

Comparison Paper: Organisational approaches to humanitarian advocacy

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Save the Children:

- *Guidance note: 'Development of an advocacy strategy'*
- *Humanitarian Advocacy: Emergency Standard Operating Procedures*

Oxfam:

- *Humanitarian Advocacy Toolkit*

Preface

This paper forms part of a Review conducted for UNICEF of its humanitarian advocacy practice (see main Synthesis report for ToR). UNICEF's Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) commissioned the Review to analyse the way UNICEF undertakes advocacy in response to sudden-onset humanitarian crises and to critical events occurring within more protracted crises. The Review is intended to provide an evidence base and analysis of humanitarian advocacy practice in the response to such crises, and to recommend ways to strengthen that practice. In particular it considers the question of UNICEF's *comparative advantage* as a humanitarian advocate. One related element of the Review involved drawing comparisons with the advocacy practice of other agencies, in order to identify potential lessons for UNICEF. This paper consolidates the results of those organisational comparisons.

This paper consists in part of a dossier of relevant materials that we believe may be helpful to UNICEF as it reviews its own practice in this area. We would stress, however, that much useful material already exists within UNICEF itself, as noted in the Synthesis report. What is perhaps most useful about the material presented here is not the detail – some of which is organisation-specific – but the underlying method and approach to advocacy, and in particular the systematic approach to identifying priorities and targets for influence.

We would like to thank the organisations concerned (Oxfam GB, Save the Children UK, UNHCR and Human Rights Watch) for sharing their materials and for being willing to discuss their own views and experiences of humanitarian advocacy in practice.

1. Introduction

In this section we consider the way in which other organisations conceive and organise their humanitarian advocacy. Of these, one is another UN agency (UNHCR), two are humanitarian NGOs, (Oxfam and Save the Children Alliance) and one is a human rights agency (Human Rights Watch). The spread is deliberately wide, and these are clearly very different types of organisation. In particular, a major distinction must be drawn in terms of mandate, role and accountability between inter-governmental bodies like UNICEF or UNHCR, and non-governmental bodies like Oxfam and Save. Nevertheless, there is a clear overlap of agendas between these agencies and all of them have advocacy as a major component of their activities. Comparison can shed light on the ways in which agencies seek to influence policy and practice in humanitarian situations and how they organise themselves to do so.

UNICEF and UNHCR staff sometimes look with envy at the NGOs which seem to have the freedom to speak publicly as they do not. Certainly the NGOs are more vocal, but they too can struggle to find their voice – or to decide between competing priorities, particularly where the concerns of multiple affiliates have to be reconciled. The essential difference between them is a function of their respective status as intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies. For the most part, UNICEF works from the ‘inside’ based on a close, on-going working relationship with host governments; humanitarian NGOs tend to work on the ‘outside’, although this distinction has to some extent become blurred in recent years as the larger international NGOs have established partnerships with governments.

Both the IGOs and NGOs rely, ultimately, on the good will of the host government to operate in a given country. In this they are distinct from an organisation like Human Rights Watch, which works not only outside the sphere of government but is often openly critical of it – and does not depend on political good will to pursue its activities. This can be both a strength and a weakness. Certainly it complicates the relationship between the humanitarian and the human rights agencies. While the human rights agencies do not have a specific focus on humanitarian contexts, they often concern themselves with breaches of human rights and humanitarian law in crisis contexts, and so find themselves overlapping with the ‘protection’ agendas of the humanitarians. In contexts like Darfur, this can create major problems of government perception.

For the IGOs and NGOs, the nature of their relationship with (and dependence upon) host governments complicates the issue of advocacy – which, by its nature, is often aimed at changing the policies and practices of those same governments. Their attempts to do so may involve more or less consensual or adversarial approaches – the IGOs tending to the former, the NGOs to the latter approach.

As the following sections show, even between the two IGOs compared here (UNICEF and UNHCR) there are significant differences of approach and emphasis, in part based on their different agendas of concern. The paper is structured as follows. We begin by considering the issue of organisational mandates, missions and aims, then go on to look at how different organisations pursue advocacy in practice and some of the issues arising – particularly as regards the relationship between advocacy

and other elements of an organisation's programme of activities. We conclude by drawing potential lessons for UNICEF from the practice of the other organisations reviewed.

2. Organisational mandates, missions and aims

Oxfam and Save the Children

The two humanitarian and development NGOs considered as comparator organisations share many similar features in their mandates, missions and *modus operandi*. As non-governmental bodies, neither has a formal mandate – although both claim to draw legitimacy from the nature and extent of their support from the general public. Both organisations now constitute international families of NGOs, each constituted as a charitable organisation in its respective country and each governed by its own national law. By way of example, UK Charity Law puts the following conditions on permissible advocacy and campaign works by charities like Oxfam and Save:

Advocacy and Campaigning

Campaigning and advocacy work by UK charities is subject to guidance from the Charity Commission. This allows charities to undertake advocacy and campaigning provided:

- The advocacy and campaigning is an ancillary activity;
- it is based on 'well founded' and 'reasoned' argument;
- supporters and the public are encouraged to participate on the basis of informed opinion;
- it is carried out within the law;
- it is conducted 'responsibly';
- direct action is limited to peaceful demonstrations.

By 'ancillary' the Charity Commission mean that the policy changes being promoted by the charity must further the charity's objects, and must not dominate activities which the charity itself undertakes to directly support its beneficiaries. The Commission sees a difference between a charity 'contributing to public debate' by expressing a point of view, and using funds to mobilise public opinion to apply pressure on a government to change policy or practice.

The basis for advocacy of these and the other organisations compared in this paper include both the formal (constitutional) aims of the organisation and those that are contained in policy and planning documents. The constitutional aims form the basic framework. To use the example of Oxfam GB, according to its Memorandum and Articles of Association, the objects for which Oxfam is established for the public benefit are -

- To prevent and relieve poverty and to protect the vulnerable, including through humanitarian intervention
- To advance sustainable development;
- To promote human rights and equality and diversity, in particular where to do so contributes to the prevention and relief of poverty.

