

Language, Gender, Communication and Advocacy in Diverse Communities in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Dr.Chemba Raghavan (UNICEF-EAPRO) and Goy Phumtim (UNICEF-EAPRO)

“Data are not just numbers...but a story waiting to be told!” This presentation gave an insight into best practices in preparing, conducting and analyzing results from advocacy and communication projects involving ethno-linguistic minority groups. A key issue raised was that evidence on its own does not persuade, it is what you do with the evidence that is important.

Advocacy is defined differently by different organizations, but the general overarching idea is telling your story to a decision maker and persuading him/her about why it is important to advance a particular cause. It also means building platforms and supporting the development of civil society (especially groups including children) so that they can advocate for change themselves.

Evidence-based advocacy, a process based on data and information, integrates otherwise independent data from different sectors, such as research, policy, action groups and practitioners, etc., into analysis to inform advocacy.

Institutional change through evidence-based advocacy can only be achieved if evidence exists and is used. The accumulated data is used to further the cause of a particular group in society, a process that requires political backing to bring about change.

In crafting effective advocacy messages, it is important to identify advocacy issues through situational analysis and an assessment of advocacy capacities, such as knowing the target audience and developing effective communication strategies. These messages are most effective when kept short and concise. They take the format of a universally compelling primary message, and a secondary message that explains how the objectives of the primary message will be met.

In disseminating the information, key issues are: Who has the power at different stages of the process? How can you involve children of both genders and ethno-linguistic communities in advocacy? What social, political, or annual calendar events can be used to increase awareness?

Key issue:

Technical experts are crucial to the whole process of analyzing and utilizing evidence from ethno-linguistic minority community surveys, but this information can only be used effectively if a political will exists to use the evidence to advance the empowerment of ethno-linguistic minority communities.

Conclusions:

Language and cultural expectations are intertwined, so understanding the cultural situation is important to gender advocacy in general.

Evidence-based advocacy utilized appropriately can be a very powerful tool to advance the cause of language and gender.

Understanding gender expectations within ethno-linguistic communities may inform gender and language advocacy.