NGO FORA ADVOCACY GUIDE: DELIVERING JOINT ADVOCACY
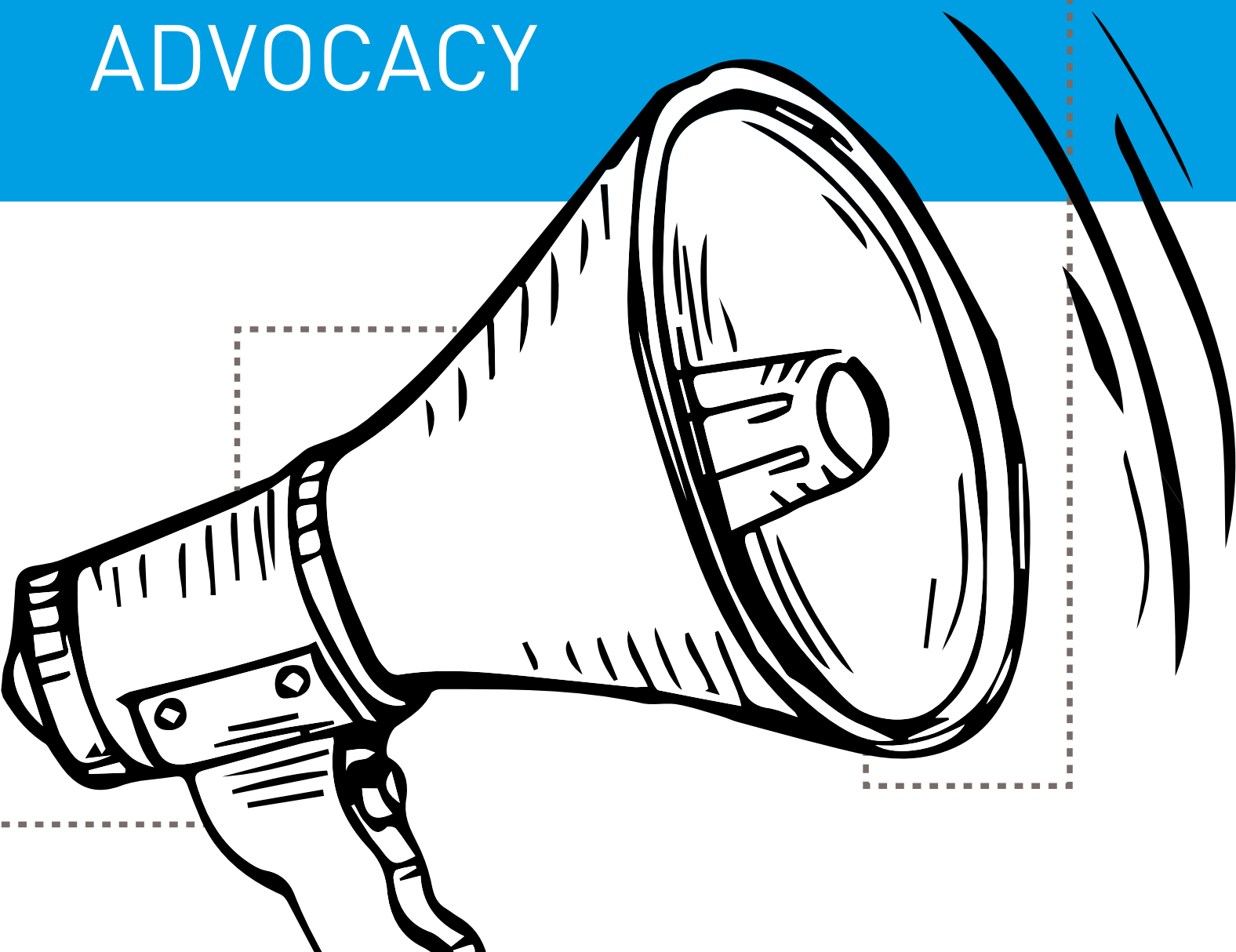
ICVA is a global consortium of humanitarian NGOs promoting principled and effective humanitarian action.
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 ICVA

In 1962, in response to the post World War II forced displacement, NGOs came together to establish the NGO consortium ICVA. Since then ICVA has grown into a diverse network of humanitarian NGOs operating at global, national and local levels. ICVA advocates for principled humanitarian action, enhanced recognition by governments and international organizations of the vital role of NGOs, and high quality partnerships among humanitarian stakeholders.

Based on its 2015-2018 strategy, ICVA promotes and facilitates NGO engagement in the development of the humanitarian sector, with a focus on Forced Displacement, Humanitarian Financing, Humanitarian Coordination and Humanitarian Partnership.

1.2 NGO Fora

In many humanitarian crises, NGOs come together to establish networks and Fora to coordinate NGO efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance.

NGO Fora are active in a range of areas: facilitating NGO engagement in the humanitarian response system; ensuring an effective, inclusive and contextualized response; and promoting collective NGO advocacy. By working together, NGOs can have a stronger voice on issues of concern.

NGO fora have demonstrated their capacity to engage in highly relevant advocacy action, but have also highlighted their potential to do more and better. Representatives of NGO for a have specifically detailed the need for support to develop advocacy capacity and collective advocacy initiatives to strengthen their collective voice to government authorities, UN agencies, donors etc.

1.3 Using the Guide

While each NGO fora is unique in its membership, structure, scope and strategic direction, this brief guide to delivering joint advocacy has been developed to be relevant to humanitarian NGO fora of any size or scale. The components within the guide can be used together, or individually, and may be tailored to the needs of each coordination fora.

The guide looks specifically at components of humanitarian advocacy from a perspective of delivering joint NGO advocacy; it is tailored to the collective advocacy work of NGO Fora. There are abundant resources available on advocacy, but much less on facilitating joint advocacy in practice and the specificities and dynamics of NGO forum humanitarian advocacy. This guide can be used alongside the plethora of publically available generic advocacy resources and tools, some of which are listed under resources for reference.

2. JOINT NGO FORA ADVOCACY

NGO Fora are in a powerful place to advocate for improvements in the lives of affected populations. For many NGO Fora, collective advocacy is one of the key areas of work the forum delivers with and for its members. Other work areas include humanitarian coordination, representation, security services, networking, research and data analysis.

Some NGO Fora have very clear and defined advocacy strategies and work-plans, whilst others operate more informally. Being clear on collective advocacy priorities, approaches and plans is essential to delivering effective joint advocacy – both proactive (i.e. planned) and responsive (i.e. responding to a specific event/incident/decision).

NGO Fora can increase the impact of advocacy efforts by bringing in more expertise, knowledge, resources as well as all the collective connections, relationships and contacts of members. NGO Fora can collect detailed data and create powerful, evidenced based joint messages and products, which can increase the national and global reach, power and credibility of advocacy efforts.

