

6. Influencing policy makers

Convincing policy makers in your country to join and fully implement the cluster bomb ban is possible. In recent years, a combination of many different advocacy approaches has worked in countries around the world. Take time to consider which approaches are most likely to influence policy makers and advance the ban on cluster bombs in your country. Also learn from other CMC campaigners how they achieved a breakthrough in their country.

Advocacy

Lobbying

Influencing

Convincing

Informing

Identifying who to influence

- **Government departments:** Scope which departments have the government portfolio on the issue of cluster munitions - there is likely to be a lead department, usually the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Ministry of Defence. Other departments may need to be consulted on the decision for example the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Justice and the Ministries of Social Affairs or Ministry of Health if your country is affected. Consider the policy “hook” that will get these departments interested in prioritising cluster munitions. As well as making the ethical case that cluster munitions should be banned, consider and demonstrate how joining and implementing the global ban can support multiple agendas (including international development, economic development, health care, national and regional security, international relations and tourism for example).
- **Civil Servants:** Whatever policy you are trying to influence, it will most probably be written by civil servants. Compared to parliamentarians, they are much more likely to be in their position for longer and know their topics very well. Don't underestimate the power of these people doing the desk work. Identify the civil servants working on or leading your topic and try to establish strong relationships with them.

Georges Ntidendereza, Association de Prise en Charge des Orphelins de Guerre (APECOG), Burundi:
 “Identify the people in the government who have the ability to take political decisions.”

- **Parliamentarians:** Depending on your campaign strategy and the environment you work in, you might also want to identify and create relationships with elected officials, from as many political parties as possible, to champion your cause and open doors for you to other influencers. It also helps to have supportive parliamentarians to drive the ratification or accession through to the parliamentary stage. Often there is no resistance to joining the treaty, it is just getting the decision from a desk or committee stage to a higher level, which can be slow due to competing priorities within the government.
- **Overseas Missions:** Identify and build relationships with your representatives in Geneva, New York and other relevant missions. Staff at government missions have proven to be key allies and drivers of progress on the Convention on Cluster Munitions - from the Oslo process negotiations through to the implementation. They are often the representatives attending treaty meetings, so work with them to ensure key outcome documents, messages and progress on the convention is relayed back to capital.

Serena Olgiati,

Action On Armed Violence (AOAV), UK:

“Diplomats are also human beings! So the best way to advocate for your messages is not to adopt an aggressive and challenging posture with them, but to first establish a connection with them. This can sometimes most easily be done during receptions or evening times. Once you have a better understanding of the person you are talking to, you can be much more effective in getting your advocacy messages across.”

Approaches to influencing policy makers

Once you have first considered your overall campaign strategy, identified who you need to influence and crafted your messages, here are some specific approaches you can use to influence decision makers to support and implement the ban on cluster bombs. Analyse the stages of decision making within your political system, and consider which tactics can help influence change at each stage.

• Developing partnerships

The strong partnership between governments and civil society was integral to the establishment of the Convention on Cluster Munitions - this partnership is as important as ever to make it a success.

Building lasting, positive relationships with policy makers can be very helpful to your efforts over time. Inspire and encourage those who can influence decision making to share ownership of the issue, make it their cause and be active partners in the cluster bomb ban effort. Consider appealing both to their sense of what is right and their self-interest. Some of the opportunities you can share may be valuable to them as well, including media story and photo opportunities, chances to speak at public events, participation in global days of action, participation in key meetings or field visits, or opportunities to co-organise events or initiatives.

As well as seeking support, remember to offer your support too - officials are busy and will have multiple portfolios. Be reliable and on hand help them to make the case to seniors and ministers, to be the expert, and to help do the groundwork.

• Advocacy meetings

Face-to-face advocacy meetings with policy makers are a key way to persuade them to make change. Convention on Cluster Munitions treaty meetings offer a great opportunity to lobby relevant officials and the Cluster Muniton Coalition coordinates lobby preparation around these meetings.

