Strengthening Advocacy Networks
The Climate Change Advocacy Toolkits

These toolkits aim to guide and support civil society actors in the South in their efforts to advocate for pro-poor climate policies. They include a mix of:

- instructions on how to plan and conduct advocacy interventions,
- a range of case stories on how civil society works to influence climate change policy-making, and
- references for further reading.

The toolkits are developed and published by Southern Voices on Climate Change. Since 2011, this Programme has supported around 20 civil society networks in the global South to advocate for climate policies that benefit poor and vulnerable people. The Programme is implemented by the Climate Capacity Consortium, comprised of four Danish and two international NGOs, with CARE Denmark as lead agency, and IIED as co-publisher of the toolkits. Funding is from DANIDA from the Danish climate finance envelope.

Further information on the Southern Voices networks and the Programme is available at www.southernvoices.net
Why work together?
When we are trying to change government policies or public attitudes to climate change, the forces against us can seem powerful. If progressive groups come together in networks and alliances, it can help make our voice stronger, but there are some drawbacks to joint advocacy, succinctly described in the following traditional Africa proverb:

‘If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together’

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<tr>
<th>Potential advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tr>
<td>Generates more resources to accomplish your goal: alliance members can pool human, material and information resources and so achieve much more.</td>
<td>Distracts from other work: the demands of the coalition can lead to the neglect of other organisational priorities.</td>
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<td>Increases credibility and visibility: a united voice is a louder and stronger voice, whereas if CSOs are saying different things, it is easier to ignore them.</td>
<td>Slower decision-making processes.</td>
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<td>Produces safety in numbers: it is more difficult for the state to crack down on several groups than it is to harass one.</td>
<td>Requires compromises to keep the coalition together, often resulting in diluted objectives, bland messages or fudged decisions.</td>
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<td>Broadens your base of support: joining forces brings together the different constituencies that each member works with.</td>
<td>Limits organisational visibility: each member may not be recognised sufficiently for what it contributes.</td>
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<td>Creates opportunities for learning, as well as peer support and motivation.</td>
<td>Poses risks to your reputation: if one member has problems, there can be guilt by association; one member can hurt the coalition as a whole.</td>
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<td>Contributes to the long-term strength of civil society: the more networking that exists among actors in civil society, the more capable it is of holding decision-makers accountable.</td>
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There are also many challenges to effective collaborative working:

- Uneven workloads among network members can create resentment. Some network members may ‘take’ and not ‘give’.
- Unequal power or resource distribution between people/organisations within the network, or competition between network members can cause tension.
- Undemocratic decision-making can make some members feel marginalised and withdraw.
- Members may need to sacrifice their own interests to promote the interests of the network, but at the same time they need to maintain their own institutional identity and autonomy. Balancing the two can be difficult.
- Managing networks can be difficult when members have different value bases and opinions.
- Communication between all network members can be challenging. Without good, on-going communication, some members may feel excluded.
- Money is often a source of distrust and a common reason for strife within a network.

Being prepared for these challenges, and having mechanisms to deal with them, is the best way to ensure that your advocacy network is enjoying all of the advantages and minimising the disadvantages of working together.

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1. Adapted from The ABCs of Advocacy, DanChurchAid, 2010.
Forming a network

Whether organisations are coming together to form a semi-permanent network, or a shorter-term coalition or alliance around a particular issue, what is most important is that the members have a common understanding of what they want to achieve, and why it is better to work together to do so.

Tips for establishing an advocacy alliance

1. Be clear about the advocacy issue proposed as a focus for the alliance. A written problem statement can be helpful for this purpose.
2. Develop membership criteria and mechanisms for including new members and sustainability.
3. Resolve what the alliance will and will NOT do. Agree as a group the alliance’s purpose, scope and priorities.
4. If the group is large, select a steering committee of five to seven people who are representative of different membership interests or member organisations. Establish a process to ensure the steering committee is accountable and responsive to the wider group.
5. Avoid designating the steering committee or any single person as the sole spokesperson for the alliance. Rotating opportunities for visible leadership can avoid resentment about who gets credit and provides opportunities to build the capacity of different individuals.
6. Establish task forces to plan and coordinate different activities. Involve all members in at least one committee and encourage development of new leadership.
7. Assess progress periodically and make whatever changes are necessary.
8. Develop a code of conduct to ensure mutual respect and responsibility, including a mechanism for dealing with complaints and grievances, so that minor frustrations are defused and don’t build up into major conflicts.