A voice that represents many actors, that is echoed by many, and that is clear and evidence based, is a powerful voice that can effectively influence third parties and targets.

2.1 Defining Humanitarian Advocacy

Developing a common understanding of joint advocacy based on an agreed definition is an important first step. Whilst there are many available definitions, the following covers all the main elements.

*Advocacy is a **deliberate process,** based on demonstrated **evidence,** to directly and indirectly **influence** decision-makers, stakeholders, and relevant audiences (third parties and allies), to **support** and **implement actions** that contribute to a specific goal e.g. effective humanitarian action.*

The concept of 'humanitarian diplomacy' as defined by IFRC, is also useful.

*Humanitarian diplomacy is **persuading** decision makers and opinion leaders to act at all times in the **interests of vulnerable people**, and with full respect for fundamental **humanitarian** principles*.

3. COMPONENTS FOR EFFECTIVE JOINT ADVOCACY

The type of components, and the level of detail within each component will be specific to each forum, depending on their size, scale and remit.

Each component will support the forum in delivering effective, timely, joint advocacy, and specifically to mitigate some of the pitfalls of joint advocacy such as being: disjointed, overburdened, pulled apart, speaking with separate voices, discredited, subject to repetitive discussions on activities, approaches, and messages, used as a forum for individual member advocacy objectives, exposed to negative consequences or repercussions.

3.1 NGO Fora

NGO Fora structure and processes, while not specific to advocacy, will facilitate the process of delivering joint advocacy. These components are detailed below:

3.1.1 Strategic Plan

The forum strategic plan, whilst potentially a simple document, is an important foundation for joint advocacy. It will cover a **specific time period**, laying out the overall organizational **vision**, values, overarching **goal** (that the forum will work to contribute to) and **specific objectives** (short terms, specific that the forum will seek to achieve).

Developed through a process, involving all members and partners, it acts as a **core document** to guide the work of the forum enabling members to be united by a defined common purpose and direction. It is a tool for monitoring and accountability, providing a benchmark for assessing progress as well as a guide on forum resourcing requirements. It should be **regularly reviewed** and updated through participatory processes and stakeholder engagement.

Forum advocacy should be aligned with the strategic plan and contribute to achieving the strategic objectives.

3.1.2 Governance Structure

Effective forum advocacy needs to be based on member consensus and to be timely. To make timely and transparent decisions amongst many organizations, clear processes are required. Whist advocacy processes and procedures (see Advocacy SOPs) provide specific guidance for a given product/activity, a clear forum governance structure that defines reporting lines, decision making and approval processes and lines between the steering committee, membership, forum working groups and the secretariat – as relevant to each forum – is essential.

3.2 Advocacy Components

This section briefly details the core components an NGO forum can put in place to support effective joint advocacy.

3.2.1 Advocacy Strategy

An advocacy strategy document provides essential focus and clarity to advocacy efforts. While it requires a time commitment to develop, this can be tailored to the size and resources of each forum, and the initial time investment will pay off by its facilitative role in focusing advocacy efforts and providing continuity overtime as members and staff change. Linked to delivering against the forum strategic plan, the forum advocacy strategy may include the following:

- Overall **advocacy goal** (medium to long terms vision for change)
- Specific **advocacy objectives** (short term, specific and measurable, that clearly state the specific policy change required to achieve the objective)
- **Methods**, **activities, communication channels** (briefing papers, face-to-face meetings, conferences, articles in targeted publications, etc.)
- **Targets** (the decision makers) that have the power to make the change)
- **Allies** (people, or groups of people, who have the same interests and/or the capacity or resources to help)
- **Third parties** (people and/or groups who can deliver and/or repeat the forum's key messages to targets).

The advocacy strategy should be developed and agreed through a participatory process with forum members and stakeholders and should be regularly reviewed and updated. New members can receive a briefing on it. For further guidance see Section 4 *'Developing a Joint Advocacy Strategy'*.

Advocacy Strategy Narrative Example

Introduction: xxx

Objective 1: xxx
- Objective 1 Outcomes: xx
- Objective 1 Forum position: xx
- Objective 1 Approach: xx
- Objective 1 Key message: xx
- Objective 1 Targets, allies and third parties: xx

3.2.2 Advocacy Work Plan/ Plan of Action

Developed with the advocacy working group through a participatory process and endorsed by the forum's members, the advocacy work plan breaks down the advocacy strategy into **time bound activities with responsibility for their delivery/coordination** clearly assigned to members and staff.

The advocacy work plan may be developed annually or six monthly depending on the size and resources of the forum. It can be presented in a spreadsheet or table and may be organized by the advocacy objectives defined in the Advocacy Strategy.

3.2.3 Advocacy Human Resources

In the strategic plan and/or the advocacy strategy, the human resources required to deliver defined objectives and results need be indicated. Human resources may be from the forum members, the secretariat or, a combination of the two. The advocacy work plan will define the role of each person/position engaged in the advocacy work.

There must be a link between the strategy and the resourcing of the forum. Where resourcing is lower than required, decisions need to be made on increasing human resources or reducing the scope and ambition of the strategy to meet the size, scale and funding of the forum.

Example of a basic NGO Forum Advocacy Action Plan

NGO Forum Advocacy Action Plan 2016				
Objective 1: Increased awareness of the work of NGOs by 2018				
#	Activity	Responsible Agency/Staff	Date	Status/Outcome
1.1	Media Roundtable 1	Lead: Help4two	June 2016	Complete See report
1.2	Media Round Table 2	Lead: Help4 two	November 2016	Complete See report
1.3	*NGOs in action* public exhibition hosted in partnership with the Government Earthquake response authority	Lead: Right2west	January 2017	Event planned 89 NGOs holding stands 9000 invitations sent
1.4	Quarterly thematic opinion editorials in three national print media	Q1: Sight4u Q2: Health1st Q3: ProtectAll Q4 Redflag	March 2016 June 2016 September 2016 December 2016	Complete – Dailystar Complete –Newsnow Complete – not published Complete –Dailystar
1.5	Bi-annual partner networking events	1: Secretariat 2: Secretariat	May 2016 November 2016	Completed Postponed to Jan 2017
Objective 2: ……				

3.2.4 Representation Matrix, Roles and Responsibilities

Representation is a key part of most NGO Fora work, where a small number of forum members/secretariat staff represent the whole forum/NGOs at external meetings, workshops and events. Being clear of who represents the forum and the parameters for the representation is essential, particularly given that representation and advocacy are intrinsically linked.

The Representation Matrix, Roles and Responsibilities can contain information that addresses each of these questions:

- What is the process to assign representatives for standing meetings such as the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) or Funding Boards?
- What is the process to assign representatives for ad-hoc meetings such as Emergency Director Missions or Government briefings?
- Does a representative represent only the forum or also his/her own agency?
- Can a member represent the forum alone or must there always be a second member?
- How is the representative supported with the agreed member position/input in advance of the meeting?
- How are representatives required to feedback to members?

