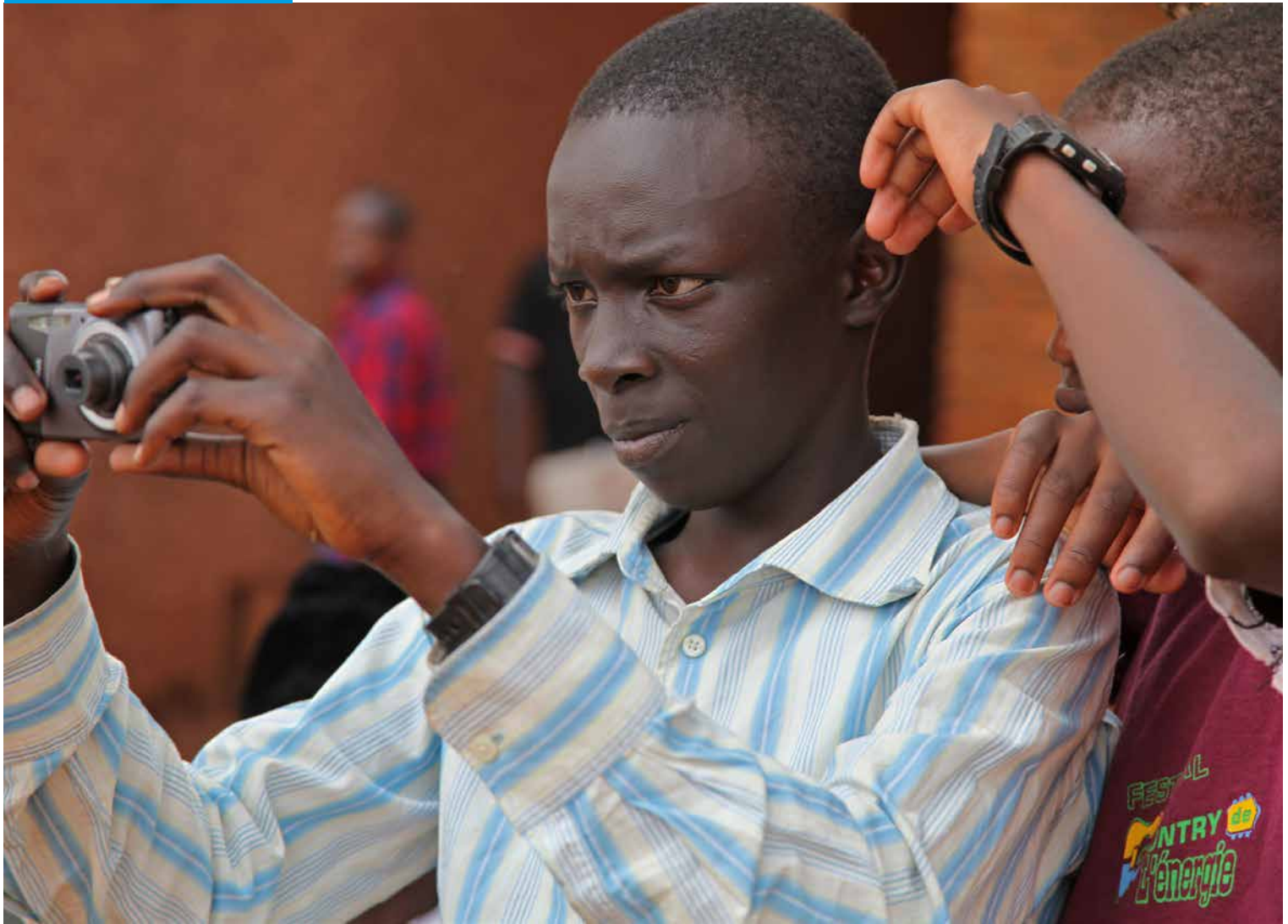


THE ADVOCACY STRATEGY KIT



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
INTERNATIONAL



A guide to a carefully worked out advocacy strategy

About the advocacy strategy kit

SOS Children's Villages stands up for children. We make communities and decision makers aware of children's rights. We work to improve policies and practices that undermine the well-being of children at risk of losing parental care, and for those who have already lost it. We encourage children to speak up and take part in advocacy processes that affect their lives.

Before implementing advocacy activities aimed at improving policies and practices, you need a carefully worked out advocacy strategy. An advocacy strategy must be based on a number of important analyses that enable you to understand

the context, your advocacy target groups, risks and opportunities. This advocacy strategy kit will guide you through the process.

