

4) How to get the UN disability Convention ratified in your country!

By the end of Section 4 you should

1. Understand the environment in which your Ratification Campaign will take place
2. Have a good idea why your government should want to Ratify the Convention
3. Know what areas you will need to draw support from to ensure success
4. Have identified a series of first steps in your Campaign

• Environmental Scan:

Before designing a plan to get your government to ratify the new Convention, it will be important to have a clear understanding of the context in which this lobbying campaign will take place. There are many ways to do this and your group is of course free to choose what works best for you. One excellent tool that is widely used around the world is SWOT analysis. For your consideration and convenience, a brief outline of this tool is included here. You can have a look at it before we move to the specifics of developing your “ratification campaign!” As you proceed through these activities we would invite you to use the answers from the exercises completed in sections two and three to help think things through and to develop your own information materials.

• Understanding Your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats – SWOT

Why use SWOT?

SWOT Analysis is an effective way of looking at your environment and identifying the Strengths and Weaknesses, and of examining the Opportunities and Threats your Organization will face in its efforts to get the Convention ratified by your Government. Experience has shown that carrying out an analysis, using the SWOT framework, will help focus your activities in areas where your group is strong, and where the greatest opportunities lie. Similarly, it will help you determine areas of weakness that you may either fix or work around in your efforts to get the Convention ratified in your country.

How to use SWOT:

To carry out a SWOT analysis, write down answers to the following questions. Where appropriate feel free to modify questions:

Consider this from your organization’s point of view and from the point of view of the people you deal with. Don’t be modest - be realistic. If you are having any difficulty with this, try writing down a list of your group’s characteristics. Some of these will hopefully be strengths!

Strengths:

- What are your advantages?
- What do you do well?
- What do other people see as your strengths?

Again, consider this from an internal and external basis - do other people seem to perceive weaknesses that you do not see? It is best to be realistic now, and face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.

Weaknesses:

- What could you improve?
- What do you do badly?
- What should you avoid?

Keep in mind opportunities advent of the this point, it and anticipate possible.

Opportunities:

- What are the good opportunities facing you?
- What are the interesting trends you are aware of?

that many useful will come with the new Convention. At will be helpful to try as many of these as

This sort of analysis will be illuminating - both in terms of pointing out what needs to be done, and in putting problems into perspective.

Threats:

- What obstacles do you face?
- Does your group have all the required skills for the job?

Downloaded from Mind Tools - more details are available on-line at:

<http://www.mindtools.com/swot.html>

Exercise: Why should governments join the new Disability Convention?

We all know why *we* think that the new disability Convention is a good idea, and what *we* hope that it will accomplish. However, governments will need to be convinced why *they* should commit their countries to becoming States Parties. In other words, you may need to help them understand why it is in *their* best interests to sign and ratify the new Convention.

Below is a list of some reasons why a country might want to join – look to see if these reasons might be appropriate for *your* country. For example, you might want to amend depending upon whether your country is a developed or developing country.

- To be a respected country in the world today you need to protect and uphold human rights for all members of society – ratifying this Convention sends a message to the world that your country is serious about human rights for persons with disabilities!
- We all want to live in successful and productive societies – no society can fully achieve this if persons with disabilities are excluded and forced to be a burden instead of being respected and contributing members of society. This Convention provides the guidance countries need to understand how to be inclusive of persons with disabilities in society and support their contributions.
- Ratifying this Convention provides access to a network of mechanisms and activities (such as monitoring activities and international cooperation) that can help countries in their work to uphold the human rights of persons with disabilities.
- Ratifying this Convention and implementing it will help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, to which all countries have committed themselves.
- Ratifying and implementing this Convention can help countries make their development monies go further – whether they are donor or recipient countries.

In addition, what other reasons can you think of to add to this list?

Areas of support required to ensure Ratification of New Disability Convention

With a good understanding now of your environment, it is time to consider in some detail how you can work with your government and other stakeholders to ensure that the Convention is ratified in your country. There are five areas that your organization will need to focus on to ensure a successful campaign. They are outlined briefly in the box below, and then presented in more detail in a matrix that we hope will be useful to you as you design your own campaigns.

Note that the details have been provided describing each tool in the toolbox. Your task is to identify an action, or set of actions, that will bring this tool to life!

Focus Areas for Ratification Campaign

1. Community Support - It will be important to work through the media and other means to get the larger community to support the Convention.
2. Strong relations with key decision makers - Your organization will have to identify the political and community leaders and get their support.
3. Cross-constituency alliances - Alliances with other Human Rights groups will be needed as well. Similarly, alliances may be sought with others who could benefit from a new treaty like parent groups or rehabilitation professionals, senior citizens groups, etc.
4. Strong membership base - You will have to have a strong membership base and your group will have to be on alert to mobilize if support is not readily forthcoming.
5. Relations with individual decision makers on specific issues – Many organizations have developed good relations with the negotiators of the treaty at the UN, this can serve as a base for continued dialogue at home.