Clearly this provides only the most basic platform for advocacy and other work by these agencies. The more detailed basis is provided by internal strategic policy frameworks. The Box below shows the relevant framework for Oxfam which provides continuity of purpose across strategic planning periods.

Oxfam's Strategic Aims

In policy and planning terms, Oxfam structures all of its work under **5 Strategic Aims**:

- Aim 1: The right to a sustainable livelihood
- Aim 2: The right to basic social services
- Aim 3: The right to life and security
- Aim 4: The right to be heard
- Aim 5: The right to equity (gender and diversity)

Each of these five aims has defined objectives including corporate objectives and national change Strategies. Aim 3 (which encompasses Oxfam's humanitarian work) is further elaborated as follows: *All civilians affected by crises will receive humanitarian assistance and protection of commonly-accepted quantity and quality, consistent with their needs.* The Oxfam Strategic Plan for 2007-10 sets out the following humanitarian objectives (extracts only):

In the Plan period we will have...

- *enhanced our ability to deliver timely and effective assistance by:*
 - *using the systems, processes and ways of working developed in the Humanitarian Investment Plan throughout the organisation.*
 - *integrating protection (especially of women and girls), consistent gender analysis and response, and accountability to beneficiaries in our own work and that of others.*
 - *promoting conflict-sensitive approaches to programming.*
 - *improving our work with partners and developing partner capability.*
 - *developing an understanding of how to reduce people's risk before, during, and after disasters*
 - *linking especially to our livelihoods work.*
 - *developing capacity for every region to be able to respond to medium-scale emergencies.*
- *continued our contribution to sector-wide initiatives and debates on standards and accountability in humanitarian assistance.*
- *undertaken campaigning (on 'rights in crisis')*
 - *to ensure fast, effective, acceptable, humanitarian assistance by the international community.*
 - *for the increase of aid for humanitarian assistance to at least \$15 billion and for the UN to be held to account for the proper management and disbursement of these resources based on need, and an end to the under-funding of forgotten or neglected emergencies.*
 - *to promote adherence by governments to their responsibility to protect all their civilians, and if they are unwilling or unable to do so – for the international community to fulfil their 'responsibility to protect'. [...]*

Save the Children adopts a similar approach, but puts more explicit time limits on its corporate aims:

We aim to make these breakthroughs by 2017:

- reduce child mortality (focusing on under-nutrition and healthcare) and make governments accountable for it
- ensure children caught up in crisis get an education
- ensure children are cared for in their communities rather than in institutions
- ensure marginalised and poor children in the UK are served properly by government
- ensure children and their carers can hold agencies to account through the systems and practice we have helped set up.

Working towards these breakthroughs, by 2010 we will have:

- launched a global campaign to save children's lives
- focused our work on the core rights of health, freedom from hunger, education and protection, underpinned by work on poverty, economic justice and rights
- boosted our capacity to deliver all of these in emergencies and fragile states
- meaningfully involved children in our work
- inspired more support through our communications and campaigns
- built a strong International Save the Children Alliance

We set annual priorities with specific criteria against which we measure our progress. We have developed a way to estimate the number of children we reach and have included these numbers in our annual report for the first time this year. We also use Global Impact Monitoring to measure the impact of our work against changes in:

- the lives of children and young people
- policies and practice affecting children's and young people's rights
- children's and young people's participation and active citizenship
- equity and non-discrimination of children and young people
- the capacity of civil society and communities to support children's rights

Both Save and Oxfam have a strong rights basis to their work, and both emphasise the interconnectedness of the different elements of their work. For example, Oxfam's approach is summarised as follows:

All our work comes from a rights-based approach. We believe that all people have social, economic, political, and civil rights, as well as rights under humanitarian law. To overcome poverty and suffering, we work to ensure that these rights are fulfilled and protected. We believe that given resources and power, people can solve their own problems; so we support

self-reliance, not dependency. We also recognise wider, national or global issues that need to be tackled. Our work on the ground informs both our analysis of issues and our campaigning work to secure lasting change.

We work in three main areas: saving lives through emergency response; long-term development work; and campaigning. These different approaches are intertwined, mutually-reinforcing and need to be used together to achieve lasting change.

Various elements of this serve to highlight the similarities of approach with that of UNICEF. One is clearly the emphasis on rights, although how each interprets a 'rights-based approach' differs. We explore below the implications of this for these organisations' respective approaches to advocacy.

UNHCR

UNHCR's own summary of its mandate and mission (from its website) is as follows:

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country. It also has a mandate to help stateless people.

As an intergovernmental organisation, UNHCR clearly has very different legal and political status from the NGOs. The Statute of UNHCR – established by GA Resolution – provides the formal basis for its activities:

1. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, acting under the authority of the General Assembly, shall assume the function of providing international protection, under the auspices of the United Nations, to refugees who fall within the scope of the present Statute and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting Governments and, subject to the approval of the Governments concerned, private organizations to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, or their assimilation within new national communities...
2. The work of the High Commissioner shall be of an entirely non-political character; it shall be humanitarian and social and shall relate, as a rule, to groups and categories of refugees.

While UNHCR's remit has since been somewhat revised (it now talks of seeking 'durable' solutions to refugee problems, for example) and extended – e.g. it now takes a lead role in assisting and protecting internally displaced people as well as refugees – the Statute remains the governing document for its activities. It is notable that it stresses the 'non-political' character of UNHCR's work, glossing this as 'humanitarian and social'. In practice, UNHCR works in highly politically charged environments and has at least to be highly politically aware.

UNHCR's Statute sets quite specific parameters for its work and details the main activities of the High Commissioner. These include:

- *Promoting through special agreements with Governments the execution of any measures calculated to improve the situation of refugees and to reduce the number requiring protection;*
- *Assisting governmental and private efforts to promote voluntary repatriation or assimilation within new national communities;*
- *Promoting the admission of refugees, not excluding those in the most destitute categories, to the territories of States;*

The 'promotion' of measures designed to assist refugees (and now IDPs) provides the basic platform for UNHCR's advocacy. But like UNICEF, and as an inter-governmental body, it has a close 'assistance' relationship with governments, which in turn affects the kind of advocacy it pursues. This is considered further in the following sections.

