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CCIH ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



CCIH

Christian Connections
for International Health

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INTRODUCTION

WHY SHOULD WE ADVOCATE?

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. (Proverbs 31:8–9, NIV)

We are called as Christians to speak up and advocate on behalf of our communities and people in need. Advocacy is part of who we are as faith actors in health.

[Christian Connections for International Health \(CCIH\)](#) is a global network of Christian organizations and individuals committed to advancing health and wholeness. Motivated by our Christian faith and our values, CCIH envisions a world where all have access to quality healthcare and prevention services. An important part of our work – and the work of our members – is Advocacy, which is why we developed this toolkit.

HOW CAN CCIH HELP?

Knowing where to start and balancing advocacy along with all our other work may seem overwhelming. With this in mind, CCIH developed an advocacy toolkit for members and partners to help you achieve your advocacy goals. We designed it to be customizable to meet your needs, and also aimed for it to be useful for organizations that have been advocating for years, as well as for those who are just beginning.

There is increasing awareness of the importance of faith in daily life and of the influence of faith communities in health. We hope these tools help you leverage your strength as a vital part of the influential faith community.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

CCIH developed companion pieces to complement the SMART Advocacy Guide, which was [designed by global health actors](#) as a way to encourage policy makers to support family planning programs. The toolkit provides ways to draft an advocacy strategy that is **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound** and set an organization up for success. It was important for CCIH to share a toolkit that would be useful for both short-term and long-term goals.

As we shared in this [blog post](#), our members want tools that can be useful for a strategy that advocates local, regional, or national governments, as well as to advocate the engagement of a faith leader audience as well, which the SMART Advocacy guide does. By utilizing this toolkit, we hope members new to advocacy will view it as a helpful guide to start, and those with more established advocacy strategies will be able to incorporate these techniques into their ongoing work.

The supplemental resources we developed as companion pieces to the SMART Advocacy Guide include:

- Tips and suggestions on how to draft [Opinion Pieces](#) for local newspapers, providing a platform for faith leaders and other faith actors to speak out on health. We also share tips on how drafting these pieces can be an opportunity to strengthen relationships with policy makers to support global health initiatives.
- Guidance on developing organizational profiles that can be used for a government audience and for private sector partnerships. Highlighting the significant impact FBOs make in global health and reliance on fact based interventions (with results to prove it).
- A how-to piece on creating an Issue Fact Sheet to present the impact of a health or development issue and why the policy maker or community member should take action. By demonstrating how positive global health outcomes positively impact other sectors, we create leverage to persuade policy makers to make investments in these life-saving initiatives.

We hope that you will try these tools, and look forward to hearing your feedback on how they were helpful, how you customized them to fit your needs, or suggestions you may have for future modifications. We also hope you will share your success stories so that other members might benefit from your experiences and use those lessons in their own advocacy work.

TIPS FOR WRITING AN OPINION PIECE

An opinion piece expresses a person's beliefs or views. It provides a unique opportunity to voice a position in a newspaper's Letter to the Editor or Opposite the Editorial Page (Op-Ed) in order to influence public opinion or policies related to an issue. Think of an opinion piece as a space for declaring a personal point of view to motivate change.

Depending on your context and experience, it may be important to reach out to policymakers and government officials first before writing and submitting an opinion piece to build trust and avoid the appearance of going around them. For those times an opinion piece is the right course of action, it can be a powerful tool to strengthen your advocacy work.

SPEAK UP

The following *Speak Up* acronym provides a few common tips for writing an effective opinion piece.

Seek the target audience.

One of the first decisions to make before writing your opinion piece is: who do you want to read it? For example, an op-ed written for a major general news outlet will be very different from a blog post for a development-focused website. So, before writing, make sure you have a clear idea in mind of where you want to place your piece, who you want to read it, and what kind of background knowledge and beliefs you can assume your readers generally have.