The Representation Matrix, Roles and Responsibilities can also define the agreed response in circumstances a representative fails to meet the responsibilities – for example, not attend meetings, not provide feedback, represents his/her own agency and not the forum, represent in contradiction to the forum strategy and positioning, etc.

3.2.5 Advocacy Risk Assessment

Whilst advocacy can achieve great impact, advocacy activities and approaches can also carry high risk. Having an established procedure in place **to assess** and make informed choices on tactics and messages, based on the context, that make informed choices on risks – to the forum, member organizations, staff and affected populations – of any given approach, is a core basic component of advocacy work. It can be a simple process that involves anticipation of possible difficulties and determining acceptable risk levels for each advocacy activity, method, and message.

Some risk decisions may be long term, and span across all advocacy work – informing the general forum advocacy approach – for example quiet diplomacy with decision makers *versus* open use of the media to expose issues. Most risk decisions will be specific to each individual advocacy activity, product, and message.

The risk assessment procedure can be an informal discussion, or a clearly defined and well documented process; either way it may include:

- **Who** is responsible to lead the risk assessment
- The **format** a risk assessment will take
- Who the assessment will be discussed with
- How the process for making the decisions is taken i.e. which stakeholders are involved - secretariat, advocacy working group, steering committee/board, members etc.

Examples of risk consideration include:

- Is the information correct – incorrect information will affect forum credibility/reputation
- Are there risks for security of staff and assets? – if state/non-state actors take issue with messaging, might they harm office, staff or assets
- Are there risks for access – if actors take issue with messaging might they stop programming, restrict travel, withdraw permissions etc.?

A basic table can be used to document the risk assessment. Alternatively, a more detailed method that gives each factor a score of 1-5 or 1-10, and that then multiplies the scores to give the overall risk score, can be used. Once risks are identified, actions can be considered to mitigate the risk.

Example of a basic risk assessment table:

Activity: 5 media articles in national print media on the IDP response in Aziria			
#	Risk (lists all the possible risks)	Likely impact (how likely is it this risk will happen low, medium or high)	Likelihood of occurring	Mitigating actions
1. Risks to forum			
1.1	Forum data is discredited	Medium	Low	Used verified and triangulated data only
1.2	…			
2. Risks to members			
2.1	An individual member organization is singled out and targeted	High	Low	Make no reference to any individual organization
2.2	…			

3.2.6 Monitoring and Impact Assessment Framework

The Monitoring and Impact Assessment Framework is a core component of advocacy work.

Monitoring measures progress in delivering activities and achieving specific results in an advocacy strategy/work plan. It is often measured by tracking outputs against standard indicators. For example: what materials were produced, asking for what, to which targets, using what communication channels.

Impact assessment seeks to measure the change that resulted from the advocacy in terms of policy and practice influenced/changed. It is often measured by recording against standard indicators, such as: who did what as a result of the advocacy and what changed. Example impact indicators are: # target policies amended, or # of requested legislation amendments accepted.

Monitoring and impact assessment should take place regularly and can, for example, be built into **monthly reporting requirements** to allow continuous monitoring. Information then feeds back into advocacy strategy and work plan review and, in addition, provides essential information for member and donor reporting. To ease reporting pressure, indicators can be mirrored in funding proposals, so that donor-reporting requirements are linked to internal monitoring and impact assessment.

3.2.7 Advocacy Working Group (AWG)

Made up of a subset of members, the roles and responsibilities of this group will be defined in specific **Terms of Reference** (ToR), along with the authority levels and reporting lines. The establishment of the group, the ToR and the reporting lines will be approved by forum members. There may be space in the group for each forum member to have one place in the group, or it may be a limited group made up specifically of members' advocacy experts.

The group will likely be the focal point for development, review and monitoring of the advocacy strategy and advocacy work plans. It may lead to the development and update of key messages and advocacy products, prior to them proceeding to full member review and endorsement. They may act as the advocacy advisory body to the forum membership and board. See *Annex 1 for an example of AWG standard operating process.*

3.3 Additional Advocacy Components

The section details advocacy components that will add value and effectiveness to joint advocacy initiatives that may be developed, relative to forum size and scale.

3.3.1 Advocacy Products, Templates and Branding

Advocacy products, templates and branding the forum produces need to be defined. Each product is defined and a template is created to ensure uniformity. How the forum brands each product (e.g. forum logo/donor logos/ member logos etc.) is agreed. Footnotes are included that specify reproduction and onwards circulation limitations. Some products may also have set schedule for review/update.

The table *Examples of Forum Products* provides examples of forum products.

Examples of Forum Products

Product Name	Product Description
Briefing Paper	Ssummarizes for members and at times partners, a particular humanitarian issue/ response. Could include the background, identification of the problem, data on the topic, describe what works and make recommendations, key messages/ asks for improvements /actions. E.g. New Displacement Briefing: background; # Forum members responding; issues in response; key asks (advocacy) to whom.
Internal Position	An internal document that outlines the member joint position/action regarding a particular matter. Internal Positions support the coordination process between members and seek to deliver a common approach/ response to issues/ topics.
External Position/ Statement	Communicates a clear joint position supported by information for the improvement of policy or practice to external partners and stakeholders.
Information sheet	Presents forum data in terms of trends, analysis and info graphics e.g. NGO registration data, member presence data, NGO country summary etc., in a simple format which provides analysis and emphasizes key points concisely, normally including Forum Key Messages on the data set/topic.
Talking points/ Q and A	Provides staff/ members with the background, context and pertinent points on a given topic for use in meetings and public speaking. Supports staff and members in Forum agreed positioning when engaging externally. Can be developed for key meetings with Government, UN Counterparts as well as in relation to media engagement.

3.3.2 Advocacy Processes and Standard Operating Procedures (SoP)

The **exact member agreed process** for each product or/and advocacy activity under taken by the forum need to defined. Defined processes/SoP's should include a standard, transparent, approach to the development, sign off, and dissemination of internal and external advocacy products, processes and activities. A clear process helps to ensure timely development and dissemination and provide transparency in the process.

For example, a forum SoP for a **press release** might include:

- who drafts it
- who reviews it
- how members receive and comment on the draft
- how comments are addressed
- how members sign off on the final version
- timelines for each step
- what happens when a member does not sign off on the final version
- how the final product is disseminated and by who.

See *Annex 1 for an example set of Forum Advocacy SOPs.*

3.3.3 Key Messages

Key advocacy messages are needed to support consistent positioning of the forum and members, as staff change overtime and for dissemination within member organizations. It can include tailored key messages for specific targets/ allies/ third parties. It should be **regularly updated** at set intervals as well as each time a forum key message is developed or updated.

