

Advocating the Right to Education in Tanzania:

The experience of HakiElimu's using Media to advocate for Accountability, Equity and Transparency in Education Budget Planning and Expenditure

Context

HakiElimu, a Swahili blend for *right to education*, is a Tanzania's based organization adopting a human rights approach in advocating for quality education. The organization tirelessly advocates for education believing that it is through strategic investment in education, Tanzania would develop requisite human capital to propel the country's development. The media advocacy campaign have been strategically designed to address issues around teachers' salaries and incentives, increased budget in the education sector, money reaching schools as budgeted and on time, transparency, good governance for improved quality of education. Since its establishment in 2001, HakiElimu has strategically resorted to using various media advocacy campaigns to promote quality education for all.

Rationale for media advocacy

Media is widely regarded as the 'fourth estate', existing separately from the executive, legislative and judicial estates; and watches over them for the public good and the good of democracy¹. This is referred to as a 'watchdog' function of the media, defending democracy and public interest. In other words, the media is supposed to influence or sometimes provoke the government to deliver quality services in the interest of the people. However, the watchdog role of the media can sometimes be compromised in the clutter of political manipulations and market forces, which in the end do not necessarily guarantee better media products.

Experience from Tanzania and many other African countries shows that media has the power to influence change by influence people to know their rights and demand or the rights provider to respond to these demands. In Tanzania for example we have seen that, 'things' happen only when they are reported by mass media and reaching as many people as possible within a short time.

In other words, key public and policy decisions are made by governments as a result of demands, realities and pressure emanating from increased public awareness and knowledge from media coverage. Likewise, individuals and the

¹ Willis, J and Willis, W. J (2007) The media effect. How the news influence politics and government.

public as a whole take actions within their capacity as a result of increased awareness and knowledge from media coverage. It is the way that the media has the potential to influence public agenda.

HakiElimu has been working closely with the media to advance the public good of opening up the right to education, improve budget transparency and expenditure and management of public funds for the benefit of all people and development of the country. This is advocacy work that strategically uses the mass media and community to organize for advancing a social or public policy initiative.

Renowned media experts, Wallack, L and Dorfman, L (1996) assert that media advocacy addresses the power gap rather than just the information gap. It is therefore not just like any work that is expected to produce information or news stories. It is in most cases focusing on public policy rather than personal behavior; and this is how civil societies can effectively use media to bring about change in policy and budget, but as well as among citizens.

The proponents of media advocacy argue that it can lead to larger victories when used as a complement to community organizing in the context of a larger strategic vision for policy change. Like policy advocacy, media advocacy is best done in the context of clear long-term goals; conscious framing, guiding the choice of spokespeople, visuals, and messages, in altering media coverage and public debate of policies.

It is in view of these theoretical and contextual realities, that a significant amount of HakiElimu's work has been implemented through media. Tanzania is such a vast country; bringing people on board to demand and contribute to the realization of rights to education wouldn't have been possible if it was not for the use of media.

HakiElimu believes that it is through the people; that the organization can record significant advances in realizing the right to education. This is reinforced by the fact that it is the people who stand to suffer or benefit from the policies, programs, budgets and decisions that are made by authorities for them. Participation of the people in each of these can improve the content and representation of priorities. Media thus offers this important platform for citizens to voice out their opinions and priorities for improving the state of any sector or development programs in a manner that cannot be easily ignored by policy makers and government leaders.

HakiElimu's work has therefore, always revolved around raising people's awareness and promoting stakeholders' interventions in the hope that, when people are aware of;

- 1) the pressing issues and challenges in realizing the right to education, equal allocation of resources and good governance (in leadership and financial management)
- 2) know the benefits of adopting or taking a certain decisions, and appreciate that the move would benefit them,
- 3) know practicable actions to take; and
- 4) know how to manage or mitigate the challenges and risks associated with taking certain decisions; then, they are likely to contribute individually and/or collectively in improving education.

HakiElimu's media advocacy work therefore, has been crafted along the above four principles. The role of media in furthering and complementing the work of HakiElimu cannot be over-emphasized, considering that the organization's office is in Dar es Salaam , the business capital of Tanzania (This is the **case with most CSOs around the world that have one office/center**). HakiElimu therefore, uses media because;

- Media channels (e.g. radio, mobile phones, TV, social media, etc) can reach the masses of people more quickly and comprehensively
- Media can initiate agenda for public attention/discussion
- Media offer a possibility to share advocacy messages, not information alone
- Media can harness mass support and public pressure on issues advocated by the organization.

The use of media per se does not guarantee public support, until it involves clear and creative packaging, use of evidence based research and investigative journalism, crafting and strategic placement of the messages in order to attract public attention, and the attention of the government and policy makers. There are times when your messages can be designed to create awareness, educate and lobby for change; but there are times when messages have to be firm, provocative and annoying to stimulate and force change to happen.

Media advocacy model that other CSOs can adopt

HakiElimu's media advocacy observes an in-house model that was derived from vast experience and expertise in communication and media relations. HakiElimu does not have a communication strategy and we do not bother to develop one because of the political influence in the education sector. As things are never predictable, therefore, nay rigid communication strategy might not be useful.

