EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY:
A BACKGROUNDER

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THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC ADVOCACY

Advocacy is a strategy or process to bring about beneficial change in the policies and practice of influential institutions, groups and/or individuals.

There are strong reasons for developing advocacy work to progress animal welfare. These include the following:

- Traditional practical/rescue & emergency work alone are unlikely to produce sustained improvements in the lives of animals.
- Advocacy can be used as a key tool for addressing the root causes of animal suffering. Advocacy does not merely deal with the symptoms of animal abuse and neglect, but ensures that the underlying educational, institutional and structural causes of suffering are addressed.
- Advocacy is vital to ensuring that the authorities take responsibility for animal issues, including: policy, legislation and enforcement; education and awareness; research and training; and practical programs to improve the lives of animals.
- Advocacy can change attitudes and political will.

WAN believes it is vital to plan advocacy strategically in order to maximise its chance of success (and therefore its effectiveness). This means much more than just researching and selecting the best tactics to use.

We believe that with effective strategies and actions ours holds the potential to be the next great social change movement.

WHAT IS STRATEGY?

In a nutshell, strategy is charting the direction/actions of an organisation to achieve an agreed mission, taking into account the optimum "fit" between an organisation and its environment. This is explained diagrammatically here. As can be seen, there is no avoiding either an in-depth environmental analysis or an organisational assessment; and these should be done before strategic choice (issue/niche selection). It follows that there is no "one size fits all" for effective strategy.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CHANGE

A thorough understanding of Social Change and Social Change Movements is vital to the development of effective advocacy strategy. That is why we included this as the first and opening Module of our course.

The movement in each country will be at a different stage of Social Change. This is demonstrated simply in this framework. Whilst we share a common cause and international policy environment, the environment in each country can be markedly different, and what is effective in one country and culture may well not be in another. In Europe, there has been a receptive policy environment – largely thanks to the European Union - with many legislative advances. Conversely in the United States a difficult policy environment has led the movement to favour "free market" campaigns (personal and corporate change). However, this approach would simply not work in most developing countries, where levels of awareness and acceptance of animal protection values are low: here many animal protection organisations quite rightly choose to focus on education and awareness work (the necessary groundwork for any future advocacy).

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The animal protection environment is complex. This includes the international and regional policy environment; and the dominant social and political structures that currently institutionalise animal abuse, as well as the attitudes that sustain and reinforce this situation. An understanding of the bigger picture and the impact of current structures and systems is necessary in order to dismantle current constraints to change.

The good news is that a thorough understanding of the environment can help to identify effective strategies. Sometimes these are not what we had envisaged at all. In the words of Leonard Cohen in Anthem:

"There is a crack, a crack in everything

That's how the light gets in."

EFFECTIVE UTILISATION OF INTERNAL RESOURCES

Charting an effective strategy also requires a long, hard look at your organisation's skills and resources, and a decision on the how to leverage these to best achieve your mission. This analysis should also take into account your passions and motivations.

The WAN guidance on organisational analysis may help here. In addition to the skills and resources mentioned above, we purposefully included "motivation" in this because we are not all born to do the same type of work, and following our passion is a sure way to achieve greatness.

Throughout the movement there are wonderful, inspired, driven individuals who have felt compelled – called even – to give their lives to help animals in their own ways. Are they all wrong if they have not saved millions of animals? Are they not to be supported because they do not meet a simple numbers game? What is not measureable is the inspiration of such lives...

In my early days in the movement I used to be fairly dismissive of those undertaking practical work, rather than advocating and educating for change. But over the years I mellowed as I witnessed the broader impacts of such work. Take, for instance, the case of farm sanctuaries: Although these rescue very small numbers of animals compared to the vast numbers of farmed animals that are killed each year, they provide the opportunity for members of the public to form a new type of relationship with, and perspective on, "food animals" (through extensive media work as well as direct visits) which has a multiplier effect as they then influence those around them. They are also a source of inspiration to so many, and create a sense of optimism and community within the animal protection movement which is important for our motivation.

Another example which springs to mind is the legendary figure of "Camberley Kate" which so inspired a young Kim Stallwood. Kate would doubtless have been similarly dismissed by many, as she rescued hundreds of stray dogs and pushed her green pram/buggy through the streets of Camberley. But she was compassion personified, and this made a lasting impression on a young Kim, who went on to become a movement leader – and doubtless many others were similarly awakened.

Throughout the movement there are visionary and inspirational individuals who work tirelessly for animals, often for no financial reward, but simply because their hearts are moved to act for animals. They have different paths, and cannot be shoe-horned into different roles.

UNDERSTANDING STAKEHOLDERS

We need to examine all important stakeholders in the strategy process – including internal stakeholders, allies, adversaries or opponents, and potential targets of our advocacy. An analysis of other organisations working in the field is vital, so we can choose both an effective strategy ourselves, and the optimum approach for working with others to strengthen our (and their) efforts. Some of the greatest successes for animals have been won through effective collaboration in advocacy coalitions and alliances.

WAN's Strategic Advocacy course includes lots of helpful advice and tools on stakeholder mapping and analysis. These include a full Stakeholder Analysis. There is also a useful tool for analysing "Other Players" – other organisations working in the same broad field. This helps you to identify these organisations and consider how to avoid duplication, fill gaps in the 'market', and decide what type of working relationships to develop for best impact. This is a simple tool, and the course does include further guidance and advice, if needed.