For example, audiences that may be priority for CCIH members include: Members of Congress or Parliaments, including their staff and advisors, Government Administrations, Think Tanks, Church bodies that may support or advocate for health programs; and universities and researchers who study both health and faith topics.

Present an opening “hook.”

The first line of an op-ed is crucial. The opening “hook” can grab the reader’s attention with a strong claim, a surprising fact, a metaphor, a mystery, or a counter-intuitive observation that entices the reader into reading more. The opening also briefly lays the foundation for your argument.²

Examples of hooks for Christians in health: personal stories or accounts of transformational encounters in health, examples of programs that reach underserved populations or the ‘last mile’, statements or quotes from highly respected religious leaders who can pave the way to legitimize talking about faith and health.

Establish a clear topic and theme.

Every successful op-ed piece or column must have a clearly defined topic and theme.²

- Topic: the person, place, issue, incident, or thing that is the primary focus of the column. The topic is usually stated in the first paragraph.
- Theme: another level of meaning to the topic. What’s the big, overarching idea of the column? What’s your point? Why is your point important? The theme may appear early in the piece or it may appear later when it can also serve as a turning point into a deeper level of argument.

Some examples of topics and themes may include: healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies and available family planning services; equitable access to quality health services and medicines; care for all facets of the health of people (mind, body, spirit) and communities; and much more.

Aim to personalize the issue.

You should bring a personal quality to your op-ed. A reader should be able to feel your passion and understand your expertise through the words you use. Do not be afraid to use your own voice, but make sure you establish yourself as a credible professional.³

Keep it brief.

The maximum word count on op-eds for most outlets is no more than 750 words. You should aim to come in just under that limit or even shorter. An editor is more likely to consider publishing if they don't have to spend time cutting words.³

Use simple language.

Unless you are writing for a trade or industry publication, you are writing for an audience that does not have the insider knowledge that you possess, and they aren't going to know the shorthand or acronyms you use with your colleagues. Avoid using jargon and acronyms. You may consider having a non-expert review your draft for clarity.

Plan a strong closing.

Your closing paragraph is just as important as the opening one. Leave the reader with a very clear idea of how your recommendation for change, call to action, or suggested solution is going to make things better.²

REFERENCES

1. Primary Health Care Performance Initiative (PHCPI) Advocacy Toolkit. Available at <https://improvingphc.org/sites/default/files/PHCPI%20Communications%20Toolkit.pdf>
2. Harvard Kennedy School – John F. Kennedy School of Government Communications Program. How to write an op-ed or column. Jeff Seglin. Available at https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/hks-communications-program/files/new_seglin_how_to_write_an_oped_1_25_17_7.pdf
3. Global Social Service Workforce Alliance. Global Advocacy Toolkit for the Social Service Workforce. May 2017. Available at <https://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/resources/global-advocacy-toolkit-social-service-workforce>

RESOURCES AND TEMPLATES

Sample Op Eds

- Kenyan Religious Leaders about Family Planning Family Planning, Matter of Life and Death for Kenya's Women in The Star <https://www.the-star.co.ke/siasa/2019-12-08-family-planning-matter-of-life-and-death-for-kenyas-women/>
- Church Leaders Helping To Boost Family Planning in The Standard <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/opinion/article/2001402179/church-leaders-helping-to-boost-family-planning>

Additional Tips

- How to write a strong and sound opinion article. Abhishek Jha, Data Fellow at the Hindustan Times. Youth Ki Awaaz. January 2018. Available at <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2018/01/how-to-write-an-opinion-piece/>
- Op-Eds. Harvard Kennedy School – John F. Kennedy School of Government Communications Program, Communications Consulting and Resources, Writing Resources. Available at <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/more/about/leadership-administration/academic-deans-office/communications-program/consulting#op-eds>
- Op-Ed Writing: Tips and Tricks. The Op Ed Project, Available at <https://www.theopedproject.org/>
- Tips and tricks for writing opinion articles. Centre for Advanced Studies in Policy Research (CASPR) Foundation [https://www.casprindia.org/\(based in India\). Undated](https://www.casprindia.org/(based%20in%20India).Undated). Available at <http://oped.casprindia.org/images/pdf/Tips.pdf>