The advocacy strategy kit is developed especially for staff, but volunteers, parents, children and youth with SOS Children's Villages and other organisations can also use the kit. Local leaders, authorities, teachers and others who work with SOS Children's Villages may also benefit from the advocacy strategy kit.

When you have carefully worked out your advocacy strategy, SOS Children's Villages' *Advocacy pocket*



book will help you implement your advocacy. Advocacy is not a one-off activity. It is a strategic process involving a number of steps. These are all described in the *Advocacy pocket book*.

If you skip parts of the advocacy strategy process, you are less likely to achieve positive, sustainable changes in legislation, policy and practice.

Based on our experience as practitioners, successful advocacy leads to sustainable changes that ensure that children can fully enjoy their rights in a supportive environment.



Photo: Lotte Ladegaard

Important advice before you start

Developing an advocacy strategy takes time and involves teamwork. Often, advocacy strategies are developed by the coordinator, the head of programme or a consultant to save time. Unfortunately, this approach makes it almost impossible for other staff, volunteers and project participants, including the children, to feel any kind of ownership for the strategy.

Without ownership among those who are to implement the strategy, it usually ends up on a shelf, advocacy activities quickly petering out or ending as scattered events. Even scattered events consume time, but they usually fail to improve policies and practices that undermine the well-being of children at risk of losing parental care, and for those who have already lost it.

Advocacy is a process, and so is the development of a strategy. Therefore, SOS Children's Villages recommends that you allot at least three days to work out a comprehensive, realistic and thoroughly thought-out strategy. Invite the same relevant staff, volunteers, parents and children all three days. Remember that children usually find it difficult to speak out if they are on their own or there is only a few of them, so you need to invite at least as many children as adults.

Appoint one staff member who knows the children very well to be responsible for creating space for the children's voices throughout the workshop. Remember that the aim and the process must be carefully explained to the children throughout in a child-friendly way if the process is to make any sense to them. Include games and energizers to make the strategy workshop fun for all.

Make sure to take substantial notes in the advocacy development process, appoint one staff member to be responsible for writing up the strategy and timeframe and set deadlines to ensure that the process is carried forward right away. Experience shows that insufficient notes, no division of responsibilities and a lack of deadlines slow advocacy down or bring it to a halt, even after the strategy process has been completed.

Determine your advocacy issue

How you embark on the advocacy strategy process depends on whether you already have a project document and a logframe with indicators or if you are selecting the advocacy issue(s) as a part of developing a new project.

If you already have a project document and a logframe with indicators: First, go through all the objectives, outputs and indicators in the matrix and determine which ones you can only achieve with the help of advocacy because they require changes in policy, legislation or practice – or all three. Then, carry out the analysis below.

If you are planning a new project and want to develop your advocacy component: Carry out the analysis below now.

Analysis to determine your advocacy issue(s)

Begin by:

- 1. Identifying the problem(s)** you want to address through advocacy. You should:

Either: Extract the objectives, outputs and indicators from your matrix that are only possible to achieve with the help of advocacy because they require changes in policy, legislation or practice – or all three.

Or: If you do not have a matrix, consider the objectives in your new project. Then, identify the problems that need to be addressed with advocacy if you are to fulfil those objectives.



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When you have identified your problem(s), you will have to look at:

2. The barriers to solving the problem(s).

There may be many barriers, for example, cultural and economic barriers, a lack of knowledge or political unwillingness. List as many barriers as you can.

Then ask yourself:

3. Which changes in policy, legislation and practice would help remove these barriers? Consider:

- Should new policies, legislation or new practices be created if we are to overcome the problems and barriers listed in 1) and 2) in order to achieve our objectives and indicators? If yes, which new policies, legislation or practices are needed?
- Should old policies, legislation or practices be removed if we are to overcome the problems and barriers listed in 1) and 2) in order to achieve our objectives and indicators? If yes, which old policies, legislation and practices are to be removed?
- Should existing policies, legislation or practices be changed if we are to overcome the problems and barriers listed in 1) and 2) in order to achieve our objectives and indicators? If yes, which existing policies, legislation and practices are to be changed?
- Is the implementation of existing policies and legislation challenging? If yes, why?

Any questions that you responded “yes” to in number 3. are your advocacy issues.

Please continue to **step 2**.



Photo: Lotte Ladegaard



Photo: Lotte Ladegaard

Evaluating and ranking advocacy issues

You may feel that you have to work on numerous advocacy issues if you are to achieve your objectives and fulfil your indicators and outputs, but it is important to be very selective.