Founding document

Regulations in your country may require that associations be registered and have a legal foundation (alternatively, unregistered networks may be hosted by one of its legally registered members). Such a legal structure will need a formal constitution or articles of association. Even if the law does not require this, it may still be a good idea if the association is to have its own funds or employ staff. A more informal network still needs some form of founding document – a Terms of Reference or a Vision & Mission statement – to help ensure that it runs smoothly with minimal internal conflict. Such a document needs to set out:

- Why the association has been formed and what members hope to achieve by working together.
- Who can be a member and what the conditions for membership are (e.g. agreement to certain values or policy positions, financial contributions, commitment to a minimum level of activity, etc.).
- How decisions are made and followed up.
- Who can speak on behalf of the membership.
- How individuals are appointed to leadership positions.

Network strategy

For an advocacy network or alliance to function, it needs to develop and adopt an advocacy strategy. The process it can follow is the same as any advocacy organisation, and is set out in Toolkit no. 2: Planning Advocacy. However, it is important that members of the alliance have ownership of the strategy. Therefore they need to actively participate in the planning process, which should be systematic and transparent.

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Case Study 1. Forming a civil society alliance on REDD+ in Nepal

REDD+ is a common concern for indigenous peoples, local communities and forestry sector civil society organisations in Nepal. During the initial phase of REDD readiness in Nepal, these actors were trying to influence REDD readiness and national REDD+ strategy formulation independently from each other. This meant efforts to ensure environmental and social safeguards and stakeholder rights were enshrined in the national REDD+ frameworks were not always effective.

Realising this, Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN) and other forestry-based civil society groups organised a joint meeting in 2009 to discuss forming a REDD+ alliance to influence REDD readiness and REDD+ strategy formulation processes at the national level. The REDD+ CSOs & IPOs Alliance Nepal was subsequently formed. More than 40 organisations are now affiliated with this alliance.

The alliance aims to advocate for good governance, inclusiveness and equity in REDD+ mechanisms, and to develop member capacity, particularly on national safeguards for REDD+. Alliance members have met regularly to develop a common vision for REDD+. This vision and later position papers have been submitted to the government for consideration in REDD+ policy processes. The alliance is now concentrating on influencing the National REDD+ strategy formulation process. Government has recognised the role of the alliance and accepted it as a key actor in the REDD+ process in Nepal.

Key lessons learned during the formation and functioning of the alliance are as follows:

- A guidance document for the operation of the alliance was needed. Details on the following need to be clear: rotational secretariat operation; resolving internal conflict through consensus; regular meetings to plan ahead, address weaknesses and review progress; and, opportunities for member capacity building.
- Do not discriminate between alliance members and their representatives based on caste, gender, origin, religion etc.
- Ensure alliance members do not expect personal benefits from joining.
- It was important to focus on common issues and concerns and to develop a common vision / advocacy position on REDD+. The values (and capacity) of alliance members varied so the vision needed to be developed in a participatory way, respecting the concerns of all alliance members. Imposing choices that are not common to all members should be avoided.
- It was important to provide space for government and donors to share their opinions on REDD+.
- Implementing projects through the alliance or having alliance representatives in the government should be avoided to ensure independence and avoid conflicts of interest.

Source: Dil Raj Khanal, FECOFUN
Case Study 2. Coordinating advocacy activities in Honduras

In Honduras, several national civil society organisations share major concerns about climate change. In 2011, an alliance called ‘Alianza Hondureña ante el Cambio Climático’ (AHCC) was thus formed to inform civil society in Honduras about climate change, identify the challenges it faced (often related to food security, production and use of energy, water and access to resources and funding for climate change activities), coordinate advocacy activities and demand good results from government in international and regional negotiations and national planning. The alliance gained momentum in later years with increased membership and a stronger focus on government accountability.