TEMPLATE: LETTER TO THE EDITOR

[Letterhead, if you have it]

Date

Name of Editor

Name of Publication

Office Address

City, State, Zip

To the Editor of [Name of Publication]

First Paragraph:

- Grab the reader's attention – your opening sentence is very important. It should tell readers what you're writing about, and make them want to read more
- Explain what the letter is about at the start – tell your key point at the beginning

Middle Paragraph/s:

- Explain why the issue is important. Explain the issue and its importance simply to those who do not share your interest or background, using plain language that most people will understand.
- Give evidence for any praise or criticism. If you are writing a letter discussing a past or pending action, be clear in showing why this will have good or bad results.
- State your opinion about what should be done. You can write a letter just to "vent," or to support or criticize a certain action or policy, but you may also have suggestions about what could be done to improve the situation. If so, add these as well. Be specific, the more good reasons you can give to back up your suggestions, the better.

Final Paragraph:

- Summarize issue and why you are writing.
- Make sure you stay within the word limit and keep the entire letter brief. Shorter letters have a better chance of being published.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Your name, typed

Your Title

Your Address

Your City, State, Zip

Your email and/or phone number

Source: This template was adapted from the [Community Tool Box – Organizing for Effective Advocacy online guide](#). The template is available [here](#).

TEMPLATE: OP-ED Structure & Guidance

Heading

TITLE

DATE

AUTHOR, TITLE, CREDENTIALS

The Opener

- The first paragraph of your op-ed should set up the problem.
- Include data and how the problem affects the community.
- Conclude the paragraph with a sentence that hints at finding a solution.

The Body

- The second paragraph of the op-ed should present your solution.
- Show how the effectiveness of the solution is supported by data.
- Provide examples of specific initiatives supported by the author.

The Call to Action

- The concluding paragraph acts as a call to action. It reminds readers that solving the problem will take time, dedication and cooperation. It invites readers to become part of the solution in their communities.

Source: This template was adapted from the California Medical Association Opinion Editorial “Op-Ed” Template available [here](#).

CREATING AN ISSUE SHEET TO USE IN YOUR ADVOCACY

When advocating to your community and government for support for an issue you care about, it is helpful to introduce the problem and who is affected, give examples of solutions and suggest next steps.

Think of your content as addressing the three P's: **Problem, Progress, and Plan of Action.**

The Problem

- **State the public health issue, including the affected populations.**
- Using HIV/AIDS as an Example:
 - Sub-Saharan Africa is home to more than two-thirds of people living with HIV infections globally.¹
 - Every week, around 5,500 young women aged 15 to 24 become infected with HIV.¹
- Present key facts and statistics on the impact of the public health issue.
 - In 2020, 1.5 million people became newly infected with HIV.¹
 - This disease claimed 690,000 lives in 2020.¹

The Progress

- **Identify evidence-based solutions.**
 - Implementing universal antiretroviral treatment (ART) for all pregnant and breastfeeding women living with HIV optimizes maternal health and protects newborns from getting HIV.¹
 - Social Network Strategy (SNS) is an evidence-supported approach to engage and motivate a person to accept HIV testing. This approach is based on the underlying principle that persons within the same social network who know, trust, and can exert influence on each other share similar HIV risk behaviors. SNS is particularly useful to recruit marginalized and/or hidden persons at risk for HIV.²

- **Highlight successful programs.**
 - DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe) – A public-private partnership aimed at reducing rates of HIV among adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in the highest HIV burden countries.¹
 - Programs to encourage Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) reduce HIV transmission.¹

The Plan of Action

- **Propose action steps to improve health outcomes.**

What Is Your Ask?