In your country, try to secure a meeting with a Minister or other high level representatives, and meet frequently with desk officers and other relevant officials. Consider who among your group and campaign allies may be most likely to secure an in-person lobby meeting, and who might have the most influence in a face-to-face conversation. Prepare your verbal case well, and bring a concise, effective written brief to leave behind.

The global Cluster Muniton Coalition has samples of advocacy meeting key messages you can draw from and can offer you support to help you learn how to lobby effectively in-person. Take notes and remember to document the results of your meeting afterwards for follow-up and to track your progress. Share insights with Cluster Muniton Coalition staff and campaign colleagues working with you.

Aisha Saeed,

Yemen Mine Awareness Association, Yemen:

“To find out which decision makers to target, discuss with relevant people such as your country’s Mine Action Director.”



At 2MSP © John Rodsted



A morning briefing at 4MSP



Meeting room at 3MSP

- **Informal lobbying**

Sometimes it might be too difficult or not desirable to organise a formal advocacy meeting. Instead you might want to try to talk to an official outside of a traditional policy arena. Lobbying, as the word suggests, is traditionally done in the lobbies of government buildings and elsewhere where you will meet government official outside an official meeting space. It might also be at a reception or other less formal occasions where you, and the official, are able to talk more freely. Use your informal lobbying to also establish relationships that you will be able to build on in the future.

- **Letter writing**

Writing letters to policy makers with influence is another way to persuade them to act and keep the issue on their agenda. Letters from civil society to Ministers or leaders can also help to give opportunities for designated officials to discuss the issue with superiors. Work with your government contacts to identify who to write to, and when is the most opportune time to write.

Coordinated but individualised letters which arrive at the same time can have a large impact – you could choose a symbolic day, or time coordinated letter writing ahead of a policy consultation. Alternatively ask members or partners to co-sign one letter to give it more weight. Consider which of your campaign members and allies might have the most influence as signatories. For example, members of a particular elected representative's constituency, or a respected community or faith leader may be good choices.

The number of letters policy makers receive, and who they are from can affect their impact. The Cluster Munition Coalition has samples of advocacy letters you can draw from.

Habbouba Aoun,

Landmines Resource Centre for Lebanon:

“Engage an official in the cause of a specific survivor or contaminated village of interest to the community.”

- **Round tables and workshops**

Inviting policy makers to take part in public or private round table discussions or workshops on aspects of the Convention on Cluster Munitions is another way to engage with them. These approaches can help build ongoing, positive relationships with supportive officials, and give them a platform for learning and sharing their positive views of the cluster bomb ban. It can also provide an opportunity for you to connect with the policy makers further, and build their sense of positive involvement with the issue. Consider inviting parliamentarians, government officials, diplomats, UN partners, mine action teams, NGOs, survivors and, potentially media, unless it could prohibit open dialogue.

- **Field visits**

Seeing is believing. Coordinated visits to cluster bomb-affected communities or countries can be an effective way to educate and persuade decision makers to join and implement the ban on cluster munitions. Seeing the problem and efforts to address it firsthand can have quite an impact. Field visits (including to clearance operations and victim assistance programmes) can also provide officials with opportunities for positive media coverage and experiences they can talk about afterward, which can strengthen their commitment.

Nguyen Thi Thanh Hong,
Association for Empowerment of
Persons with Disabilities (AEPD), Vietnam:

“Based on experience, I found the way to do advocacy in my context, I never opposed the government, but instead, tried to encourage them to carry out their responsibilities that also reached my advocacy targets. For example, I and my colleagues encouraged the Department of Labor, War-Invalids and Social Affairs to build an action plan to support persons with disability including victims, which is also under a program of the government.”

- **International visits/missions**

Visits by international allies of the cluster bomb ban, such as Cluster Munition Coalition ambassadors or staff, can be good opportunities to advance the ban in your country. They can provide additional chances to meet with and influence key policy makers and garner media coverage.

Also consider which states have influence on your country and work together with campaigners from countries that have already joined the convention to encourage their representatives to raise the issue bilaterally. States Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions are obliged to encourage those not yet party to ratify or accede to the convention - hold them to this responsibility and help them to fulfil it.