Talking to the Honduran Government delegations attending different negotiations and meetings helped AHCC learn about their views. This was particularly important when civil society could not join the official delegations themselves. AHCC has also been running workshops and forums to raise civil society awareness about the international negotiations and press for government accountability in these negotiations. It has led discussion and analysis of national climate policies and strategies and government participation in the Central American Integration System, and it has created opportunities for civil society to participate in climate change related advocacy activities. A diploma on climate justice, for example, is helping strengthen civil society knowledge on this issue.

Key components of AHCC’s successes (and key pitfalls to avoid) include:

- Strengthening partnerships between national and regional civil society organisations.
- Identifying a common need amongst organisations.
- Identifying key actors who could strengthen the alliance.
- Coordinating activities amongst alliance members.
- Realising an advocacy work plan.
- Ensuring opportunities for regional and national advocacy are not missed.
- Maintaining communication with key stakeholders throughout the process.
- Ensuring participation in the implementation of joint activities.
- Strengthening partnerships and coordination between civil society organisations and government institutions and representatives.
- Strengthening partnerships with regional networks to ensure regional information is up to date.
- Ensuring existing national and regional partnerships are not neglected.
- Ensuring information on regional and national negotiations is up to date.
- Empowering national grassroots organisations.

Source: Lily Mejía, ACICAFOC, SUSWATCH; Mónica López Baltodano, Centro Humboldt and SUSWATCH/CANLA.

Case Study 3. Raising awareness on REDD+ in Ghana and the Central African Republic

In response to growing concerns about the poor involvement of civil society in REDD+ processes in Ghana in 2008, Forest Watch Ghana – a coalition of 40 non-government, civil society and community-based organisations – organised a two-day convention for civil society actors interested in forest governance, to create awareness about the REDD+ process and its implications for forest governance in Ghana. The result was better civil society involvement in ensuing national REDD+ activities.

Civil society organisations in the Central African Republic working on environmental and human rights also came together as La Plateforme de la Société Civile Centrafricaine pour la Gestion Durable des Ressources Naturelles et l’Environnement to lobby for the rights of local and indigenous communities. The Platform held several workshops on REDD+ in 2010 and 2011 that brought together local authorities, local NGOs and indigenous and local community representatives.

Source: Is REDD-Readiness Taking us in the Right Direction? Case Studies from the ACCRA Caucus, written in November 2011 by the ACCRA Caucus on Forests and Climate Change.
Strengthening a network

Once established, the following tips will help strengthen a climate change advocacy network:

- Ensure comprehensive and timely communication within the network to exchange information on new evidence, new policies, new stakeholders, etc. Establish simple but effective communication guidelines (e.g. working with focal points, sharing contact details, reporting back from meetings, making one person responsible for communication, etc.).

- Build trust between network members. Successful networks are built on trust, respect, and a commitment to working together. Civil society professionals tend to downplay the importance of trust, but solidarity and good team spirit form the basis of strong network advocacy activities.

- Use participatory processes to plan and develop a shared understanding of advocacy objectives and make decisions about network activities. These processes should determine network governance structures.

- Invest in capacity-building for network members, e.g. on lobbying and advocacy methods, or drawing up stakeholder and power analyses. Provide continuous feedback to network members during the planning and implementation phases of lobbying and advocacy activities.

- Ensure your network remains open to change, for example linking up with new stakeholders to strengthen the network’s lobbying and advocacy efforts.

- Monitoring. Staying abreast of political and policy developments at all relevant levels, as well as of progress at the level of the member organisations, can allow timely adjustment of the network’s advocacy strategies and thus enhance its potential impact.

Case Study 4. Coordinating network efforts and speaking with ‘one voice’ in Cambodia

Cambodia is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. It has ratified the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, and its National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) was endorsed by the Council of Ministers in 2006.

Since 2009, the NGO Forum on Cambodia has mainstreamed climate change into its strategic advocacy planning. The Forum works all over the country and has the support of over 300 NGO members. It has developed a long-term strategy plan (2012-2017) for advocacy on climate change at national, regional and international levels. Members have also committed to revising their own advocacy strategies to focus on climate change issues at the grassroots level, while the Forum itself focuses on issues at higher levels, such as the NAPA, Cambodia Climate Change Strategy Plan, Pilot Program on Climate Resilience, National Development Strategy Plan, Climate Change Finance Framework, and National Policy on Green Growth.