3.3.4 Data Sources and Evidence Collection Mechanisms

Several NGO Fora have in place member-agreed processes and mechanisms to gather member organizational and/or operational data linked to key advocacy priorities.

Data collection mechanisms should be clearly defined, with standardized data collection formats to enable data cleaning, compilation and analysis. When data collection is in place, members may be required to share specific data sets, at set intervals, as a pre-condition of forum membership unless otherwise agreed for a given reason.

3.4 Advocacy Self-Assessment

A good starting point, after reviewing the basic and advanced components, is to undertake a simple forum advocacy self-assessment. This could be done with a small group of forum members, or with the forum advocacy working group, the forum steering committee/board, or by/together with forum staff members

An example process is included in the Advocacy Self-Assessment box:

In addition to these components, NGO Fora could consider what needs to be in place to ensure that members talk with one voice – what is needed in terms of internal member coordination to support effective joint advocacy.

For example:

- Internal talking points, annotated meeting agendas with the agreed forum positions.
- Monthly member bulletins with a forum advocacy update section.
- Forum internal positions summary document shared with members monthly.
- Forum external position summary document shared with member monthly.
- Advocacy activity and impact update at member meetings.
- Individual member meetings, briefings for new members, briefing for HQ missions, etc.

Each forum member will have different levels of resources and experience as well as different internal challenges. Some members will be able to contribute a high level of expertise, time and resources to joint advocacy, whilst many will have limited, even no, expertise, time and resources to contribute. Each member will come to the forum with different motivations and priorities. Balancing expectations and keeping joint advocacy on-track to achieve defined joint advocacy objectives is a constant and long-term process.

ADVOCACY SELF-ASSESSMENT

- What components do you have in place already?
- For those components in place is there a need/potential to develop them further, if so how?
- What is not in place?
- For those components, not in place, which ones would be relevant to your forum?

Map out a development timeline, with assigned responsibilities and timelines for components for further development and for new

3. Developing a Joint Advocacy Strategy

The previous section defines the various components a forum may have in place to support effective collective advocacy. A basic key component is the Advocacy Strategy; investing time and resources in planning is critical to delivering effective joint advocacy, and ensuring accountability to the membership in and through the process. For NGO Fora this requires a detailed participatory approach for each component of the strategy.

This section provides brief guidance and examples of processes that may be followed.

Ideally the forum will have in place a strategic plan, identifying the key forum objectives, which the advocacy strategy will then build from. Whilst the advocacy strategy will define the key proactive joint goal, objectives, messages and approaches, much NGO Fora advocacy will also be responsive and the advocacy strategy should define the parameters for responsive advocacy. It is key to consider the constant engagement and involvement of members in processes and decision making at each stage of the strategy development and subsequent implementation.

Developing a Joint Advocacy Strategy
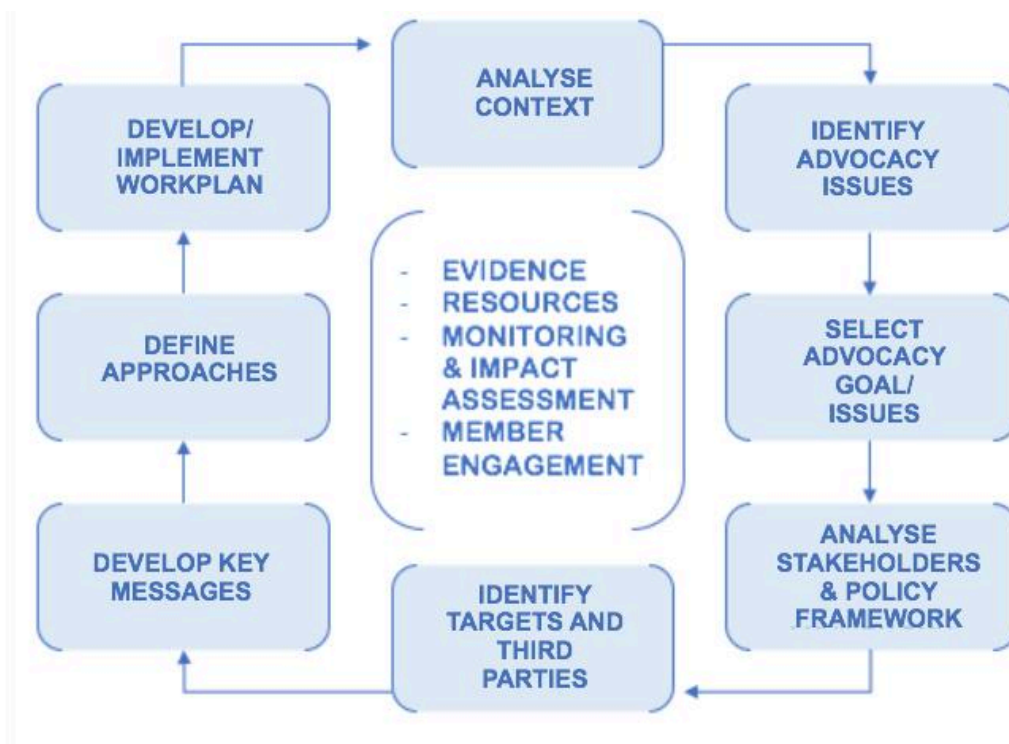
The steps in this section assume there is no forum strategic plan, or that the strategic plan does not clearly identify collective advocacy issues. Where the forum has a strategic plan in place, this stage will be lifting the key issues to be addressed by advocacy from the strategic plan and following the process with members to validate the issues as the basis of forum advocacy.

In order to **gain member input** to identify shared advocacy issues where the forum can add clear value, the NGO forum can:

- Develop and disseminate an **online member survey** (e.g. what are your top priorities for joint forum advocacy? On what issues, can the forum add most value, why?) Analyse responses to identify common priorities, disseminate report.
- Hold a **meeting** with member advocacy focal points to discuss/validate/gain further inputs and develop them into focused, clear priority issues.
- Discuss and finalise agreed priority issues in a **full member meeting**.

- For each issue agreed, the strategic added value of engaging on the issue as a forum should be defined along with the forum internal position on the issue.

Agreed issues should be:

- **Consistent** with the forum vision, mission and overall strategic priorities.
- Directly or indirectly of interest to a majority of forum members.
- Focus on common space amongst members.
- An issue, for which the forum has a strategic added value and the ability directly or via members/third parties to make a change on.
- An issue, for which the forum can collect evidence on (from verified sources or from members) to represent the issue well.
- Change on the issue will result in a real improvement in the lives of vulnerable communities.
- Change on the issue will improve humanitarian response.