Ratification “Toolbox”

Focus	Tool	Description	Issues to consider	Action
Building Community Support	Marketing and Public Relations	Communicate to general public the importance of equality of opportunity for persons with disabilities	Avoid messages that make persons with disabilities seem needy – be sure to set firmly in equality and human rights sort of language	
	Using the media	Get to know reporters and editors	Be careful of those who “think they understand” but do not – their stories can be harmful to the equality message you want to get across	
	Special events	Used to draw profile to an issue and portray persons with disabilities as active participants in the community	You want to project image that persons with disabilities are equal members of the community. Be careful of patronizing	
	“Celebrity champions”	Can add high profile to a cause	Ensure consumer control of agenda	
	Letters to the Editor	Can be used to highlight injustices	Ill-informed letters can be damaging – efforts need to be carefully orchestrated	

Focus	Tool	Description	Issues to consider	Action
Strong Relations with Key Decision Makers	Build / maintain credibility with elected officials	Educate on disability issues and ensure that they become a priority	Politicians have limited understanding of disability issues so be careful not to get co-opted or to settle for less than you can get	
	Appointing community leaders to advisory boards	Appoint community leaders to disability organization board of directors	You don't want your group co-opted by business interests or your consumers intimidated. Nor do you want the group's strategies to be constrained	
	Visible presence of group members at key debates	Attend prepared to bring up disability issues	Many different groups will be trying to be heard - be clear and concise with your message	

Focus	Tool	Description	Issues	Action
Cross-constituency Alliances	Development of alliances and coalitions with other civil society groups	Working with other equity seeking groups	Usually some compromise is required – get to know the group and what it stands for and its approach before forming an alliance	
	Informal networking and information sharing	Let other sectors know what is happening on disability issues. Send news letters and invite others to special events	Time consuming – be careful not to get overextended	
	Networking, joining service clubs, nurturing contacts with influential neighbours, friends and family	Working with others in the community on non-disability issues can be very helpful for relationship building and creating alliances when they are needed	Be careful not to overextend your members	

Focus	Tool	Description	Issues	Action
Strong Membership Base	Good Education	Members need to grasp the potential of the new treaty to effect change	Can be complex and the long term nature of the process will not appeal to everyone	
	Direct Action	Protests and similar actions to be used only when all other tactics fail	Can create enemies, should be a last resort	
	Communication strategy	Need to keep members informed	Takes a lot of staff time and energy	
	Fun events	Need to keep members enthusiastic	Can be costly and difficult when resources are scarce	

Focus	Tool	Description	Issues	Action
Relations with key decision makers	Building and maintaining credibility with key business leaders	Especially helpful in terms of promoting employment opportunities and access to goods and services	Choose the issue carefully so your interests overlap or else you may end up rejected or co-opted	
	Building and maintaining credibility with key bureaucrats	Important to ensure that legislation and policy accurately reflect the issues of persons with disabilities	Carefully choose the correct level of the bureaucracy, so as not to waste time on people who can do nothing for you	
	Domestic human rights law	Can be used to promote access and equality of opportunity	May lead to discussions about no need for new Convention	
	International human rights instruments	Can be used to influence and educate domestic decision makers	May lead to confusion over current efforts	

10 Point Advocacy Meeting Checklist

In order to implement your ratification advocacy plan, you may need to be in contact with a wide variety of different actors, either to provide them with information or to persuade them, or both! The following checklist is designed to help you prepare for a meeting with one of these actors. Always remember: be professional, polite, and positive!

1. Who do you need to contact, and what do you hope to accomplish by meeting with them? (Consider specifically how meeting with this person will further your ratification advocacy plan.)
2. What information do they need? (Different actors will need different kinds and amounts of information, so tailor the information you provide to the specific person you are meeting.)
3. How can I reach them? (Especially if you are meeting with a government official, they may be very busy! You may need to schedule a meeting far in advance in order to fit into their schedule.)
4. What kind of follow-up can I offer? (The best kinds of meetings are ones where you make or build upon a positive relationship with the person you are meeting. One of the best ways to do this is to build a relationship where the person sees you as a valuable resource – someone who can provide useful information and help to guide them in their decision-making.)
5. Who needs to be included in the visit? (Many people may want to participate in the meeting! However, having too many people participate can make it hard to coordinate what you will all do in the meeting. Think about who really needs to be there.)
6. What is your plan; who will do/say what? (This question is particularly important if you have more than one person at the meeting to represent your group, or if this is a joint meeting with other groups. You do not want your participants in the meeting to provide conflicting information, or to appear disorganized. You may want to practice what you will do and say – role-playing with your colleagues can be a useful way to do this.)
7. What specifically will we ask our contact to do? (Always be considerate of what your contact can realistically do, and think about what you can do to support them in fulfilling your request.)
8. What will we leave behind? (Think about the information that your contact needs. Some of the information may be conveyed to them when you speak, but more detailed information could be provided to them in writing. In this way you can keep your meeting short and focused, and they can read the other information later. They can also share your information with their colleagues if they need to. Don't forget to make sure the person knows how to contact you in the future.)
9. Do you need to report to someone about this meeting? (Make sure that colleagues who need to know what happened in the meeting are briefed.)
10. What happens next? (If you have made a commitment to provide more information, or follow-up with your contact in some other way, make sure that you do it when you say you will do it! If your contact will get back to you, make sure they know how to reach you.)