The Forum and the Cambodia Climate Change Network – another national NGO network tackling climate change issues – have come together to agree on a common goal but separated out sub-themes and objectives on which to focus. The Forum will work to influence national and international climate change policies and practices that affect poor and vulnerable Cambodian communities, while the Network will focus on sharing information and building capacity on climate change. They will collaborate on policy advocacy work and ensure that together they speak with one voice.

The Forum’s inputs to policy making processes to date have been appreciated by government and development stakeholders alike. Forming an alliance as opposed to individual organisations acting alone was central to this, because it ensured advocates spoke with ‘one voice’. This needed resources (human and financial) to strengthen and extend the network. Developing a clear advocacy purpose and basing all recommendations on clear evidence also proved important. Lobbying government stakeholders was effective, but confrontation was not.

Source: Ung Soeun, NGO Forum on Cambodia, and Nop Polin, DanChurchAid/Christian Aid. For more information see: www.ngoforum.org.kh

3. Adapted from Guidelines on lobby and advocacy by ICCO, June 2010
Case Study 5. Network development in Zimbabwe

In 2007, members of what is now known as the Climate Change Working Group in Zimbabwe began as a loose group of environmental and developmental CSOs, individuals, academia and media with an interest in climate change issues. They were concerned about inadequate civil society consultation in the negotiations process, fragmented NGO participation in national and international sustainable development debates, and the inability of civil society to lobby effectively. ZERO Regional Environment Organisation, a local NGO with a long history of advocacy and leadership, led the group’s formation. In 2010, more than 40 NGOs endorsed and mandated ZERO to formally adopt a secretariat role. It was important for network members that a local NGO took the lead in this way, with support from other national and international network members. A 2010 strategy meeting identified the following issues in Zimbabwe, which paved the way for planning future network advocacy activities:

- Lack of adaptation strategies.
- Lack of coordination on climate change issues amongst key stakeholders.
- Lack of education and awareness on climate change.
- Lack of national climate policy.
- Lack of funding for CSOs to engage in climate change issues and support adaptation actions.
- Lack of capacity and capacity building on climate change.
- Lack of active participation by the vulnerable.
- Lack of research.

To have a strong network we wanted a governance structure that was loose enough to retain flexibility so members did not feel trapped. They therefore agreed to establish a steering committee, thematic working groups, a secretariat and advisory organisations. Terms of reference have been drawn up for these structures. Thematic working groups – for example on water and energy – are led by different network member organisations, each of which reports to the Steering Committee. Poor institutional support has made implementing these proposed institutional arrangements difficult but they have at least helped to keep the network together and create a unity of purpose.

Membership has grown and now includes people from a wide array of sectors including environmental law, science and technology, advocacy/lobby groups, CBOs, policy/research organisations, media and business. Government stakeholders are also welcome to attend meetings. The Steering Committee defines membership eligibility, which is not limited to CSOs.

Since its inception, the network has acted as a constructive government watchdog, monitoring its commitments and activities. The Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate now recognises and values network activities. The network has contributed to policy formation, advocated on behalf of the most vulnerable, and pushed for certain government positions in the international negotiations. It has provided its members with a platform for lobbying government and opportunities to exchange information, undertake collaborative activities and build organisational capacity and profile. Over the years it has helped many network members attend UN climate change negotiations and in recent months it has successfully advocated on behalf of a national climate change policy and strategy. Key to the network’s success over the years are the following:

- Ensure network members understand what is happening in the climate change arena, both at international and local levels and how the two link up. This will inform advocacy activities.
- Members must help shape the advocacy issues.
- Members need to know how to do advocacy and to embed prioritised advocacy work into their day-to-day funded work within their home organisations.
- Encourage members to attend government led meetings to say the same message over and over again.
- Be friends with government officials. It makes advocacy easy.
- Make sure members see benefits from being part of a network.