“The Ask” is what you are asking for, or what you would like to see happen. Decision makers are inundated with people asking for more money for their favorite projects. They might be able (and more willing) to give support in other ways. While many of us automatically think of increasing funding to a particular issue as the answer, policy change can also have a very important impact. Asking for a change in policy, rather than for more funding can be an easier path to cultivating a relationship with government officials.

Here are some sample policy changes that are not related to a specific health issue; rather, they cut across development policy as a whole that an organization may ask for:

- Reviewing and fully staffing government offices to carry out work in the area you care about.
- Clarification of organizational authorities and mandates (for example, the New Partnerships Initiative and localization guiding USAID’s work; or clarifying the pros and cons of vertical “silo” funding versus horizontal “system” funding).

- Reviewing who's at the table when programs are designed or decisions are made. Is the government including faith leaders and local voices in policy development? Is the government reducing compartmentalization of data or information flows that decrease efficiency? Does it require private sector (including non profit and faith actors) investment and inclusion?
- Regulatory review – overcoming unnecessary or inefficient regulations that hamper innovation, implementation, or scaling of successful initiatives.

Policy Asks Related to a Specific Health Issue, in this case HIV:

- Scale up effective prevention to populations at high risk of HIV, especially adolescent girls and young women, in areas hardest hit by HIV (e.g., sub-Saharan Africa).¹
- Make treatment available to everyone living with HIV, to save lives and prevent transmission.¹

Asking for Increased Funding

When advocating for funding, always make the connection how the increase will lead to long term benefits, cost offsets, and increased efficiency. Consider asking for funding to address 'causes' of a problem rather than only the "symptoms."

Present fact sheets and other evidence-based resources to show how government-funded programs saved and improved lives.

Here are examples from Tuberculosis programs:

- In 2020, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as part of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), supported 87,000 eligible children to be initiated on TB preventive treatment (TPT) with 86% of those initiated completing treatment.³

- CDC and the International Union Against TB and Lung Disease have established a global, virtual platform with nine Ministries of Health to provide a community of learning and practice for childhood and adolescent TB in countries hardest hit by the epidemic.³

References

1. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). HIV Remains a Leading Cause of Death Worldwide [Fact sheet].
<https://www.cdc.gov/globalhivtb/images/DGHT-HIV-Factsheet.pdf>
2. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). Social Network Strategy for HIV Testing Recruitment.
<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/effective-interventions/diagnose/social-network-strategy/index.html?Sort=Title%3A%3Aasc&Intervention%20Name=Social%20Network%20Strategy>
3. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). Tuberculosis in Children & Adolescents [Infographic].
<https://www.cdc.gov/globalhivtb/images/peds-infographic.pdf>

Organizational Profile Content Guidance



EXPLAIN YOUR MISSION

What is the mission of your organization? What does your organization do?

This is essentially an "about us" section to share important facts about your organization with others.

USE SIMPLE DESCRIPTIVE TEXT AND PHOTOS



Avoid using jargon in your text. Make it clear and simple to understand. Think of this as telling a story about your organization.

Include high-quality photos to help with visualization. Extremely small file sizes generally indicate a low quality photo. If the file size of your photo is lower than 50 KB (kilobytes) look closely at the image to make sure it is not blurry.



EXPLAIN THE VALUE YOUR ORGANIZATION ADDS

What value does your organization add to your community and field of work?

Explain the value you add and how this is achieved.

SUMMARIZE WHY YOUR ORGANIZATION OR SERVICE IS UNIQUE



What makes your organization unique or different than others? What services do you provide that sets you apart from others?

Summarize this in a short paragraph.

SHARE RESULTS OR OUTCOMES OF YOUR WORK



Share results and outcomes of your work that you've seen within your community. Sharing this will demonstrate the importance of your work.

This can be done through sharing statistics and data. Example: number of people helped.

SHARE TESTIMONIALS



Share quotes from individuals or organizations you have helped through your work. Share their story.

Sharing testimonials will connect others with your work.