Most advocacy efforts require a lot of time, economic and human resources. You are more likely to succeed if you focus on one or two issues at a time. At the same time, not all issues are suited for advocacy because they may be too demanding to achieve.

Your advocacy issue should always be clearly linked to your organisation's mission, programmatic priorities and strategic focus areas. If this is not the case, you will not have the authority you need to address it.

As your advocacy priorities must be clear, you have to evaluate, rank and narrow down your advocacy issues. The following analysis will help you select the best and most achievable advocacy issue(s).

If you selected many issues in the previous step, pick out the three most important ones and do the following evaluation for each one separately.

Evaluation of advocacy issues

Circle one answer for each of the 13 questions.

Question 1: You want to change legislation, policy and/or practices. If your advocacy issue is not very specific it will be difficult to design a strong strategy.

Is the problem you want to change absolutely clear?

- ☐ 1 Very clear
- ☐ 2 Somewhat clear
- ☐ 3 Unclear

Question 2: Does your advocacy issue benefit many programmes or very large programmes in your organisation, or will it only affect a few of your project participants?

- 1 Minimum four programmes or very large programmes
- 2 Two to three programmes
- 3 One programme or project

Question 3: How much time, money and human resources will you need to work on the selected advocacy issue?

- 1 Very little time, money and human resources
- 2 Some time, money and human resources
- 3 A lot of time, money and human resources

Question 4: How likely is it that you will succeed?

- 1 Very likely
- 2 Maybe
- 3 Unlikely

Question 5: How much time will it take to achieve your advocacy issue?

- 1 Less than one year
- 2 One to two years
- 3 More than three years

Question 6: Does the general public support your advocacy issue?

- 1 Very supportive
- 2 Maybe
- 3 The general public shows opposition

Question 7: Are policymakers supportive of your advocacy issue?

- 1 Very supportive
- 2 Maybe
- 3 They show opposition

Question 8: Is there a risk that your advocacy activities on the issue will hurt your organisation's reputation, decrease your funding, or put your staff and project participants in danger?

- 1 No
- 2 Maybe
- 3 Yes, there is a risk

Question 9: Will your advocacy activities on the issue improve your reputation, help you get new funding and make your organisation more known and respected?

- 1 Yes
- 2 Maybe
- 3 No

Question 10: Do you have enough financial resources to advocate for your issue?

- 1 Yes, we already have funds
- 2 Funding will most likely be available
- 3 No

Question 11: How many partners and networks do you have that will support your advocacy activities on this issue?

- 1 Three or more
- 2 One or two
- 3 None

Question 12: Do you have evidence that this advocacy issue is important for many people?

- 1 Yes
- 2 Maybe
- 3 No

Question 13: Is the issue important for your organisation and in line with your organisation's mission and values?

- 1 Very much
- 2 Somewhat
- 3 Not really

Rating your issues

Now, for each advocacy issue evaluation, count how many times you circled answers 1, 2 and 3.

If your evaluation shows many 1s and 2s, your advocacy issue is probably good.

If your evaluation shows mainly 2s and 3s, your advocacy issue is probably not very good.

Select the best advocacy issue and write it down so that it is clear to everyone.

Then, move on to **step 3**.

Assessing the environment

When you do advocacy you have to be very clear about who you are trying to influence, the opportunities that exist for influencing them and what the risks involved are. Advocacy takes place in the public arena, and it may provoke people and push things in the opposite direction of what you intend if you are not well prepared.

When you involve children and youth in advocacy you also have an obligation to take care that

they do not suffer unintentionally or face negative consequences. In-depth analysis will aid you in taking any necessary precautions.

Complete the following assessment, which covers five different areas. Circle one answer for each question and elaborate upon your response when applicable.



A. Assessment of the legal situation

Question 1A: Are there any limitations on what civil society organisations, citizens and the media may do or communicate in your country? Limitations could, for example be on freedom of (critical) speech, limitations on freedom of assembly, or issues that are now illegal but that you would like to legalise – or the opposite.

- 1 Yes
Elaborate: Which limitations? How will these affect your advocacy activities?
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

Question 2A: Does your government have laws and/or policies addressing your advocacy issue?

- 1 Yes
Elaborate: Which laws and policies? Do they have any deficiencies?
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

Question 3A: Are the laws and policies addressing your advocacy issue being implemented?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
Elaborate: Why not?
- 3 Don't know

Question 4A: Is your government planning to issue laws and/or policies or to review existing laws and/or policies related to your advocacy issues?