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

HRW is a very different kind of organization from UNICEF, both in its aims and its modes of operating. As its name implies, the protection of human rights provides the focus for institutional goals. Its guiding value is justice, leading to a particular focus on investigation and exposure of abuse (). HRW uses investigative techniques (related to investigative journalism) and campaigning. It puts a very strong emphasis on evidence gathering to support a particular 'case'. It pursues public, high profile advocacy and campaigns and it has strong lobbying capacity, particularly in the US. Although it clearly comes from a different tradition from the humanitarian agencies, its agenda overlaps with theirs particularly in relation to the protection of civilians in conflict situations.

Human Rights Watch is one of the world's leading independent organizations dedicated to defending and protecting human rights. By focusing international attention where human rights are violated, we give voice to the oppressed and hold oppressors accountable for their crimes. Our rigorous, objective investigations and strategic, targeted advocacy build intense pressure for action and raise the cost of human rights abuse. For 30 years, Human Rights Watch has worked tenaciously to lay the legal and moral groundwork for deep-rooted change and has fought to bring greater justice and security to people around the world.

Mission Statement:

Human Rights Watch is dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world. We stand with victims and activists to prevent discrimination, to uphold political freedom, to protect people from inhumane conduct in wartime, and to bring offenders to justice. We investigate and expose human rights violations and hold abusers accountable. We challenge governments and those who hold power to end abusive practices and respect international human rights law. We enlist the public and the international community to support the cause of human rights for all.

Source: Human Rights Watch website

3. Organisational approaches to humanitarian advocacy

Not all of the organisations reviewed have a formal definition of advocacy, let alone humanitarian advocacy. One that does is Oxfam, and this is cited in the Box below. While the definition itself is broad, the subsequent descriptions provide a little more focus. Advocacy for Oxfam is concerned with influencing change in relevant policies and practices; it involves a variety of methods including lobbying, media work and campaigning; and it is conceived as part of a single, integrated programme approach. In humanitarian contexts, it is concerned both with causes and effects.

Extract from Oxfam's 'Humanitarian Advocacy Toolkit' (2010):

Oxfam defines advocacy as “influencing decision-makers to change public policies and practices in ways that will have a positive impact on the lives of men and women living in poverty.” Advocacy aims to change policies (laws, norms, official rules, etc) and/or practices (the way in which these policies are or aren't applied).

*Advocacy can take place at a variety of levels and be carried out by various actors - from local communities through to international institutions. It usually consists of a variety of methods including **lobbying, media work, and popular campaigning**.*

Humanitarian advocacy aims to scale up the impact of Oxfam's emergency response by examining what caused a crisis in the first place, and what might be done to resolve it or - at a minimum - limit the negative impact of the conflict or natural disaster on the civilian population.

*It is important to remember that **Oxfam's legitimacy in undertaking advocacy is primarily derived from its programme work**. Rather than seeing advocacy as a stand-alone initiative or an optional add-on, **Oxfam therefore seeks to incorporate advocacy into its development and humanitarian work as part of a single, one-programme approach**.*

*** Emphasis added**

For UNHCR, advocacy is described in its policy statements as a 'cornerstone' of its protection strategy – but it is not clearly defined in any of the documents reviewed. The box below contains the official (public) UNHCR description of advocacy, which does not so much define advocacy as describe some of its features. This description makes a distinction between advocacy and 'activities such as information dissemination, monitoring and negotiation'.

UNHCR and advocacy

Advocacy is a key element in UNHCR activities to protect refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people and stateless people. It is a cornerstone of protection strategies, used in combination with activities such as information dissemination, monitoring and negotiation. These can help transform policies and services on national, regional or global levels to better protect people for whom UNHCR bears responsibility.

In both countries of asylum and countries of origin, UNHCR works within national political, economic, and social structures that directly affect the lives of refugees and other people of concern to bring policies, practices and laws into compliance with international standards.

In situations of forced displacement, UNHCR employs advocacy to influence governments and other decision-makers, non-governmental partners and the public at large to adopt practices ensuring the protection of those of concern to UNHCR.

Source: UNHCR website

Some of the staff interviewed in UNHCR said that “there is no real discussion about advocacy – it is felt to be clear”. “Advocacy is about trying to persuade duty-bearers to fulfil their duties” – specifically in relation to the international legal instruments on refugee status (the 1951 Refugee Convention etc), and now also in relation to the internally displaced as reflected in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. UNHCR does not have a global advocacy strategy, but it does have context-specific strategies. Some made a distinction between ‘lobbying’ (e.g. of donors) and ‘advocacy’ aimed at host governments on the basis of law and principles on behalf of the groups of concern to UNHCR (refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, stateless people).

On this view, advocacy seems a quite narrowly defined concept and a formal activity, based squarely on the agency’s mandate and related legal instruments. But a senior official made a distinction between ‘advocacy for refugees and IDPs’ on the one hand; and ‘advocacy for UNHCR’ on the other. Regarding the latter, he said that ‘we need to sell the *role* that UNHCR plays in the protection of refugees’, since recognition of this is vital to HCR’s ability to function and influence policy and practice. The same official commented “UNICEF’s brand is children, which is easy to sell compared to refugees. “ ‘Asylum seeker’ and even ‘refugee’ can be terms of abuse in some countries, e.g. in Europe.

States need to accept that UNHCR would ‘confront them with their responsibilities, as well as helping them to carry out those responsibilities’. For the most part, they do accept this. For governments, “we are both an ally and a nuisance”. For refugees, “we are their advocates, the voice of the voiceless”. But UNHCR does not solve individual refugee problems, rather ‘the refugee problem’. Much of HCR’s advocacy work involves ‘mediation between states’, and this transnational dimension is a point of difference with most other agencies’ advocacy. Often advocacy with one state is deliberately set in a broader geostrategic context, pointing out how the actions of one state set the tone for others (e.g. in relation to European asylum policy) and that states have mutual interests in setting a good example.