Source: Sherpard Zvigadza, ZERO
**Case Study 6. Advocating for climate change legislation in Guatemala**

Guatemala is highly vulnerable to climate change. The slow progress towards reaching a legally binding agreement under the UNFCCC continues to frustrate national development planning, and Guatemala spends almost a quarter of its GDP on emergency care and rehabilitation.

Recognising the need for a legal instrument to prevent, plan for and respond to climate change impacts in an urgent and coordinated way, the National Roundtable on Climate Change and Indigenous Council of Climate Change have been working on the issue for five years. Together they consist of more than 200 civil society organisations and academia. Climate change policy at the time was inadequate, because it changed every four years along with the government, so the two groups began working with the government to develop a draft of the proposed law known as La Ley Marco Para Regular la Reucción de la Vulnerabilidad, la Adaptación Obligatoria ante los Efectos del Cambio Climático y la Mitigacion de Gases de Efecto Invernadero. Following endorsement of the draft law from the Vice President, the two groups worked with the Congressional Committee on the Environment and secured commitment to take the draft law to parliament. Parliament met and discussed the law during two sessions, but missed the third due to a change in national government. Continued advocacy by the two groups targeting members of Congress (and their deputies, who were known to support the law) with the aim of enacting the law ensured it had its third reading and passed into law under the new government. The two groups are now working with the Ministry of Environment to prepare an implementation plan for the new law, known as La Ruta de Instrumentalización de la Ley de Cambio Climático.

Central to the success of this advocacy initiative was coordination amongst the key networks and participation of a wide range of stakeholders and sectors in developing the draft law. Workshops and consultations introduced the draft law to these different stakeholders, and constant efforts were made to improve ties, share knowledge and secure support from regional groups, key government agencies, international networks, the media, the private sector, grassroots organisations and others. Determination was important – one must not faint at the first setback. Advisors and secretaries to the main political parties were particularly targeted along with government agencies with a mandate to participate in developing new climate change law.

Potential pitfalls to avoid include members acting alone, failing to act in accordance with the priorities of network member organisations, failing to update plans and advocacy strategies, not engaging with local media and having spokespersons with different messages.

Source: Vivian Lanuza Monge, Fundacion Solar and SUSWATCH; Mónica López Baltodano, Centro Humbolt and SUSWATCH/CANLA
Case Study 7. Regional networks in Latin America influencing the Green Climate Fund

The Green Climate Fund was created in 2010 to help developing countries adopt climate-resilient development pathways and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Civil society in the global south has been working to influence the Fund’s rules of operation through two networks: ‘south-southlist’ follows Fund activities, exchanges information and consolidates strategies; and ‘participación fondo verde climático’ articulates the views of the Latin American region.

Members of both networks participate in the Fund’s Board meetings and also help prepare papers to inform Board meeting discussions on issues such as transparency, civil society participation, environmental safeguards and fiduciary standards. A recent paper recommending cross-cutting principles that the Board should adopt was widely disseminated and provides an example of how the networks strive to ensure the Board takes account of civil society views.

Practices that have helped promote the voices of civil society in influencing Green Climate Fund decision making include:

- Reading and learning together about how to identify advocacy opportunities;
- Working as a team and exhibiting a solid shared position;
- Being consistent, particularly with specific recommendations that are given, which are defended by all;
- Meeting the Board members and understanding their priorities, strengths and weaknesses. It is important to know who to go to with a request; and,
- Appreciating that Board members have little time to understand the concerns of others, so keeping recommendations to change text or adopt recommendations specific. Don’t provide long documents; they will never be read.

For more information:
http://gcfund.net/home.html
www.intercambioclimatico.com/author/arodriguez/

Source: Andrea Rodriguez, CEMDA and CANLA; Mónica López Baltodano, Centro Humboldt and SUSWATCH/CANLA
Raising funds

The ability to mobilise resources is a valuable skill for advocacy networks. Access to financial resources expands the options available to the advocacy network and gives members the freedom to try new, creative, or even higher-risk activities than would be possible with limited funds. But also remember it is entirely possible to launch a successful campaign without outside funding, using the resources and energy of network members alone. Trying to access financial resources can use up valuable time that could be spent on other activities, and securing donors might require compromises in what the network can do and reduce its flexibility.