Advocacy Goal
The medium or long-term vision for change

Advocacy Objectives
The short-term, specific and measurable, that clearly state the change being sought

The steps that could be undertaken are:

- Establish an **advocacy/member working group** to develop the **goal and objectives** and develop measurable outcomes for each objective;
- Share them with member advocacy focal points for feedback;
- Discuss and secure a finalised draft in the forum steering committee meeting;
- Present for discussion to the whole membership;
- Share with the membership for non-objection/endorsement.

The **timeframe** for achieving the strategic advocacy objectives should be specified – two or more years is realistic for the overarching objectives depending on the wider context. This is broken down in the work plan/action plan to weekly/monthly actions/activities/outcomes.

The **legal basis in national law/ international law** of the advocacy objective should be researched and specified along with which humanitarian principles apply – to give the specific legal/policy/good practice basis for the advocacy.

For instance:

Overall Goal: Persons affected by conflict and disasters have timely access to effective humanitarian assistance

Objective 1: Improved public perception of NGOs to support acceptance and access by xxx

Objective 2: Increased awareness among stakeholders of key humanitarian principles by xxx

Objective 3: Improved bureaucratic operative environment for NGOs to facilitate access by xxx

This is a critical stage. Achieving change will be dependent in knowing in detail who has the power to make and influence change – both in theory and in practice. As a membership forum, there is extensive information on, and access to, a wide range of stakeholders via membership knowledge and connections. Leveraging this value is essential to effective joint advocacy.

For **each advocacy objective**, a group of member advocacy focal points complete the below components. It is critical to complete these processes in detail and identify where the decision-making power/potential for change lies:

- Complete a **stakeholder mapping** (to map out actors that are engaged on issues and involved in decisions making/influencing an issues);
- Complete a **power analysis** (to map out power relations, relationships between stakeholders and identify the key stakeholders based on access and influence);
- Use the two processes (stakeholder mapping and power analysis) to **identify targets**, **third parties and allies** to work with for each objective.
- Based on the above, decide who the forum will focus advocacy efforts on for each objective. Note that if there are too many targets, efforts could be spread too thin. The goal is to identify the targets are the most important/influenceable given the resources of the forum.
- Complete a **target analysis** for each key target – who are they, what do they think, what's their current position on the objective, why, what is mostly likely to influence them?

Circulate all drafts to members, electronically or in a series of meetings to gain further input based on their knowledge and connection.

STEP 4:
BUILD COLLECTIVE KEY ADVOCACY MESSAGES

For each advocacy objective, the forum should follow their set process to develop and **define the joint internal position on the issue**. This internal position will define the issue, the data and the legal/humanitarian principle position on the issue. The internal position should be developed with and endorsed by members. The forum position on each advocacy objective should be specified in a brief narrative along with the key message/s. As each stakeholder is different, there is no 'one size fits all key message', as such, the main key message/s form the foundation and are then tailored to the interests/role of each stakeholder when advocacy activities/products are developed.

In an NGO forum, it is essential that all members know and support the overall key messaging (and underlying joint positioning), as well as each updated version, and the stakeholder targeted key messages. A clear system should be in place for how key messages are developed, reviewed and endorsed by the membership.

Key messages should be:
- Agreed and known by all fora members
- Clear, concise and consistent
- Based on evidence and stand up to detailed questioning and criticism
- Include the requested action
- Updated regularly and re-endorsed by the membership each time.

The basic formula for a tailored key message is
STATEMENT + EVIDENCE + ACTION
REMEMBER

- Be concise
- Avoid Jargon
- Be Evidence based
- Consult extensively
- Use consistent formatting and style
- Proof read, then do it again and again
- Be consistent, over time, or justify changes clearly
- Be clear – what do you want the target/third party to do?
- Manage risks - consider possible unintended consequences

STEP 5:
METHODS, APPROACHES, ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Finally, the appropriate methods, approaches and communications channels to deliver the advocacy message to the defined target/third party audience are determined, clearly set out and agreed by the membership.

The NGO forum should agree the approach for each advocacy objective and/or each advocacy activity and/or each advocacy message. This will include discussions such as private *versus* public advocacy, levels of engagement, direct target engagement *versus* third party mobilisation and will involve assessment of risk on different approaches.

For example, will a specific advocacy channel for an advocacy message increase the risk to humanitarian workers and affected populations,

what would be a lower risk option, would this option reduce the likelihood of achieving the advocacy outcomes, is the decrease in impact balanced out by the decrease in risk?

This step will also involve determining the standard **advocacy products** the forum delivers (research papers, briefing papers, fact sheets, round tables, etc.). The defined method, approaches and communications channels section of the strategy document provides a basis to break down the advocacy objectives into a Joint Advocacy Action/Work-plan. This can be done though a dedicated member/advocacy focal point meeting/workshop and will assign responsibilities for delivering each activity. Meetings should take place on a regular basis to review progress and update the work-plan.

5. Engaging with Stakeholders: Going Global

Critical to effective advocacy is having either (a.) **direct access**, or, (b.) a**ccess via third parties,** to the identified decision makers and shapers. At a country level this process will be undertaken with members through the mapping of stakeholders (targets, third parties and allies), a power analysis and through subsequent networking and relationship building. Remember to *'nurture'* your allies and third parties; support them with information they might need, invite them to networking events, respond to their requests for your assistance where it is within the remit of the forum.

For many issues that NGO humanitarian fora engage on (for example: humanitarian financing, humanitarian reform and humanitarian access, etc.), there will be added value in reaching out to global level allies and third parties to reach targets at different levels/in different ways, for greater impact. Having a basic understanding of global actors that may support or be important to forum advocacy efforts is important.

The following table provides a summary of global bodies/positions that could be relevant to NGO Fora advocacy work. The table includes four main groups of actors, who they are, what their focus is and how to engage with them. The four groups of actors are:

- NGO Fora that engage in joint advocacy and access donors/ governments /UN agencies /IASC Working Groups, etc.
- International Government Aid/ Development people Departments.
- Senior Leadership in UNOCHA
- Relevant UN departments engaged in humanitarian coordination and leadership.