Denunciation is rare for UNHCR. As a rule of thumb, UNHCR ‘goes public only as a last resort’. “We are much closer to ICRC in that respect (though a bit more vocal) than to the NGOs like MSF or Amnesty”. UNHCR has never been as vocal as it was under Mrs Ogata over the Former Yugoslavia, concerning the abuses by the Bosnian Serbs and Serbia itself. “We pick our fights”. In the Sri Lanka case, HCR made private (and some public) representations re lack of access, which “made us very unpopular with the Government”. This contrasted with the welcome given to UNHCR (rather than ICRC) earlier in the course of the war as an ‘honest broker’ and provider of practical solutions like the Open Relief Centres in the Wanni.

Human Rights Watch pursues ‘humanitarian advocacy’ only in the more limited sense that it is concerned with rights violations and with the application of IHL as well as the human rights conventions. Where it differs from the humanitarian agencies is in its much more single-minded pursuit of issues of justice and accountability for abuses, concerned both with preventing abuses and with bringing the perpetrators to justice. This can lead to divergent approaches with the

humanitarians, for whom maintaining access to the victims of conflict and disaster remain paramount. Where the two roles become mixed in the minds of host governments, the result can be disastrous – as was vividly illustrated in the case of the Sudan NGO expulsions in 2009.

In the words of a senior staff member at HRW, “there are basically three elements to what we do: investigate, expose, change”. The *investigation* part is analogous to investigative journalism – “but for them the story is an end in itself, for us it’s a means to an end”. Documentation is key. “The evidence that we provide can be important step to potential prosecution”. In this sense, there is a ‘forensic’ dimension to what HRW does. Although it does not pursue evidence to the depth that (say) a public prosecutor will, it does investigate to the point of establishing a *prima facie* case for action.

With regard to *exposure*, this involves making evidence of abuses public through the media or otherwise. This purpose is to apply political and public pressure on perpetrators and on others who can bring influence to bear on perpetrators. HRW is not a membership organisation like Amnesty International, so it relies on the press picking up stories. HRW has an extensive array of different products: substantive reports, which take time to generate; press releases; videos, tweets, Facebook page etc. But HRW does not do what Avaaz does (web campaigns). “We are always thinking about advocacy timelines and key events,” (e.g. GA elections to the Human Rights Council, to kick start debate about Syria).

Although HRW does do thematic advocacy, it is almost always linked to a particular context. Only occasionally does it do broader global overviews, e.g. on the juvenile death penalty. “This is more the bag of the academics”.

As regards the *change* element of what HRW does, this is about going beyond the exposure of an issue – it is about finding solutions. This part of advocacy for HRW is about:

- What is the desired change?
- What needs to happen to achieve this?
- Who should we target?

HRW does not just ‘name and shame’. Rather, it attempts to articulate in detail *what needs to happen*. The example was given of police brutality in Nigeria. The end game is to bring an end to police brutality altogether. Getting to that point probably involves a combination of:

- Changes in law
- An end to impunity
- Better supervision

This is then broken down into further detailed prescriptions.

For the most part, HRW does not pursue advocacy for its own sake, but rather for the change it thinks it can help bring about. That said, there is sometimes a case for the ‘voice crying in the wilderness’ even where the prospects for change are remote.

HRW is now looking to develop its advocacy and communications capacity in emerging powers – India, China, Brazil – and with the AU.

Assessing the risks of advocacy

All of the humanitarian organisations compared are conscious of the potential downsides of advocacy. Oxfam gives its staff specific guidance in managing these risks:

What are the potential risks of humanitarian advocacy?

Engaging in advocacy can also create risks to Oxfam programmes, staff, partners and beneficiaries. These include:

- Direct security threats, for example if Oxfam advocacy (or Oxfam association with a controversial position) could lead to threats or even targeted attacks against our staff, partners or beneficiaries.
- Restrictions on our ability to operate, for example increased scrutiny of Oxfam activities or introduction of bureaucratic impediments (denial of visas, operating permits, customs clearance, etc.) by local or national government officials.
- Damage to long-standing relationships, for example in instances where some of our partners, donors or advocacy targets may not agree with our positions or our advocacy approach.
- Damage to Oxfam's reputation when we publicly get something wrong
- Creation of unrealistic expectations on the part of staff, partners, and beneficiaries

Source: Oxfam Humanitarian Advocacy Toolkit, 2010

Interestingly, Oxfam takes a robust view on the supposed trade-offs between operational priorities and advocacy, instead putting the **emphasis on the right choice of advocacy approach**:

Whilst engaging on discussions about the right balance between operations and advocacy work, it should be acknowledged that there never has to be a clear choice between 'maintaining programmes' and 'speaking out'. It is hard to imagine a situation in which it is impossible to engage in advocacy – the question is more about how advocacy is best carried out (publicly or privately; independently or in coalition) and by whom (as Oxfam, or by funding other organisations, etc.) [Source: HAT 2010]

Human Rights Watch, by virtue of its way of working, faces different kinds of risk associated with advocacy. It does not have an operational programme to worry about; but it does have staff, partners and sources (witnesses) whose safety and security is of paramount concern. What HRW says publicly can implicate witnesses and make them liable to reprisal. Staff and partners may themselves be vulnerable if they are associated with reports perceived to be damaging to the governing authorities or other parties. Even the way in which information is gathered – e.g. being seen to associate with known rebels – can be highly dangerous. Great care is exercised to avoid compromising witnesses and to ensure that data and sources are protected.

Advocacy and humanitarian principles

Much stress is laid by Oxfam on advocating 'on principle' – and specifically, advocating on humanitarian principles (which it specifies as humanity, impartiality, independence & neutrality).

A key element of Oxfam's humanitarian work is not just to ensure that its own work upholds humanitarian principles, but also to influence the performance of others - including governments and the UN system - to provide greater assistance and better protection for people affected by natural disasters and conflict. This means that we advocate – through lobby work, media, research and popular mobilisation – to raise awareness about humanitarian principles whenever we feel that the broader humanitarian community is failing to uphold them.