- **Working with international partners**

Working with international partners in your country may help you gain access to and influence decision makers. In some cases, it can be helpful to collaborate with the embassies of supportive donor countries or influential allies of your country. It can also help to work with knowledgeable UN agencies or international NGOs which have good relations with the government. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are key partners in the establishment and implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Coordinate your advocacy activity strategically with a range of key partners to have the strongest impact.

- **Treaty meetings and other regional and international events**

There is a regular schedule of international meetings which can provide good opportunities for influencing your country's policy on cluster munitions.

Every year there is a Meeting of the States Parties for the Convention on Cluster Munitions and an intersessional meeting. Every five years, there is a review conference (with the first scheduled in 2015). Smaller, less regular regional treaty meetings provide good opportunities as well.

Take advantage of other disarmament meetings such as those to support the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT) and Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). Also consider other regional and inter-governmental meetings where groups of decision makers are meeting on related issues that could also provide good chances to organise activities and advocate for the cluster bomb ban, e.g. the UN General Assembly, the UN Programme Directors Meeting, meetings of regional organisations such as the African Union, ASEAN or OAS, or events focused on the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

All meetings are opportunities for networking, advocacy, hosting side events on your work, publishing and launching reports, and more. They are also key milestones at which your country's government could announce and receive positive attention for steps forward on the ban. A [calendar](#) of events can be found on the Cluster Munition Coalition website.



CMC Meeting with Iraq's Delegation at the 4MSP



Margaret Arach Orech delivers a CMC statement



Stop Explosive Investments report launch in Denmark, 2013

• Share information

Compile and disseminate information on the issue to officials including reports and relevant materials. Share knowledge on global developments and policies on cluster munitions – for example the latest country to join, or complete stockpile destruction, or countries speaking out to condemn use.

Follow up on treaty meetings by ensuring the relevant officials have written a report on proceedings - and offer your insights to ensure the important points are highlighted.

Scope and contribute to relevant national consultations, action plans and committees that could support progress on the Convention on Cluster Munitions in your country. Offer expertise, suggest talking points, and provide encouragement for progress.

• Be the expert

Time and again policy makers report their appreciation for the expertise of Cluster Munition Coalition members – be the expert that helps your country join and/or implement the global ban. If you need support to build your confidence, Cluster Munition Coalition members and staff are here to help you with that. If you need a specialist in a particular technical aspect of the treaty (to attend a meeting contribute to a consultation, or review a document you have produced for example) - reach out for support from campaign colleagues around the world

Preparing for an advocacy meeting

- Be clear about your objectives for the meeting, such as getting information or changing the person's position.
- Determine your main message. What are you asking this decision maker to do?
- Decide if you will attend on your own, or with others, then prepare and rehearse your arguments and answers to possible questions.
- Create personal background notes on previous developments, previous interaction, and officials' stance on the issue.
- Know key facts and figures, and try to show the humanitarian impact of the weapon on people.
- Prepare specific questions you need answers to, for example on a decision-making process or timeline.
- Consider preparing a briefing note or materials to share with the person.
- Be polite and respectful, even if disagreeing, and thank the officials for their time.
- Take notes during the meeting including action points, and share with Cluster Munition Coalition staff and campaign colleagues.
- Know when part (or all) of a discussion is off the record and do not take notes at that point.
- Take a business card or contact details and follow up after your meeting.

Ema Tagicakibau,

Pacific Concerns Research Centre, Fiji:

"I round off the meeting by requesting regular 'talanoa'. That is Fijian for 'talk time' - an informal story telling session. During such sessions you can update each other on what is happening on the CCM treaty front e.g. government progress on reports, assistance with report template, etc. The Fijian government appreciates such opportunities as it can be their only source of information on the CCM."

More resources:

- [Building a campaign strategy](#)
- [CMC government resources](#)
- [Why and how all states should join the Convention on Cluster Munitions](#)

