Advocacy through Field-based Research (5 days)

Humanitarian, human rights and development practitioners become agents for sustainable change

Geneva, 21-25 May 2012

Course overview

Fieldwork is often under-utilised and under-valued when mobilising for change. The potential of completed research surveys are frequently left untapped when trying to uncover interesting trends or phenomena locally, nationally or even internationally. Using findings efficiently can more effectively create change. The Advocacy through Field-based Research course aims to bridge the gap between collecting data, analysing and applying it successfully for advocacy.

This course is oriented towards those who are interested in acquiring the skills needed to link their organisations’ research directly to advocacy. Conceived in the field, this training draws directly on experiences gained by researchers from a multitude of partners sharing a common need for improved information dissemination.

The 5-day course “Advocacy through Field-based Research” requires participants to conceptualise a project directly linked to their organisation. The participants are asked to come forward with a research project of their own which they want to link to their work. Through the course’s topics and one-on-one work with the trainer, each participant will complete a project proposal and present to a “donor” panel (the trainer and associates). This hands-on approach gives everybody experience researching, writing and creating strategies, but also attracting support for the mobilisation of change.

The course methodology focuses on participative problem solving through associative and creative thinking. One third of the course will focus on theories and explanatory case studies while another third delves into course examples, participants’ field experiences and developing project proposals. The final third is spent in the “field” with practitioners from a university and an advocacy-based organisation; this will contextualise the lessons learnt.

Participants are expected to create SMART proposals, to be motivated, participative, adhering to ethical professional standards while being tolerant of others as they take their cruise through these stimulating subjects. This self-teaching model will prepare participants for the realities of working in the field as well as to be flexible and self-reliant.

Who should attend

This training course is designed for those who already have some experience in research or advocacy related work. It is intended for individuals who have already developed an idea for a project they wish to put into practice.

- Humanitarian and development workers
- General researchers
- Communications professionals
- Project and programme managers
- Policy and decision makers (field and HQ)
- Heads of missions
- Grant writers
- External Relations personnel
Learning objectives:

How you and your organisation will benefit

On this course participants will be able to:

- Define and develop their own project proposals with the direct assistance of experts
- Develop improved research techniques and data management approaches
- Adequately contextualise project methodologies
- Discover new and engaging ways to showcase research findings
- Better identify on-the-ground realities and draw upon field experiences
- Develop advocacy-related project proposals
- Creatively learn to mobilise for change for clients/beneficiaries
- Identify improved leveraging of international resources for local capacity building

Course programme

Day 1

Definitions
- What are the different organisations involved in research and advocacy? (NGO, governmental, think tanks, etc.)
- What are these organisations’ structures? (funding, hierarchy, liaisons, research needs, ideologies of success, etc.)

Research Methods
- What are the research methods and what purpose do they serve?

Linking Research to Advocacy
- What are the conceptions of the link between research and advocacy?

Kick-off for individual Advocacy Project Proposal
- Participants present their project proposal to work on during the entire course. Initial feedback from fellow participants will help put each proposal in context and map out its scope.

Day 2

Research Techniques
- What are research techniques?
- How does each technique fit into the different organisations’ needs?
- What role do humanitarian, development and political institutions play in research methods and outcome?

Research Cycle
- How does the research cycle work?
- How to create meaningful surveys

Case study
- **Barrier Monitoring Unit**, West Bank

Guest Speaker

Independent Work
- Participants draft their own research project proposal and research plan based on lessons learnt (must create concept, complete background research, needs analysis, stakeholder analysis, SWOT analysis, etc.)
| Day 3 | **Advocacy Campaigns and Tools**  
|       | Strength and weakness assessments of web based, social media, humanitarian diplomacy, etc.  
|       | **Creating Advocacy Strategies**  
|       | How to start media campaigns and lobbies  
|       | Importance of creating alliance building and how to do it  
|       | **Guest Speakers from MSF Switzerland**  
|       | **Advocacy Limitations**  
|       | What criteria are needed for an advocacy strategy?  
|       | What are advocacy’s limitations?  
|       | How to build an effective strategy despite those limitations  
|       | **Independent Work**  
|       | Participants add a “concrete” advocacy strategy to their project from the day’s lessons  
| Day 4 | **“Field Trip”**  
|       | Lectures from Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale Lausanne (EPFL) researchers, followed by a question and answer session  
|       | Presentation by an advocacy-based organisation in Geneva on their advocacy strategy  
|       | **Individual Presentations**  
|       | Participants present a “slide/poster” from their proposals to advocacy specialists for comments  
| Day 5 | **Assessing Advocacy Strategies**  
|       | How do advocacy strategies work in practice?  
|       | How to evaluate and change strategies in use?  
|       | **Independent Work**  
|       | Participants put final touches on their projects  
|       | **“Donor” Panel Presentation**  
|       | Participants present their project proposals  
|       | Feedback round from the panel  
|       | **What is the Added Value in Linking Research and Advocacy?**  
|       | Closing Debate  
|       | **Assessment**  
|       | Lessons learnt and individual ways forward  
|       | Future follow ups of projects proposed via group account  
|       | Assessing course and instructor  

*Individual consultation*  
As a participant, you can obtain an individual consultation from international experts on advocacy during the course.