The Oxfam 'Toolkit' on humanitarian advocacy gives some interesting examples of what this might mean in practice, including the question of when it might be appropriate to call for military action to protect civilians:

*When civilians become a direct target of hostilities, the international community often debates foreign military intervention into a sovereign country. When Oxfam first began witnessing mass atrocities during the **Rwanda genocide**, our staff hotly debated whether Oxfam should publicly call for a military intervention to stop the bloodshed. The team was conscious that such a move could threaten our neutrality and our independence. However, in light of the urgent situation and mass scale of violence, Oxfam decided that the importance of speaking out about the need to protect civilians outweighed the risk of being perceived as taking sides with a particular group, or aligning itself with the foreign policies of some governments. In recent years, Oxfam staff in **Sudan, DRC, Chad and Somalia** have debated similar questions about the potential risks and benefits of a humanitarian organisation calling for UN or non-UN military intervention - and each country team has responded with a different mix of public or private advocacy.*

More generally on advocacy and civilian protection, Oxfam's working definition is more specific than that of the IASC (based on protection against abuses of relevant international law). "We prefer to use a simpler working definition of civilian protection as efforts that improve the safety of civilians exposed to widespread threats of violence, coercion or deliberate deprivation".

According to Oxfam, advocacy on protection issues should be based on a sound analysis of protection threats, what impact these are having on the community, and how they are responding to threats. They distinguish two stages to the process: firstly a protection analysis should be produced using Oxfam's standard format as a guide.... Secondly, community-based protection assessments may be carried out by Oxfam's specialised protection. Protection and advocacy staff work closely together, as illustrated by the following example:

Oxfam protection and advocacy teams have worked together to carry out protection-related advocacy at various levels. More than one hundred Oxfam and partner staff in DRC have been trained to carry out regular protection assessments in the communities where Oxfam works. The information gathered in assessments is shared with the advocacy team to jointly discuss objectives and advocacy targets.

Programme and advocacy teams work together to address specific threats at the local level (for example, by arranging a lobby meeting with an army commander or local official to remove a checkpoint where civilians are abused or illegally taxed). The Country Director and advocacy team in the capital use the same information (often 'repackaged' into short, powerful advocacy products, like powerpoint presentations or briefing notes) to raise awareness of threats with the government, donors or other members of the humanitarian

community, while Oxfam's global advocacy offices support the country team by lobbying UN member states or the UN Security Council (for example, to put an end to government-led military operations that are inflicting harm on the civilian population).

However, this kind of approach often relies on significant resources and expertise. An Oxfam team in central Mindanao in the Philippines...identified their own lack of experience and capacity in carrying out multilevel advocacy as the main weakness preventing a more comprehensive linking up of local, provincial and national level advocacy work.

4 Formulating an advocacy strategy

While not all of the humanitarian advocacy undertaken by the INGOs reviewed here could be said to be part of a strategy, it is striking how much more systematic and 'thought through' NGO humanitarian advocacy is than that of UNICEF. This is true both in terms of the process and content. The Box below gives an illustration from Save the Children guidelines.

Extract from Save the Children advocacy guidelines

Template for a quick emergencies advocacy strategy – Parts I, II, III

Part I—The overall strategy

The elements necessary – ideally for something 2-4 pages maximum. Try to be readable, timely, and to-the-point.

1. Summary Box (1 para) – all the main points about the key problem, the impact on children, Save the Children's profile and strengths, targets and timing.
2. Key messages: succinct and not too numerous
3. Background (1-3 paragraphs) – the immediate history and related facts that led up to the situation we are facing at the moment
4. Save the Children's role: (1-3 paras) any programme work or history, and ideas about our advocacy profile or niche. Good to be aware of any weaknesses as well as particular strengths. Alliance information key.
5. Power analysis: -- Who are the key decision-makers, what are their motivations, and how can they be influenced? *Again, Alliance is key, but also consider internal factors.*
6. Aims and SMART objectives: what will achieve change for children, who has the power to make the change, and what Save the Children actions will influence these. *These can be immediate or more long-term, but emergencies/humanitarian objectives are often shorter-term.*
7. Allies and roles
8. Materials needed (fact sheets, letters, research, papers, creative materials etc)
9. Calendar of external opportunities or events
10. Risk analysis and how to manage/mitigate these risks

Other info to link in or to fold into

- Media plan or strategy
- Resource implications
- Monitoring and evaluation of impact
- Next steps

PART II. After the strategy is agreed, there will need to be 1-2-page advocacy paper stating the problem and specific recommendations for target audiences.

PART III. Periodic policy and situation updates will be necessary (probably by e-mail) for any alliance advocacy staff engaged on the issue.

The same guidelines provide a simple template for undertaking the power analysis described here. In addition to this, Save have developed Emergency Standard Operating Procedures which include a detailed process and guidance for humanitarian advocacy, including situational analysis (see Annex).

Each agency has its own frameworks and guidelines for advocacy, which overlap in many respects. UNHCR for example sometimes use an 'influence grid' to determine 'who has influence and who we can persuade to intervene'. This groups actors according to their 'potential influence on the situation' (x-axis) and their 'receptivity to UNHCR' (y-axis). The idea is to work on those with most influence and to increase their receptivity; though in practice HCR has 'tended to work with those who already shared their views'.

Oxfam has a framework for developing an advocacy strategy that is similar to Save's and consists of 12 steps:

1. Problem analysis
2. Overall aim
3. Specific Objectives
4. Rationale for Oxfam engagement
5. Targets – who makes the key decisions?
6. Power Analysis – what will influence the decision-makers?
7. Key Messages
8. Tools/actions
9. Opportunities and Events
10. Human and Financial Resources
11. Risks
12. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

HRW has a very explicit process of advocacy. It is founded on the Project Design Memo, which is designed to help set out the strategy to be pursued. The overall logic of this is:

- What is the problem identified?
- What change do you think you can achieve?
- How can you achieve it?

