings, and calls may work if you have contact information.

Raising awareness through direct action and education: Highly visible public displays can raise awareness and educate on the effects of criminalization of CSSA, though they may carry some of the greatest risks for advocates. Tactics may include marches, banner drops, flyers, protests, sit-ins, flash mobs, and acts of civil disobedience, among other actions.

Leveraging social media, traditional media, and entertainment: it can be difficult to achieve highly visible campaigns via social media, media, and entertainment, but with the right resources, creativity, connections, and some luck we can sometimes make a big impact.

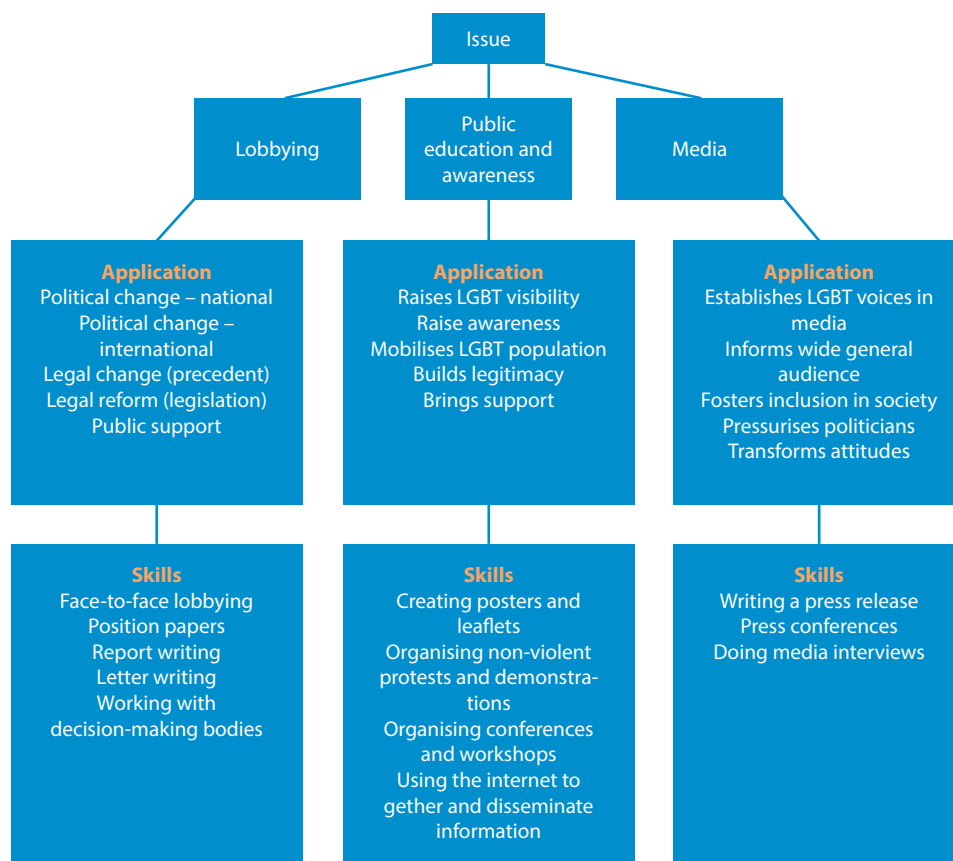
Documenting harms: advocacy is always more compelling when we have more information to work with. Documenting stories, conducting community-based surveillance, and drafting official briefs on the harms caused by criminalization of CSSA helps advocates catch the attention of local, national, and international allies.


Conferences and Workshops: Attending and presenting at a popular LGBTQIA+ oriented conference can help open networking and visibility opportunities. In some cases, establishing your own conference or workshop may be useful.

Taking a case to court (litigation): advocates can successfully change policy by challenging laws and policies in national, regional, or international courts. Even unsuccessful cases can help raise visibility, but it can also lead to significant backlash.

“There are two indicative questions that any lobbying meeting should seek to establish answers to: 1. Does the target agree that something needs to be done? 2. What are they willing to do to?”