- 1 Yes
Elaborate: Which laws and policies? How will existing laws be reviewed?
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

B. Assessment of public support

Question 1B: How much does the general public know about your advocacy issue?

- 1 Very informed
- 2 Have limited knowledge
- 3 Don't know

Question 2B: How does the general public view your advocacy issue?

- 1 The general public is supportive
- 2 The general public shows opposition
- 3 The general public is neutral
- 4 Don't know

C. Assessment of the media

Question 1C: Do you know which media and journalists are the most influential concerning your advocacy issue?

- 1 Yes
Please list the names of the media and journalists.
- 2 No



Photo: Lotte Ladegaard

Question 2C: Has your advocacy issue been covered by the media within the last two years?

- 1 Yes
Elaborate: By which media? How was the issue described?
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

D. Assessment of other advocacy efforts and possible partners

Question 1D: Has your organisation or any other civil society organisations conducted successful advocacy activities related to your advocacy issue in recent years?

- 1 Yes
Elaborate: Who did the advocacy? What did they achieve? Why did they succeed?
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

Question 2D: Has your organisation or any other civil society organisations conducted unsuccessful advocacy activities related to your advocacy issue in recent years?

- 1 Yes
Elaborate: Who did the advocacy? Why were they unsuccessful?
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

Question 3D: Are other civil society organisations, networks or coalitions conducting advocacy activities about your advocacy issue for the time being?

- 1 Yes
Elaborate: Who are they? Would they be willing to cooperate with you?
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

Question 4D: Do you know which specific civil society organisations, networks or coalitions are most widely consulted or have the greatest influence with policymakers on your advocacy issue?

- 1 Yes
Elaborate: Who are they? Would they be willing to cooperate with you?
- 2 No



E. Assessment of policymakers

Question 1E: How much does the government know about your advocacy issue?

- 1 A lot
- 2 Some
- 3 Nothing

Question 2E: How does the government view your advocacy issue?

- 1 It is supportive
- 2 It is neutral
- 3 It is opposed

Question 3E: Do you have access to any influential local or national policymakers, agencies, committees



Photo: Lotte Ladegaard

or institutions that can bring your advocacy issue forward to the government?

- 1 Yes
Elaborate: Who do you have access to? What would they be willing to do for you?
- 2 No

Question 4E: Are you aware of formal or informal channels or mechanisms that may be used by civil society to bring forward input and comments on laws, policies and implementation of laws and policies?

- 1 Yes
Please describe the formal and informal channels and mechanisms.
- 2 No

Question 5E: Do you know where policymakers usually seek information when they draft laws and policies concerning your advocacy issue?

- 1 Yes
Elaborate: Where do they seek information?
- 2 No

Now that you have completed the assessment, review which questions you responded 'no' and 'don't know' to. As a part of your advocacy strategy, allocate time in the future to research the answers to better prepare yourselves for advocacy. This research can be time consuming.

Develop your advocacy strategy

Now you are ready to work out your actual advocacy strategy. During this process, use the information you have already gathered and analysed.

It is important to remember that the development of an advocacy strategy is not necessarily a linear process. You need to be flexible and sometimes you have to jump ahead, go back or review steps you have already taken.

Changes in the political environment, such as new risks and opportunities and reactions from individuals and institutions, can affect your advocacy strategy and the activities you plan to carry out. As a result, you should revisit your previous research and analyses every now and then during the advocacy implementation phase to check whether your findings are still valid.

government structures that can help you reach and put pressure on the duty bearers who have the power to ensure the change in legislation, policy and/or practice that you are advocating. List these.

6. Strategy to reach the primary and secondary target group(s) for advocacy

Please respond to each question:

- 6.1 How can these target groups ensure the necessary change?
- 6.2 How is their position and interests on your issue?

The advocacy strategy

1. Background

Brief context and situational analysis – what's the problem? Why advocate for the issue?

2. Overall objective/aim

List your project's development objective and the immediate objective(s) that pertain to the advocacy issue(s) you chose in step 1.

3. Output/indicators

In your logframe, find the output/indicators that pertain to the advocacy issue(s) you have chosen. List the relevant output/indicators here.

4. Advocacy issue(s)

List the advocacy issue(s) you selected in step 2.

5. Advocacy target group(s)

Advocacy target groups can be divided into two categories:

A. Primary advocacy target group(s): Duty bearers who have the power to ensure the change in legislation, policy and/or practice that you are advocating.