There is a place for advocacy even where the prospects for change are small ('voice crying in the wilderness'), but HRW pursues advocacy with a view to achieving change rather than for its own sake.

The existence of guidelines and frameworks does not, of course, ensure that these are applied in practice. The evidence available to us suggests that they generally *are* applied, partly because the process of agreeing advocacy strategies is effectively joined up between country/regional office level and headquarters, facilitated by specialist policy-advocacy staff at headquarters. In the next section we consider some of the issues that arise in practice.

5 Advocacy in practice – issues arising

UNHCR

UNHCR is often confronted with situations where the ‘principled’ position would seem to indicate one course of action, but political realities may dictate another. UNHCR “has been more principled on issues arising a result of the ‘global war on terror’ (e.g. containment issues) than it has on returns, where it has arguably ‘gone a bit soft’”. But UNHCR has a mandate for protection *and solutions*, which creates its own tensions.

An example was given of this tension in relation to Pakistan and the Swat Valley displacements. The policy of the Pakistan Government had essentially been one of ‘induced return’ of people to their home areas. Although UNHCR is concerned to ensure that any such returns are voluntary, it felt it had to collaborate with the Government. “If we didn’t cooperate, we would lose influence”. Staff stressed that you have to be proactive in such situations, to approach the Government and try to shape the agenda around protection and durable solutions. “You have to interweave protection messages with the operational agenda. You don’t beat the Government over the head with the IDP Principles, you work through an operational plan”. This pragmatic approach, seeking influence in the design and shaping of events, might be described as making the best of a bad situation.

Collaborative advocacy was felt to be ‘essential’ – determining who was best placed to speak and who had the most to lose by doing so (risk analysis). On advocacy through the Clusters, UNHCR staff said that “if the Protection Cluster doesn’t work, you go to the Humanitarian Coordinator. But it is hard to get meaningful messages out of the UN Country Team”. As to the division of labour with UNICEF, while HCR staff understood that displaced children (for example) would fall within UNICEF’s domain, there were some protection issues (like statelessness) that were not on UNICEF’s agenda. An example was given of the typhoon that hit the Philippines in 2007, causing 750,000 to be displaced to ‘collective centres’ which were actually schools. After a period, the Government wanted to remove the displaced in order to resume education – creating a clash of agendas within the Protection Cluster. In practice, UNHCR had to negotiate with three different Clusters to get an agreement, which was approved by the UNCT and then taken to the Government. In general, the ‘double hat’ problem that arises from representing both an agency and a Cluster “does not seem to matter for advocacy in the same way as it does when it comes to fundraising”.

With regard to the respective agendas of UNICEF and UNHCR, some in UNHCR felt that UNICEF had rather “lost its focus on protection” over the last decade, and that service delivery and work that depended on close collaboration with government counterparts had been privileged over protection in the ‘watch-dog’ sense, that involved monitoring, reporting and sometimes criticism as well as collaboration. There did appear to be some conflict of agendas here. “UNICEF has become a protection agency over time, whereas UNHCR started out as one – assistance was always secondary. This means we have a different relationship to governments”. But the same UNHCR staff acknowledged that the tension between ‘protection’ and ‘assistance’ existed also in UNHCR and that the balance had been struck differently under different High Commissioners. The tension was reflected in the differing priorities of ‘protection’ and ‘programme’ staff.

Oxfam

For Oxfam, sudden new crisis situations were reported to be ‘a challenge’ for advocacy. The example was given of Haiti. Oxfam had done no humanitarian policy work there before the earthquake of 2010, though it had a DRR programme. At the time, Oxfam did not have the policy Humanitarian Support Personnel (HSPs) to deploy and there was disagreement whether to field a policy advisor, which in the end was agreed. This even though 8 media staff had been deployed, and 30 international programme staff! This paid dividends – “we are now one of the ‘go to’ sources for Haiti”. This serves both advocacy and marketing purposes.

Haiti was a case where the big 10 NGOs had more money to spend than the traditional bilateral donors, which had little influence. Advocacy targets for Oxfam were mainly international, since the Government had lost so much capacity “it was hard to push them”. The main influencing targets in this case were US, Canada, France, Spain, Clinton’s office, WB, IADB.

The Pakistan floods case was reported to be ‘easier’, since Oxfam had a far longer history of engagement. It was still challenging, particularly as it coincided with Haiti and West Africa food crisis. “We were caught off guard”. Policy advocacy was done on trade and debt relief, i.e. on the knock on effects of floods and wider economic picture. Advocacy was also done on DRR, “but climate change didn’t work”. Reactive advocacy lines were developed on civil military issues and the deployment of NATO assets (there was pressure from donors to accept the latter but “we were against this as it was not ‘last resort’ – there were commercial options available”). But the main advocacy issues concerned speed, scale up and coverage of the relief effort. There was some confusion as to description of who was affected, e.g. many of those without clean water had not had clean water before the floods. “So it was hard to agree on numbers” for advocacy. “It was a collective tactical error on the part of the humanitarian community to say we would provide relief to 13 million people – this was not realistic”.

As far as possible, Oxfam lobbying and advocacy in contexts like Pakistan includes an element of thematic lobbying (e.g. in that case on system reform). “But you need to decide the main level at which you are pitching for change”, e.g. country level. “In a sudden onset crisis, the ‘policy’ side doesn’t usually come in until week two. But media starts on Day 1, and the communications response is largely improvised. There is not much space to build in messaging”. “You need to work to your organisational competence on a given context. What does Oxfam know about?” You also need a risk analysis regarding political sensitivities – e.g. will it get us kicked out? In the case of the Sudan expulsions, “we had long since got on the nerves of Khartoum because we were coordinating lobbying on operational issues like visas and imports”.

Save the Children

Save the Children has a less formal and lighter sign off process than Oxfam does for advocacy, and it does not have an advocacy structure in the same way. But as with Oxfam, many of the challenges that arise derive from the need to harmonise the positions and roles of multiple affiliates. “It is a struggle to get messages agreed across the Save family of agencies. A lot depends on personalities and working relationships”.