Target/Third Party	About them	Interests/responsibilities	Contact/entry points
ICVA	A network of humanitarian NGOs. Secretariat in Geneva. Regional hubs in Amman, Bangkok and Dakar. Communicates to Member States, UN agencies, humanitarian donors and non traditional actors.	Main mandate is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by influencing policy and practice. Represents NGO voices at the highest level of the humanitarian architecture. Focus areas are forced displacement, humanitarian financing, humanitarian coordination and humanitarian partnership.	• Website contacts • Member contacts • Regional hubs contacts • Geneva secretariat contact
InterAction	An alliance of US-based international NGOs. Office in Washington, DC. Connections to Congress, Senate, donors and UN agencies.	Works on international development, accountability and learning, humanitarian access, and advocacy and policy with specific work streams on humanitarian policy and practice. Supports learning and development for INGO forums. Represents NGO voices at the highest level of the humanitarian architecture.	• Website contacts • Member contacts
VOICE	Network of Europe-based INGOs. Communicates with the European Union.	Overall vision is a collective European NGO response to humanitarian crises. Focuses on promoting humanitarian principles, NGOs as key humanitarian actors and enabling collective action.	• Website contacts • Member contacts
HQ level Government: • Heads of aid / development • Funding bodies • Government working groups • Officials responsible for aid/development	Specific official responsibilities of each position related to aid/development.	Governments' political priorities and humanitarian policies - specific to each individual country. Have influence on humanitarian funding, leadership, policies, and practices at global and country levels. Have access to high-level decision makers at global and country levels.	• Country level aid departments, donors and embassies • Member connections • ICVA and InterAction
OCHA Coordination and Response Unit (OCHA CRU) NY, Director	Oversees day-to-day management of all OCHA field operations, on behalf of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. Daily focal point for supporting Humanitarian Coordinators. Lead adviser to the Under-Secretary-General on operational decision-making.	Humanitarian leadership, policy and practice. Humanitarian operational decisions.	• Face-to-face meeting with Director of CRU when on Country Missions (OCHA Country Office arrange – liaise with OCHA to be included in the schedule). • ICVA regular meetings with Head of CRU
OCHA Humanitarian Leadership Strengthening Unit (HLSU)	Responsible for scouting talent, appointing, monitoring and appraising Humanitarian Coordinators.	If have outstanding items at country level can be a contact point at Global level. HLSU reports to OCHA CRU – New York.	• HLSU webpage • ICVA

Target/Third Party	About them	Interests/responsibilities	Contact/entry points
IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee) Working Group	All IASC organizations (full members and standing invitees) at director of policy/ emergencies level. Chaired by the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator. The Working Group meets bi-annually with additional ad hoc meetings.	Responsible for developing policies and guidance in line with strategic decisions made by the IASC.	• ICVA/ Interaction to liaise with NGO Representatives at the IASC.
IASC Emergency Directors Group (EDG)	Formed of Emergency directors of IASC members. The EDG is involved in policy and strategy decisions. Meet regularly by teleconference and in-persons at least twice a year. Undertake country missions.	Responsible for advising the IASC on operational issues of strategic concern and preparing options and recommendations for the IASC on operational issues. Involved in the annual appraisal of Humanitarian Coordinators in January/ February.	• ICVA (EDG member) • InterAction (EDG member) • EDG when on mission in country
IASC Principals	This group is comprised of the heads of IASC member agencies. Meet twice a year, chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator. For urgent matters, the IASC Principals have additional ad hoc meetings. Meet usually in April and December. ICVA and InterAction are standing invitees at the IASC Principals meetings.	Responsible for making strategic and policy decisions that have system-wide implications.	• ICVA • InterAction Working with agency staff of Principles/ IASC working group members/standing invitees to identify the best contact point.
Key OCHA HQ staff	Have strong links/focus on the HCT and HC, humanitarian financing, humanitarian programme cycle, inter-cluster coordination mechanisms, principled humanitarian assistance, humanitarian access etc.	Can provide clarity on processes/procedures and be a reference point for specific technical support and clarification where not available at country level.	Connections through ICVA and/or INTERACTION or via OCHA country offices.
Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC)	Responsible for oversight of emergencies requiring international humanitarian assistance Leads the IASC Appoints Humanitarian Coordinators	Humanitarian Policy and Practice	Forum face-to-face meeting when ERC has a country mission (liaise with OCHA to be included in the schedule). ICVA and InterAction
Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator (DERC)	Principal Advisor to the ERC and supports them in their work. Managerial oversight of OCHA and leads the OCHA Senior Management Team.	Humanitarian Policy and Practice	Forum face-to-face meeting when DERC has a country mission (liaise with OCHA to be included in the schedule). ICVA InterAction

6. ADVOCACY RESOURCES

IFRC Humanitarian Diplomacy:
http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/humanitarian-diplomacy/
http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Governance/Policies/Humanitarian_Diplomacy_Policy.pdf

Advocacy strategy tools – stakeholder mapping, power mapping, target analysis etc:

Comprehensive advocacy guide with tools that can be adapted to other sectors
- UNICEF (2010). Advocacy Toolkit: A guide to influencing decisions that improve children's lives.
  http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Advocacy_Toolkit.pdf

Identifying and Influencing Advocacy Targets
- Save the Children Open University. Session 6
  http://www.open.edu/openlearnworks/course/view.php?id=1690

Power Analysis Briefing, review of tools and methods.
- WaterAid 2012
  http://www.wateraid.org/~/media/Publications/GTF-Power-Analysis-Briefing.ashx

Planning your Advocacy Strategy
- Save the Children Open University. Session 3
  http://www.open.edu/openlearnworks/course/view.php?id=1690

Developing and Communicating your advocacy message
- Save the Children Open University. Session 7
  http://www.open.edu/openlearnworks/course/view.php?id=1690

Advocacy in Emergencies Guide and Tools (links at bottom of the link)
- Care International   https://www.careemergencytoolkit.org/advocacy/

Comprehensive thematic advocacy guide – can be adapted to other subject areas
- http://educationcluster.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/02/GBV-in-Emergencies_Advocacy-Handbook_final.pdf

Humanitarian Advocacy
- Save the Children Open University. Session 15
  http://www.open.edu/openlearnworks/course/view.php?id=1690

7. ANNEX 1:

SAMPLE NGO FORUM ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATIONS STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Sample Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Advocacy and Communications

updated: xxx

Organisational Logo

This document contains some **example** SOPs for the Advocacy and Communications activities of an NGO coordination forum.

SOPs provide standardisation and guidance on the process, creation and dissemination for forum activities and products. SOPs should be developed with members and be approved by the Board/ Steering Committee and the General Forum.

SOPs should be adhered to when undertaking activities and developing and issuing forum products. SOPs should be reviewed and updated annually or as necessary.

Throughout this document Steering Committee is used to refer to the forums Board/Executive Committee/Steering Committee.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

#	SOP
1	Forum Position (internal)
2	Forum Advocacy Working Group Meeting
3	Forum Statement (external)
4	Forum Briefing
5	Forum Talking Points
6	Forum Press Release
7	Forum Media Interview/Quotes

1. FORUM POSITION (INTERNAL) PAPER

PURPOSE:

Internal position papers are **internal documents** that outline the member joint position/action on a particular issue where **it would benefit the wider NGO community** and/or humanitarian action. Internal Positions support the coordination process between members and seek to deliver a common NGO approach to issues/topics. They are internal documents, which should not be shared with external stakeholders. Internal positions are used by members to inform their ways of working and are also used as the basis of external advocacy products. Internal Positions may be **responsive** (to a situation/event) or **proactive** (planned in relation to a coordination or advocacy objective). Example topics where internal positions could be of use: response to an operational constraint such as pressure from local politicians to share beneficiary data; pooled fund allocation priorities; use of armed escorts etc.