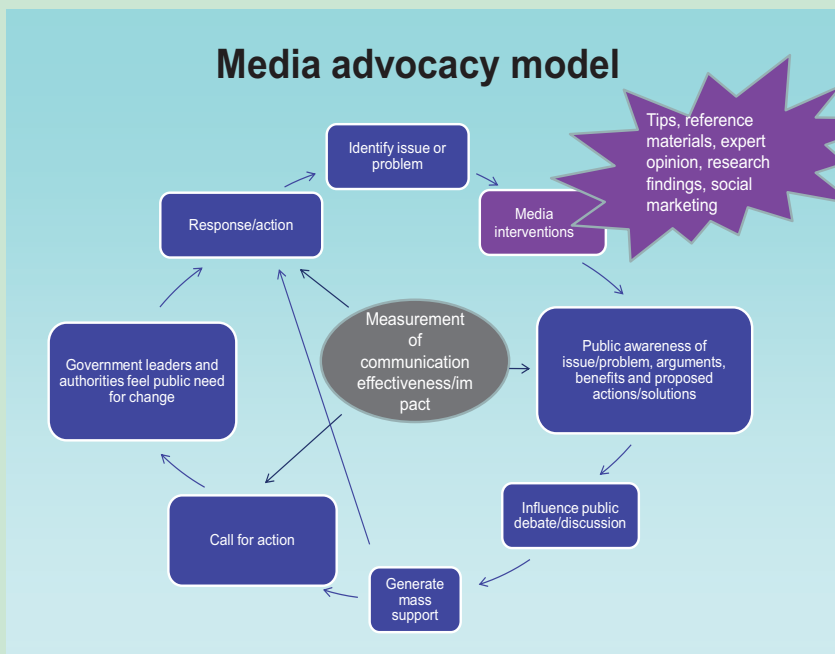
The model therefore, establishes that HakiElimu's media interventions should be built on carefully identified issues or challenges in education, emanating from informed, analytical and evidence- based research or public opinion. This provides an entry point to attracting public attention, considering that advocacy messages will be based on accurate information and data and true scenarios.

The messages are broadly shared to the public through a variety of media channels; print, electronic, digital and social media networks-to expand public awareness over the issues; and promote desirable actions and interventions. In addition to getting the public aware of an issue or problem, HakiElimu wants to see people owning the process of influencing and demanding the right to education through arguments, ideas and views they share among each other and in various social forums and networks. HakiElimu believes that when this is encouraged and supported broadly, it is likely to lead to mass support and demand over the issues raised.

Mass support compels individuals or social groups to do what is in their capacity to change the prevailing situation, or exert pressure on the government leaders or other authorities to act. Basically, HakiElimu supports thoughtful citizen engagement rather than public confrontation in pushing for desired changes in education. To improve the campaign and determine what has been achieved, HakiElimu assesses communication effectiveness at three levels;

- i. public awareness of the issues advocated (***budget information can be very complicated deliberately and therefore creative and innovative means to create awareness/educate the public is crucial***)
- ii. communication tools, messages and strategy used
- iii. nature and scope of responses/actions or impact as a result of interventions made.

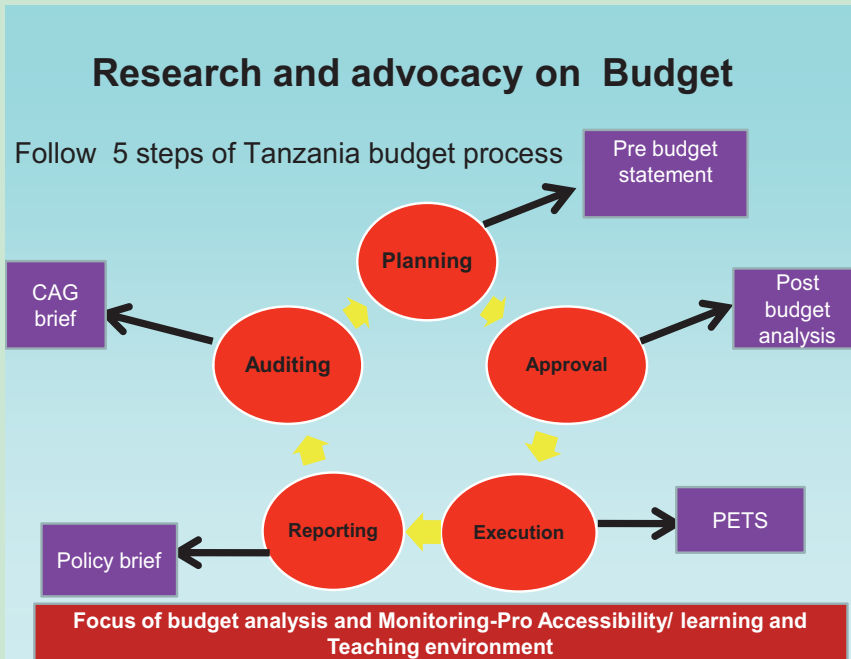
Below is a graphical representation of HakiElimu’s media advocacy model.