Where one affiliate is managing the Save response to a given crisis, it is responsible for scaling up the response in assistance terms and for leading on advocacy. In doing so, the relevant country director

can ask for assistance from any member of the Save family, but the process does not always work smoothly. In the case of Haiti, for example, it took 2 months to appoint an advocacy director – though it is notable that such a post was felt essential for a major emergency of this kind.

Save's initial advocacy messages in response to a sudden-onset crisis tend to be 'lowest common denominator' and very broad, but this "really only works for the first couple of days – particularly for the more aware and critical public audiences". Save is now beginning to differentiate its communications and media roles. Whereas the former concentrate on facilitating information flows (for the web etc), the latter now has a specific professional focus on dealing with the media, conducting interviews, etc.

Save does not invest the same resources in advocacy that Oxfam does. The example was given of Afghanistan, which is Save's largest programme. "We only have one (shared) advocacy person between us. Oxfam's Afghanistan programme is only one-fifth the size, but they have five people working on policy and advocacy". Save also lacks the centrally deployable policy-advocacy personnel that Oxfam has, but feels it needs such capacity.

Collaboration with the UN on advocacy is not easy, according to one senior Save policy specialist. "They tend to want an 'aid works, give money now' story line." In the Haiti case, this hampered getting a global advocacy push on donor governments. The UK Government, for example, wants *specifics* – not generalities. By way of contrast, Save had collaborated effectively with UNICEF on thematic issues such as on the *Children in a Changing Climate* campaign. Broadly speaking, peace time and thematic (e.g. 1612) collaborative advocacy with UNICEF goes fairly well. But sometimes "UNICEF in country assumes that NGO coalitions have to hold the same line as them". This is a mistake. "Sometimes it helps to play different roles, with UNICEF keeping in with government and NGOs being more critical." This 'good cop, bad cop' approach was also stressed as important by some UNICEF staff interviewed about collaboration with NGOs.

In emergencies, collaboration on advocacy was said not to work so well "partly because it comes down to wrangles with Cluster leads over funding flows, bottlenecks. There's a perceived conflict of interest".

Importantly, both Save and Oxfam believe that 'humanitarian advocacy doesn't work without a programme'. For Save, this may entail a decision *not* to do advocacy in order to get access to deliver assistance – or could be that the programme consists largely of advocacy. Save UK is currently working on a tool for decision making in emergencies.

For Human Rights Watch, there is no programme – but it could be said that there is no advocacy without evidence. How this is collected and used poses a key operational challenge, and as noted above an overarching concern is with the security of staff, witnesses and partners. This is a major advocacy-related issue. There are three related questions:

- how to protect staff
- how to protect information
- how to protect victims and witnesses

With the latter, it is essential to explain what will be done with the information they provide, and to protect their identity. Even working out how to approach them is a big issue.

The other main operational issue is verification of data. The credibility of witnesses varies and it is important to try to triangulate – e.g. going to hospitals in Bahrain to corroborate eye witness account of attacks on civilians. HRW tries to build up a picture from different angles.

6 Advocacy and campaigning

Just as ‘advocacy and communications’ are discussed together in UNCEF, so ‘advocacy and campaigning’ are often twinned in the language of NGOs. Both Oxfam and Save the Children use campaigns to pursue their thematic agendas, and draw on the campaign framework and messaging when conducting advocacy in response to new humanitarian situations. They are constrained in part by the law and guidelines relating to their charitable status. The Box on page 4 above (‘Advocacy and Campaigning’) illustrates this with regard to UK charitable frameworks, which stipulates among other things that advocacy must be an ‘ancillary to’ direct support provided to beneficiaries.

Oxfam’s humanitarian advocacy is conducted within the overall framework of the ‘Rights in Crisis’ (humanitarian) Campaign – one of four campaigns running concurrently in Oxfam internationally. For the other campaigns, such as that on Economic Justice (whose current focus is on ‘food justice’), the process is essentially top down, using examples from countries with an Oxfam programme which have to ‘bid’ to be part of the campaign. The Rights in Crisis Campaign is different, being more country led and focused on particular contexts. Two countries have been chosen for particular ongoing attention focus for the humanitarian campaign: DR Congo and Afghanistan. To these are added major new situations as they occur (e.g. Somalia, Haiti, Sudan elections, Pakistan floods). It is founded on Aim 3 of the five overarching Oxfam strategic aims, providing three themes for advocacy: assistance, protection and ‘underlying causes’. This translates into the following campaign goals:

- *to ensure fast, effective, acceptable, humanitarian assistance by the international community.*
- *for the increase of aid for humanitarian assistance to at least \$15 billion and for the UN to be held to account for the proper management and disbursement of these resources based on need, and an end to the under-funding of forgotten or neglected emergencies.*
- *to promote adherence by governments to their responsibility to protect all their civilians, and if they are unwilling or unable to do so – for the international community to fulfil their ‘responsibility to protect’. [...]*

The Campaign itself has no budget, but it has some dedicated resources, including a percentage of the time of Oxfam International Policy/Advocacy officers in Geneva, Brussels (EU), New York (UN), Addis Ababa and Cairo. These officers provide help in developing advocacy strategies. In addition to this, help is also available in the form of two policy specialist (Humanitarian Support Personnel) who can be deployed to assist country offices with the formulation of advocacy strategies (these are part of a much bigger cadre of HSPs with a variety of specialist skills, many associated with WASH programme delivery).

For all of the existing priority countries for the Campaign, a 3-year rolling advocacy programme is agreed and signed off by all the relevant Oxfam affiliates. There is currently an attempt to make the Campaign 'more strategic' by focusing on particular issues, e.g. SSR under the 'protection' theme of the Campaign. Under the 'assistance' theme, the politicisation of aid is a recent area of focus, "and probably something on UN effectiveness" – done in consultation with UN colleagues. "We can sometimes say things they cannot".