DEVELOPMENT and APPROVAL:

Appointed Lead Person (based on agreement at a forum member meeting or from a majority of the forum Steering Committee) will develop the Internal Position paper in consultation with the Secretariat/ Steering Committee. All members must have the opportunity to:

a) Review and comment on a draft and;
b) Object to the final draft should they not wish to endorse it, prior to finalization – through the process of non-objection

The no objection process is for full members only; other member categories have no association with forum products and no right for comment or objection.

PROCESS:

Steps to follow for internal positions:

1. First draft
- Prepared following a meeting of forum members where the need for the Internal Position is agreed and the core components of the position listed;
- The appointed Lead Person will develop the first draft of the position;
- Reviewed by Secretariat or appointed Steering Committee member.

2. Membership focal points review
- Two focal points selected from the membership to review the Internal Position and provide initial input;
- Focal points should have a detailed working knowledge of the topic of the Internal Positions.

3. Membership review and non-objection process
- Email sent to membership with the draft, that details the timeframe for comment on the Internal Position
- Members to provide feedback in given timeframe (one working day maximum for responsive Internal Positions)
- Lead Person/ Forum Secretariat makes final changes. If changes are substantive, then the

Internal Position returns to members for comment.

> ➢ If changes are minor, then the product is sent by email to the membership requesting NO OBJECTION within set timeframe (2 working days maximum if responsive);
> ➢ In the case of an objection, the Lead Persons discusses with members the reasons for objection and resolves where possible. If there is no resolution on an objection, then the Internal Position can be finalized including at the end a clause stating *'This Internal Position is endorsed by xx of the xx members of the forum'*.

- Provided a majority (or in case of a defined Quorum, the Quorum) of members do not object, the position is finalized;
- Final PDF of Internal Position circulated to members.

CONTENT:
2 pages maximum using set template.

SOURCES and DATA:
Internal Positions are based on member consultation and forum data related to the topic.

RECIPIENTS:
Forum members.

PLATFORM:
Positions are disseminated by email.

2. FORUM ADVOCACY WORING GROUP MEETING

PURPOSE:
To **bring together forum members** (at advocacy/ programme manager level) to provide a **platform for joint advocacy** and engagement on standing and emerging priorities as agreed by the forum membership and detailed in the forum strategic plan/advocacy strategy/annual workplan.

The group discusses **priority issues** (standing and emerging) to feed into the development of forum positions, statements and products and make initial recommendations for the Steering Committee and General Members to consider on joint advocacy work. The group delivers an **agreed annual work plan** – endorsed by the Steering Committee and General Members. The forum is co-chaired by either two members or the Secretariat and a member. Member chair/co-chair rotates (annually).

DEVELOPMENT/APPROVAL:
A **'save the date' reminder** is sent one week prior to the meeting with a request for agenda items from members. The co-chairs develop the **agenda** and any related presentations in consultation with members. Standard agenda items will include updates from forum working groups and progress on the work-plan. Where a member proposes an agenda item, it is the member's responsibility to lead/support the discussion unless otherwise agreed in advance. One co-chair takes the **meeting notes**, which are circulated for review and sign off. The co-chairs tracks implementation of the action points.

CONTENT:
Joint NGO Advocacy/ Policy items linked to the forum strategic plan and forum advocacy strategy as related to the work plan (standing/proactive items) and operational environment (emerging /responsive items).

SOURCE and DATA:
The Advocacy Working Group agenda will consist of issues and topics raised through the General Members Meeting, advocacy work plan or emerging issues identified by members/secretariat.

RECIPIENTS:
Forum Advocacy Working Group and the General Members mailing list.

PLATFORM:
Meeting agenda, presentations and notes are disseminated by email.

3. FORUM STATEMENT (EXTERNAL)

PURPOSE:
To communicate **a clear position supported by factual information** for the **improvement of policy or practice** to external partners and stakeholders.

DEVELOPMENT/APPROVAL:
The **Lead Person**, based on agreement at a forum member meeting or from the Steering Committee, develops the draft statement. When the forum develops any product for release to external audiences, all members must have the opportunity to:
   a) Review and comment on a draft and;
   b) To object to the final draft should they not wish to endorse it, prior to finalization. The "no objection" process is for Full Members, other member categories have no right for comment or objection.

PROCESS:
1. **First draft**
   - Prepared (usually on the basis of a forum internal position) in consultation with the Advocacy Working by the Lead Person;
   - Based on agreement for content of statement from member meeting or communication;
   - Reviewed by the Secretariat or appointed Steering Committee member.

2. **Steering Committee/Membership focal points review**
   - Two further focal points selected from the Steering Committee and membership to review the External Statement and provide initial input.

3. **Steering Committee members review** – FOR SENSITIVE ITEMS ONLY – FOR NON SENSITIVE PROCEED STRAIGHT TO MEMBERSHIP OMITTING STAGE 3
   - Email sent to Steering Committee including the External Statement draft and details of the timeframe for input/sign off/no objection process. Times will be specific, process to be

completed in a maximum of 3 days or less for reactive items.
- When changes from the Steering Committee are consensual lead person will update the product;
- Where an issue arises this will be discussed/resolved with the Steering committee member;
- A majority agreement is a go ahead.

4. Membership review and non- objection process
- Email sent to membership detailing the timeframe for the feedback/no objection process;
- Members to provide feedback in given timeframe (one working day maximum if responsive);
- Lead person makes any final changes and statement is signed off. If changes are substantive   then the product returns to the members for final comment;
- If changes are minor then the product is saved as a PDF and sent by email to the membership   requesting NO OBJECTION within set timeframe (two working days maximum if responsive**)**

> ➤ In the case of an objection by a member, the lead person will discuss with members the reasons for objection and resolve where possible, and when necessary, request the Steering Committee focal persons to make the decision on   the contentious area.

> ➤ If there is no resolution on an objection then the product can be sent but a clause will be included at the end of the product. The statement will read '*This statement is endorsed by xx of the xx members of the forum'.*

5. Release to external/internal audience
- Once final, the External Statement is disseminated to members, observers and relevant external contacts – as per the agreed targets.

CONTENT:
Statements should include the exact purpose, provide supporting information and evidence and detail actions expected and by whom.

SOURCES and DATA:
All Statements are based on Internal Positions and/or member consultation and forum datasets.

RECIPIENTS:
Always: member and observers. Other relevant stakeholders as agreed.