HakiElimu Media Interventions Around Budget Work

HakiElimu media advocacy starts when the research findings on budget or policy are completed and compiled in form of reports or briefs (2-4 pages). As outlined in the HakiElimu’s media advocacy model, media interventions play a crucial role to disseminate the issue or problem(s) discovered in the research findings for public awareness. Media interventions have been successfully in HakiElimu’s advocacy work because we believe and strive to produce evidence based research, (*“No research no right to speak”*). All our media work is informed by *research or investigation* that generates findings to inform our advocacy campaigns. We use findings from the field or government/official documents or announcements/promises by leaders. In budget our work follows budget process, step by step through investigation, budget and expenditure review, budget analysis and so on. Sometimes Journalists are involved throughout the process of budget work.

Below is the visual presentation of the experience of HakiElimu’s Research on budget and policy advocacy.



Media advocacy offers a variety of techniques and interventions that may be applicable in certain political and social contexts. HakiElimu’s media advocacy largely focuses on: Investigative Reporting, Media Programs, Media Spots, Media Engagement and Popular Publications.

1) Investigative Reporting

Investigative journalism is a pertinent feature of good journalism, especially when it comes to specific sectors or budget work. It is often in the form of a budget survey and analysis, media reporting provides extra information. However, this may not be established without media investigations. It is in this light that, HakiElimu supports journalists and media houses to understand the budget in relation to education policy to enable them to undertake investigative reporting on education. Such investigations are crucial and necessary in promoting budget issues in education in Tanzania (budget allocation and expenditure). They help to understand the state of education in the country, for example, how funds are allocated and spent, and the experiences and the situation of education delivery in relation to the budget in different parts of the

country. Additional information, which may not appear in press conferences or public statements, has also been generated through investigative journalism.

2) Media Programs (TV and Radio programs)

HakiElimu produces TV and radio programs in promoting education ideas and examples that can work in the Tanzania context. This is in addition to raising the prevailing challenges on the ground, revealing what is happening or not happening in different parts of the country. The programs are produced independently. Radio broadcasting has been very cost effective in reaching the rural audiences. In fact, media audience studies reveal that radio is the most effective medium of communication in Tanzania so far. Advocacy through TV and radio programs conforms with HakiElimu's mission that wants to enable people to transform education, in and out of schools; influence policy making, budget decisions and effective policy or budget implementation; stimulate imaginative public dialogue and social change; advance participation, accountability, transparency and social justice.

3) Media Spots

These are essentially short (about a minute long) advocacy materials produced for TV and radio broadcast. They are meant to be catchy, powerful and provocative; portraying the situation on the ground and proposing a line of action that can help solve or minimize the challenges. The spots need to be developed out of well researched and analyzed information that depicts the situation and presents facts and data objectively. It is advisable to use official data (from policy or budget perspective); various credible sources can therefore be reviewed. In this view, the information coming from researches or public expenditure tracking, social audit surveys is a necessary ingredient for script/creative brief writing. This presents a creative way to advocate for emerging issues from research.

High level of creativity would capture ideal scenarios that the audiences could easily identify with, and easily understand. Exaggeration and inaccurate information/data should be avoided on this because they would be contrary to reality. And this would create an environment for the campaign to fail, right from the beginning. It is therefore, advisable to pre-test the messages before broadcast. This is a professional requirement in preparing communication materials. They have to communicate the intended messages, and make sense to the target audience, and persuade or provoke the target audience to take the required actions.

4) Media Engagement

Media engagement is a very important aspect of HakiElimu's work. Besides information dissemination through media, we establish and maintain supportive and professional relations with the media. HakiElimu has always projected itself to the media as an organization with expert knowledge on education. The media thus see HakiElimu more than an advocacy organization. They see it as a partner and a resource organization that can provide informed analysis, tips and support on matters related to education. Because of the need to strengthen relations with the media, HakiElimu participates in strategic meetings with media organizations, editors and journalists' organizations. Strategically, it is too late and unprofessional for an organization to seek media support only when it is in trouble (trying to mend the image), or when there is information to take to the target audience.

Cultivating good media relations requires carefully chosen tactics. The media is not one entity. Each one has its own editorial policy, specific audiences and outreach (circulation). Each media house prefers to work with organizations that are collaborating with them. Therefore, any perceived bias over specific media houses would be bad news to media houses that feel they are ignored; and therefore, can be counterproductive. Although it is not realistic to involve each media house on everything, the strategy needs to be carefully designed and executed. Sometimes, it is advisable to identify a list of journalists the organization can work with. These are journalists with passion for the issues/themes that the organization works on. The passion may be a result of self interest of the journalist or cultivate through mentorship, coaching or specific training. The organization needs to come up with different ways to identify or create this passion among potential journalists.

5) Popular Publications

HakiElimu has been producing popular publications meant for average readers. These publications offer simplified information that can be easily understood by anybody with average literacy skills. Simplification of the information is imperative for communicating policy, budget, research and academic information to ordinary citizens. The exercise of simplifying the information requires specific set of skills. These include graphic layout and designing, as well as story writing. Organizations can outsource some of the assignments for quality work.



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