List these.

B. Secondary advocacy target group(s):

Individuals, institutions, organisations and local



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- 6.3 Who influences them?
- 6.4 Do we (SOS Children's Villages, community based organisations, youth and children's clubs) have any direct or indirect way of influencing them? For example, do we know anyone personally? Or do we know someone who knows someone personally?
- 6.5 If yes, how can they help us?

7. Opponents to the advocacy issue(s)

Some people, institutions, organisations and government structures may oppose your advocacy issue(s). As a result, you need to analyse these possible opponents and be prepared to add them as a potential third target group for advocacy activities. In the process, refer to your analysis in step 3.

Please respond to each question:

- 7.1 Are there people, institutions, organisations or government structures who will oppose your efforts and act negatively?
- 7.2 Do they have the power to stop or work against you?
- 7.3 Can they cause any risks or unintended consequences?
- 7.4 What is their position on and interest in your issue?
- 7.5 Who influences them?
- 7.6 Do we (SOS Children's Villages, community based organisations, youth and children's clubs) have any direct or indirect ways of influencing these opponents? For instance, does anyone in your organisation know the opponents personally?
- 7.7 If no, how will you then target these opponents?



8. Allies/partners for advocacy on your issue

Advocacy is much more powerful if civil society organisations, networks and coalitions stand together on changes in legislation, policy and practice. Please respond to these questions:

- 8.1 Which civil society organisations, networks and coalitions can you work with and get support from?
- 8.2 How can they contribute? For example, with human resources, funding, political and media connections, advocacy, communications and technical expertise.

9. Advocacy activities, tools and methods

Advocacy is not a one-off event but consists of a number of activities. The core message in all activities must revolve around your selected advocacy issue(s), and it has to be interesting and relevant to your target groups. Include child-friendly advocacy activities to make it more interesting and relevant for children and youth to participate.

Find inspiration in step 6 in the *Advocacy pocket book*.

You need to plan advocacy activities targeting various duty bearers and possible opponents, but you also need to include other activities in your advocacy strategy:

- 9.1 Conducting further research on questions you could not respond clearly to during the analysis in steps one, two and three. You may also need additional information on your advocacy issue and for your policy analysis if legislation and policy change is your goal.

Make a list of the types of research and analysis you foresee will be necessary to engage in.
- 9.2 Efficient advocacy usually requires mobilisation of relevant adults and children in the community to put additional pressure on duty bearers. Who will you mobilise and how?
- 9.3 Are there any key stakeholders you would like to engage? For example, local leaders, teachers, children? Describe how you will go about engaging them.

10. Key messages

What are you going to tell target groups, opponents, partners and allies, and those you want to mobilise? Your key message should be one that can be simply and consistently communicated, whether in

a radio interview or over the backyard fence. It can be adapted depending on who the recipient is or the advocacy tool and methods being used, but no one should ever doubt that it is the same key message every time throughout the advocacy campaign.

The key message should be used for presentations to groups, articles in newsletters, news releases, letters to the editor, speeches, Theatre for Development, songs, leaflets, publications, banners and exhibitions.

11. Call to action

You also will want to have a clear call to action. What do you want each group to do? Be prepared to provide concrete ways that each group can demonstrate its support of your advocacy issue.

12. Timeline, roles and responsibilities

Work out a plan that includes all of the activities listed in number 9, follow-up activities, period, materials and human resources required, permissions and appointments needed, responsible persons and budget estimates.

Often, advocacy becomes stronger if it takes place when there is already a general focus on the problems you are trying to solve because then you can tag along with other activities already taking place.

Simple tables help make planning easier. For example:

| Activity | Follow-up | Period |
|----------|-----------|--------|
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Now you are ready to implement your advocacy strategy. In the process, refer to the *Advocacy pocket book*.



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| | Materials and human resources required | Permissions and appointments | Responsible persons | Budget |
|--|--|------------------------------|---------------------|--------|
| | | | | |
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What is advocacy to SOS Children's Villages?

Advocacy is taking action to improve policies and practices that undermine the well-being of children at risk of losing parental care, or those who have already lost it. Successful advocacy, based on our experience as practitioners, leads to sustainable changes that ensure that these children can fully enjoy their rights in a supportive environment.

Awareness-raising is not advocacy but an essential part of advocacy because it builds understanding about rights and it may help you persuade others to become involved in your advocacy activities.



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