PLATFORM:
Members: Statements will be emailed to recipients and included in briefing packs in meetings.

4. FORUM BRIEFING PAPER

PURPOSE:
To summarise for members, observers, and at times partners, a particular issue, topic, or humanitarian response. The paper should include the background, identification of the problem, data on the topic, describe what works and make recommendations/key messages/asks for improvements/actions.

For instance, a briefing paper on "New Displacement": background on the displacement, the number of forum members responding, the issues in response and key asks (advocacy) to whom.

DEVELOPMENT/APPROVAL:
Briefing papers are agreed by the forum, often following a related coordination meeting, **drafted by an appointed person** and reviewed and signed off by the Forum Coordinator/Board/Steering committee.

CONTENT:
Briefing papers must be **concise**, cover relevant points and should be around 2 pages – see purpose for the briefing template.

SOURCES and DATA:
All briefings papers are based on member consultation, forum datasets and verified external data.

RECIPIENTS:
Forum members, observers and other relevant stakeholders as agreed.

PLATFORM:
MEMBERS: Briefing papers will be emailed to members and included in briefing packs in meetings.

FOLLOW-UP/UPDATE:
Topics of briefing papers are usually mid-long term issues that will continue over months or more. As such briefings, will be regularly updated and circulated. The update cycle for a briefing paper will be decided on a case-by-case basis. Updated versions will include the version number of the briefing paper.

5. FORUM TALKING POINTS

PURPOSE:
To provide staff/ members with the background, context and key points on a given topic for use in meetings and public speaking. To support staff and members in forum agreed positioning when engaging externally. They will be developed for **key meetings with Government** and Key UN

Counterparts (HC, Emergency Directors etc.) as well as in relation to media engagement.

DEVELOPMENT/APPROVAL: Talking points will be based on **forum Internal Positions papers** and **forum Statements (external)** as well as **forum briefing papers**. Talking points will be drafted by the appointed person.
- Where they are for use by a small number of members only, they will be discussed with the relevant member/s before finalization.
- Where they will be used by the Steering Committee, they will be reviewed and amended on Steering Committee feedback.

CONTENT:
Talking points will be maximum 2 pages with key messages/asks clearly set out.

SOURCES and DATA:
All talking points will be based on forum Internal Positions (internal), Statements (external), Briefing Papers and datasets/products.

RECIPIENTS:
Forum members only. Where appropriate and agreed, shared with relevant external stakeholders.

PLATFORM:
Talking points will be emailed to relevant members.

6. FORUM PRESS RELEASE

PURPOSE:
An official statement to newspapers and other media giving information on a specific matter.

DEVELOPMENT/APPROVAL: Based on the outcome of a forum meeting, and in alignment with the forum strategic plan, the **Lead Person** will draft the initial Press Release in consultation with members with a specific expertise on the subject. When the forum develops a press release, all members must have the opportunity to:
a) Review and comment on the draft and
b) To object to the final draft should they not wish to endorse it, prior to finalization The no objection process is for full members only, other member categories have no association with forum products and as such no right for comment or objection.

PROCESS:
1. First draft

- Prepared (usually based on a forum internal position) in consultation with the Advocacy Working Group by the appointed Lead Person (Secretariat staff or member staff).

- Based on agreement for content of statement from member meeting or communication.

- Reviewed by appointed staff Secretariat/Steering Committee member.

2. Steering Committee/Membership focal points review

- One or two further focal points selected from the Steering Committee and membership to review the External Statement and provide initial input;
- Focal points should have a detailed working knowledge of the topic of the Press Release.
-

3. Steering Committee members review – FOR SENSITIVE ITEMS ONLY – NON SENSITIVE PROCEED STRAIGHT TO MEMBERSHIP OMITTING STAGE 3
- Email sent to Steering Committee including both the Press Release draft and details of the timeframe for input/sign-off/no-objection process. Times will be specific, process to be completed in a maximum of 3 days or less for responsive items – including membership review and non-objection
  - ➢ When changes from the Steering Committee are consensual lead person will update the product
  - ➢ Where an issue arises, this will be discussed/resolved with the Steering Committee member
- A majority agreement is a go ahead

4. Membership review and non- objection process
- Email sent to membership that details the timeframe for the feedback/no-objection process
- Members to provide feedback in given timeframe (maximum one working day for reactive statements)
- Lead person makes any final changes and statement is signed off by the Steering Committee.
  - ➢ If changes are substantive, then the product returns to the members for final comment.
  - ➢ If changes are minor, then the product in PDF is sent by email to the membership requesting NO- OBJECTION within set timeframe (maximum 2 working days if responsive)
- ❖ In the case of an objection by a member, the Lead Person discusses with the member the reasons for objection and resolves where possible. If necessary s/he can request the Steering Committee focal persons to make the decision on the contentious area
- ❖ If there is no resolution on an objection, then the product can be sent but a clause will be included at the end of the product. The clause will read *'This statement is endorsed by xx of the xx members of the forum'.*

5. Release to external/internal audience
- Once final the External Statement is disseminated to members and relevant external contacts – as per the agreed targets

CONTENT:
Press releases will be **1 page:**
- A headline: - brief, clear and to the point, capturing the press release's key point.
- The first paragraph (two to three sentences) should sum up the press release, and the additional content must elaborate it.
- **Communicate the "5 W's" clearly.** Who, what, when, where, why —and how— should tell the reader everything they need to know

 SOURCE and DATA:

All press releases will be based on forum positions, statements and data and will be in alignment with the forum strategic framework.

RECIPIENTS:
Media, based on forum and member media list. Can be targeted – as agreed. May also be shared with external stakeholders, as agreed.

PLATFORM:
MEDIA: Emailed to the agreed media dissemination list.
MEMBERS: Emailed to members.

7. FORUM MEDIA INTERVIEWS/QUOTES

PURPOSE:
The purpose of media engagement must be clearly defined by the forum and be in alignment with the objectives defined in the forum strategic plan. For instance, to improve access of affected populations to assistance.

DEVELOPMENT/APPROVAL:
When assessment of **benefit and risk** promotes engagement with the media, and with the approval of the forum Steering Committee, the forum will leverage the media in support of specific advocacy priorities. This will be through interview with the media undertaken by a member of the Steering Committee, the Secretariat or wider membership as appropriate. Resulting media coverage will be monitored through media monitoring. Where there is a request for a media quote, it will be based on internal forum positions where possible.

CONTENT:
Talking points will be developed and provided to the member/staff as per '**talking points' SoP**. Where a quote is requested this will be short and to the point maximum 50 words.

SOURCE and DATA:
All media statements will be based on approved forum positions (internal) and statements (external).

RECIPIENTS:
Targeted – to the media/person that made the request/was approached.

PLATFORM:
The media interview (print) will be circulated to the membership by email.