



STEP 5: TAKING ACTION

The way in which advocates communicate evidence and solutions to government matters. If decision-makers are approached in the right forum, at the right time, with the right information and with the right people in the room who can make decisions, advocacy is significantly more effective. Furthermore, communicating useful solutions as part of advocacy can transform government's perception of organisations from 'activist' to 'valued partner'.

Advocacy includes a strong communications component and requires evidence that is presented in the right format and shared through the correct channels. Advocacy should be audience focused (having identified stakeholders), data driven, partnership oriented and both adaptive and responsive. It is often much easier to engage and influence stakeholders if there is an ongoing relationship between the advocates and the stakeholder as opposed to a singular interaction.

It is important to think carefully about potential counter arguments that you could receive, prepare a response and consider who is best placed to deliver the messaging.



BaSAM members (Bauchi State Accountability Mechanism) at the MPDSR dissemination meeting, January 2020

E4A-MamaYe is developing a Communication Advocacy Handbook which will be available on our website (<https://mamaye.org/resources>) in 2020.



Visualising information

Evidence is most likely to be used by decision-makers when it follows three basic principles:

1. It is packaged in a way that makes it easy to understand and accessible for the user
2. It is reviewed in a collaborative manner with multiple stakeholders
3. It is taken from trusted data sources

"By visualizing information, turn it into a landscape that you can explore with your eyes. A sort of information map. And when you're lost in information, an information map is kind of useful."

– David McCandless

Researchers agree that vision is our dominant sense: 80–85% of information we perceive, learn or process is mediated through vision. It is even more so when we are trying to understand and interpret data or when we are looking for relationships among hundreds or thousands of variables to determine their relative importance. One of the most effective ways to discern important relationships is through advanced analysis and easy-to-understand visualizations. It is important to consider how the evidence and data is being presented during advocacy efforts.

In the E4A-MamaYe project, a frequent tool used by our coalitions are scorecards which present commitments that have been made towards reproductive health services and "score" whether this commitment has been delivered on or not (see Figure 5). Other visualisations could include flyers, websites and pictures used to represent the advocacy efforts being undertaken.