Funding methods

Successful advocates have used many different methods to obtain the resources they need for their work. Examples include the following:

- setting membership dues for the network or alliance generally based on a sliding scale;
- soliciting in-kind contributions;
- holding special fundraising events such as dinners, film festivals, picnics, raffles;
- cultivating large individual contributors (individuals, private sector, philanthropic/donor agencies, government-sponsored initiatives);
- seeking corporate donations (money, equipment, office space, supplies, services, technical expertise, administrative support, space for meetings and events);
- selling merchandise such as crafts, artwork, t-shirts;
- obtaining international, national or local government grants;
- promoting donations around a particular holiday;
- auctioning donated goods and services; and,
- selling advertising space in newsletters or other publications.

Dealing with donors

Consider donors a key audience for outreach work and remember donors like to see: a well-run and efficiently managed organisation or effort; financial stability and budget information; examples of successful efforts and achievements associated with any previous contributions; a good strategy and a reasonable chance of success; traits that distinguish the network from other organisations in the same field; why the work is important and necessary; and if the network is new, information on its strategy and goals. Working with media can help raise awareness about a network and thus secure funding. The following tips can also help with fundraising:

- Find out what types of organisations a potential donor has funded in the past, how much it typically donates, and what its current interests are. An annual report, if available, will provide the needed information.
- To avoid donor control over the advocacy agenda or strategy, have the courage not to accept donations, grants or contracts for activities that distract you away from your specific advocacy objectives.
- Strive for a diverse funding base to avoid dependence on a few sources.
- Appoint qualified individuals to lead fundraising efforts.
- As in advocacy itself, relationships are central. Invest time and energy in getting to know potential contributors.

“As the network, when we start discussing how to work together, the donors start paying attention on our works. Therefore, to develop and implement good facilitation strategies of a network is a key to approach donors, show them what we can do bigger as a whole, using up individuals and organisations’ resources.”

Vu My Hanh, Challenge to Change. Member of Climate Change Working Group and Disaster Management Working Group (Vietnam)
Further information and resources

Bond have a collection of free resources on Campaigning Together at www.bond.org.uk/resources/campaigning-together

DanChurchAid’s 2010 publication *The ABCs of Advocacy* (in English and Arabic – see www.danchurchaid.org) has a section on preparing an advocacy campaign that provides guidance on how to define the issue, do background research, prepare a plan and implement it. It also has guidance on building a coalition under which it addresses the following questions: What is a coalition? Why should we form a coalition? What are the essential elements of a coalition? How can we promote leadership in a coalition? How can we make fair group decisions? How can we manage conflict within the coalition?

*Guidelines on lobby and advocacy* by ICCO, June 2010, provides information for developing effective lobbying and advocacy strategies. www.icco-international.com/int/linkservid/84D40E76-B5C9-FAF9-4DF6B811317B6B44/showMeta/0/


The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance has compiled a list of resources to help with advocacy (not climate change specific). This provides links to much general guidance on planning an advocacy campaign: www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/advocacy-capacity/resources/planning-the-advocacy-campaign-general-advocacy-guides/

The Policy Project provides detailed policy guidance and an online advocacy training manual (English, French, Spanish) to help advocacy networks develop effective family planning/reproductive health advocacy skills. Much guidance, however, is generic and thus relevant to climate change, for example section 1 addresses *The Power of Numbers: Networking for Impact*. www.policyproject.com/pubs/AdvocacyManual.cfm


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Toolkits in this series
Toolkit 1: Start Here! Introducing Advocacy and the Climate Change Advocacy Toolkits
Toolkit 2: Planning Advocacy
Toolkit 3: Framing the Debate: Messages and Communication
Toolkit 4: Strengthening Advocacy Networks
Toolkit 5: Influencing Decision Makers
Toolkit 6: Engaging the Public
Toolkit 7: Engaging the Media
Toolkit 8: Supporting Local Voices
Toolkit 9: Policy Implementation & Finance

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Readers are invited to provide feedback on the Advocacy Toolkits and experiences of their use at the Southern Voices discussion forum: http://forum.southernvoices.net/categories/toolkit
Strengthening southern voices in advocating climate policies that benefit poor and vulnerable people


For further information visit www.southernvoices.net