Strategies for identifying and dealing with allies are every bit as important a strategies for dealing with opponents. They help organisations to find their own niche and identify areas for constructive joint working; and sometimes help us to discover novel ways to act as catalysts - propelling others into productive action. This is clearly important for effective advocacy: It is counter-productive and cost inefficient for too many organisations work on the same issue. In advocacy terms: "the bus is crowded".

Another important aspect of this is the power and influence of policy-makers. Sometimes the most obvious policy-makers are not the most effective targets for advocacy.

BUILDING A MOVEMENT THAT IS A POWERFUL FORCE

Movement building is often overlooked in advocacy strategy. There are two main aspects to this: capacity building and working together for change. Both are needed to transform the animal protection movement into a powerful force for Social Change. Mobilisation is an important part of this – showing strength and unity.

Module 4 of the course is about Networking and Alliances, and we also have a section of our website dedicated to Animal Protection Collaboration: Networks, Alliances, Coalitions and Federations.

TO BE TRULY EFFECTIVE, LASTING CHANGE, NOT SUPERFICIAL CHANGE, IS NECESSARY

A key strategic consideration is what is our "model of change"? How will we achieve the lasting social change we need – a change which will embed the values, policies and legislation of animal protection into the future?

The first Module of WAN's Strategic Advocacy course includes a section on Bringing About Social Change which gives the following stages needed to institutionalise social change:

- Official structures – the development of departments or individuals dealing with the issue (when there is a need to put the issue on the agenda)
- Legislation – when the need for official policy change is accepted
- Enforcement – when the authorities accept the need to enforce change
- Transmission by education – when it is accepted that this needs to be an issue for society
- Cultural transmission by family – when the issue is generally accepted, and grassroots education takes place within families

The section about the frameworks used by different social change movements includes a similar model based on a framework specially adapted for the animal protection movement by Kim Stallwood.

This analysis builds a clear picture of the need to change official structures, policies, laws, enforcement and public education and awareness. If we are aiming for enduring social change, there is no short-cutting these stages.

UNDERSTANDING ROOT CAUSES

To be successful over the longer-term, we need to analyse the roots of problems, and target these. This is not an easy task, and takes a lot of research and analysis. WAN has some useful tools that can help with this, including a Causal Mapping Tool (problem tree). Often root causes are far removed from the problems you are faced with in your day-to-day issue work, so we need to firstly unearth these, and then decide how we are best placed to influence the needed change. There is also a Force Field Mapping Tool, which can help you to identify the driving and restraining forces of an advocacy issue.

Our blog on Effective Altruism also includes aspects that are relevant here, including the importance of a preventative approach, and the need to include paradigm shift. The current economic growth paradigm has been identified as one of the major root causes of current untrammelled animal use and abuse.

ISSUE CHOICE

Finally, the matter of issue choice: And personally I think this is the most effective place for this vital strategic decision – as this is far too important to be the subject of a "quick and dirty" decision, without access to the vital background analysis pointed to above.

WAN has covered Issue Choice in its Strategic Advocacy course, including an Issue Choice Matrix tool. This includes not only the benefits to animal welfare, but also other important considerations such as the likelihood of success, who else is already involved, your organisation and its role, and your passion/motivation.

For larger organisations it is also important to choose a good 'advocacy issue mix' – for example, one major issue, one 'gateway issue' (to attract people into the organization and/or to the wider issues) and at least one issue with a high likelihood of success (in the not too distant future). This is charting a "Pathway to Success" as in the linked WAN example on animal experimentation.

The example highlights the strategic importance of tackling some of the least defensible uses of animals. These are more likely to attract wide-scale public support, which can be built into wider awareness of the issue. They are also harder for the industry to justify. This makes them easier to win, setting valuable precedents. Many of these uses do not affect large numbers of animals, but winning the battle has far wider repercussions. Cosmetic testing is a good example: This covers relatively few numbers of animals, but is one of the least defensible uses of animal experimentation (for inessential vanity products, with sufficient ingredients already available). European Animal Protection Organisations campaigned on this for many years, and were finally successfully in achieving a ban on animal testing for cosmetics within the EU. This

established a precedent, and then the campaign moved on to household products (where it can be argued that there are already sufficient evidence available to meet their purpose, as well as natural alternatives). Here, the movement is taking a step-wise approach to dismantling whole areas of animal use in experiments, through legislative change. Other issues which involve the least justifiable uses of animals would include the use of animals in entertainment (e.g. circuses, bullfighting) and the production of luxury or inessential products. Success in these issues brings new followers and future leaders to the movement, galvanises the movement as a whole, and, most importantly, erodes the paradigm of unfettered animal use by society.

CONCLUSION

As can be seen, an effective strategy can only be based on thorough research, analysis and heart-searching. The movement definitely needs a more strategic approach to its advocacy work to bring about lasting social change. As regards individual organisations, there is most definitely no "one size fits all". But with the right approach and tools, every organisation can be successful in charting a pathway to its own desired change for the animals, and create lasting and significant improvements to the lives of animals.