-ILGA Europe pg. 79





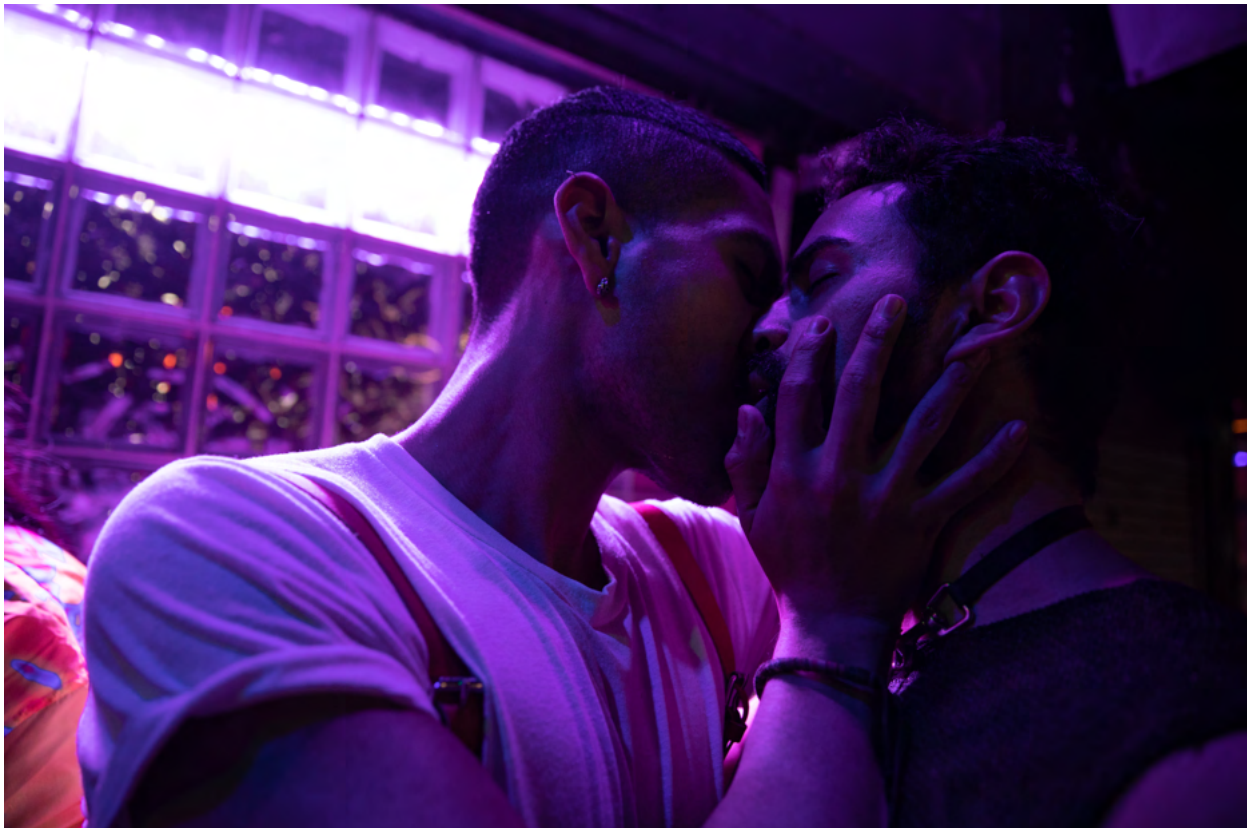
Real World Example: Working with the Media in Malawi

"The Centre for the Development of People...and the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation... developed a media engagement advocacy strategy as part of a broader advocacy campaign that includes strategies such as participating in the review of the constitutionality of the sodomy law, mass action and sensitising parliamentarians and religious leaders.... It included the creation of a Media Task Force on sexual minority rights, setting up an Editor's Forum on human rights in order to ensure sensitised and ongoing profiling of SOGI rights issues in the newspapers, contributing to a regular media column on sexual minorities and a developing media human rights awards.

The advocacy campaign has seen some recent gains, including increased funding for and targeting of sexual minorities for health care services, support from various leaders, including religious leaders, for SOGI rights and increased awareness amongst the broader public on SOGI rights issues."

-ARASA pg. 054


BOTTOM LINE: Consider all kinds of tactics that are likely to persuade your targets into helping you achieve your objectives. Make sure to assess necessary resources, likely counter-messaging from opponents, and potential risks so you can make adjustments to your plans.



6. TAKING TIME TO REFLECT AND ADJUST

Monitoring and evaluation of your advocacy is important. But working in highly changeable and dangerous conditions can make it difficult to review the work we have done. If we feel that we have failed, we may want to avoid retracing our steps; if we feel that we have succeeded, we may be celebrating and unwilling to critique our work.

This is understandable, however, the more that we objectively review our work, the more likely we will be able to improve. Much as a chess player is consistently assessing their position on the board, we need to see if our actions have put us in a better or worse strategic position.



"Funders expect us to engage in monitoring and evaluation, also referred to as "M&E", to show them that we did what we promised. We also engage in M&E for ourselves. We use it to hold ourselves responsible to our communities transparently, learn how to do our work better, help others understand what our advocacy entails, and make the case that we are effective." MPact, Simple Methods of Monitoring and Evaluating for LGBTQI Advocates Everywhere

A simple way to make time to reflect is to plan your evaluation activities before the strategy and actions are being implemented. A few suggestions:

- **Define "success" broadly:** even actions that don't go as planned can still prove to be useful. Look at completed work through several different angles and lenses to see what was most helpful and what you'd like to improve upon in the future.
- **No such thing as "perfect:"** Perfectionism can overcomplicate our work. Advocates should strike a balance between underpreparing and overpreparing.
- **Seek out critical perspectives:** disagreement can be healthy. It's important to avoid "self-confirmation bias" and only seeking out opinions we agree with.

MPact recently developed a brief but comprehensive guide on monitoring and evaluation for LGBTQI advocates that we highly recommend for more information on methods and approaches to reviewing your work. While it uses more evaluation-oriented language on inputs, outputs, and processes, you will see how this aligns with our discussion on resources, targets, objectives, and tactics. It also goes further into the concept of indicators to track your work:

https://mpactglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/MPact-Evaluation_Toolkit_6_spreads.pdf

"One thing I learned the hard way: sometimes we don't need to push too much. When we meet certain individuals who are stubborn, we don't need to go to war with them. Step back, rearrange our thoughts, and then try to plan again. The most direct and harsh way is not always the best."

- Nikolay Luchenkov,
MD, ECOM

7. CONCLUSION

We hope this guide is helpful to advocates for the decriminalization of CSSSA. Even in scenarios where national political leadership is unlikely to respond to advocates, we hope that we've shown how a full planning process can help identify goals, objectives, targets, and tactics toward the foundation of a society that supports the rights and dignity of GBMSM. Even if you do not have time, capacity, and resources for a "perfect" planning process, creating some space to think outside the box, connect with new perspectives, and think through potential risks can increase the potential for success. For more information we encourage you to check out some of the additional advocacy guides and resources listed at the end of this guide.

8. RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

ARASA SOGI + HIV Advocacy Toolkit:

https://hivlawcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ARASA_Toolkit_full_web.pdf

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