Save the Children shares a similar campaigning ethos with Oxfam, and of course its child focus means that its specific advocacy agenda often overlaps with that of UNICEF. It is notable that whereas Save and UNICEF have increasingly found common ground in thematic campaigns, they have found it much harder to collaborate on advocacy (even through the Clusters) in emergencies. This may in part be due to competitive factors – not just fundraising but competition for voice and visibility. This surely is an area for further discussion between the agencies. Meanwhile, Save has the more developed framework for humanitarian advocacy and messaging, and this is often closely allied to campaigning approaches. We include here an example of a recent e-alert sent to Save UK's supporters, asking them to 'take action by emailing the UK Foreign Secretary' calling for action on Libya – specifically to assist and protect children.

This is perhaps more akin to the kinds of campaigns that UNICEF National Committees might run if they were to engage in policy advocacy in relation to humanitarian crises – which they currently do not.

Extract from Save the Children UK e-alert to supporters headed 'LIBYA EMERGENCY ACTION'

TAKE ACTION

Dear X,

More than 1 million children in west Libya are in serious danger as government forces clamp down on protesters and vie for control of key towns and cities – with as many as 700,000 children trapped in the capital Tripoli, too frightened or vulnerable to move. [Ask the UK government to use its influence at the UN to help Libyan children.](#)

Reports suggest that children are being killed and injured, and that tens of thousands could be driven from their homes. We'll be able to help many of these children, but we're still working to reach many more that are trapped in the conflict zone.

"I'm terrified, not feeling safe, and I'm afraid I'll be an orphan," one 13-year-old told us. "I've heard that fathers of my friends are being taken and 'disappeared'."

Libya stands on the brink of momentous change. It's vital we all do what we can to ensure a better future for Libya's children.

[Take action](#) by asking the UK government to use its position at the UN to:

- put pressure on Libya to enable humanitarian agencies, including Save the Children, to get help to the most vulnerable children in the most dangerous places
- put children's rights front and centre in their enquiries into abuses in Libya.

Ask the government to act now – [please email UK Foreign Secretary William Hague.](#)

P.S. The more people who [take action](#), the stronger we are – please [share this](#) with your friends and family.

7 Lessons for UNICEF from other organisations

UNICEF can learn lessons from each of the organisations reviewed here, though to varying degrees. Human Rights Watch is the furthest from UNICEF in terms of status, approach and agenda. It does not face the same dilemmas that arise from having to maintain in-country programmes and working relationships with host governments while pursuing its advocacy. But while denunciation is a mode of communication that UNICEF will rarely use, it can learn from the clarity of purpose that HRW brings to its advocacy, its investigative rigour and the depth of its power analysis and stakeholder mapping. The comparison with HRW raises important questions for UNICEF about its attitude to issues of justice and its interpretation of a rights-based approach.

Perhaps the most important lesson that UNICEF could learn from the humanitarian NGOs (Oxfam, Save) concerns the clarity of purpose in advocacy and the concerted focus they bring to tackling a few priority humanitarian issues in a given context. The fact that these are often linked to wider thematic campaign frameworks allows for consistency and coherence of messaging, as well as a 'depth' of analysis that is often lacking in UNICEF's practice. These agencies take humanitarian principles as their starting point, allied to thematic concerns on which they have established positions. They then try to work out the national and international implications for humanitarian policy in general and for specific crises. It should be said that these agencies like many others are prone to confusing advocacy with self-promotion. Yet despite the challenge of harmonising priorities across large families of affiliates, and the resource constraints that come from responding to multiple emergencies simultaneously, the NGOs have a fairly consistent track record of principled and evidence-based advocacy in emergencies.

One point that emerges from the NGO comparison is that these agencies see a very close relationship between the operational part of their work (relief assistance, service delivery) and their advocacy. Indeed they see their service delivery and their influencing efforts on advocacy as part of a single response, and this helps to ensure consistency between them and credibility of voice. It also allows judgement to be made about the relative weighting to be given to each. One practical corollary of this is a close perceived link between the process of needs assessment (situational and response analysis) and the process of situational analysis for advocacy. In UNICEF by contrast these processes appear to be largely de-linked. While the NGO practice does not always live up to the theory, there is much to learn from them here.

UNICEF could also learn from the practical advice that the NGOs provide their staff on the formulation of context-specific advocacy strategies. In fact, UNICEF has some good materials of their own on this (as mentioned in section 3 of the Synthesis), but these do not appear to be used. In setting out a clearer policy framework for humanitarian advocacy, this is one area where specific guidance is needed on context-specific humanitarian advocacy as distinct from development-related or thematic advocacy.

The comparison with UNHCR raises interesting questions for UNICEF. Does the UNHCR approach of 'holding states to their legal obligations' – however compromised in practice – work for UNICEF? In some ways it already does this, but it does not appear to do so consistently in humanitarian contexts. The comparison also raises the question for UNICEF as to whether it gives the protection

side of its role sufficient prominence in emergency contexts. This is not just about protection programming but about advocacy related to acute threats to children's safety and well-being.

Finally, the campaigning approach of the NGOs provides an interesting model. As an IGO, UNICEF will never be a campaigning body in the same way. Yet it too uses campaigns and popular mobilisation techniques in other contexts, and these are part of the *modus operandi* of the National Committees. Perhaps the most important lesson here concerns the campaigns framework and messaging that allows the general thematic issues to be easily and quickly allied to specific messages about a particular crisis context. This is something that UNICEF struggles to achieve.

In summary, the key lessons for UNICEF that we take from the practice of other humanitarian organizations are as follows:

- **Clarity of purpose and clear processes for humanitarian advocacy help agencies to quickly generate organisational focus around a shared advocacy strategy.**
- **Existing policy frameworks and messaging (e.g. from policy campaigns) allows general thematic issues to be easily and quickly allied to specific messages about a particular crisis.** Such frameworks also serve to give both coherence and consistency to an organisation's advocacy. Thematic campaigns by NGOs are similar to those by UNICEF Natcoms.
- **Specialist deployable capacity for advocacy or policy analysis**— distinct from media and programme officers – can provide crucial support to country offices and greatly enhance the effectiveness and coherence of organisational advocacy strategies.
- **Maximize the relationship between operational response and advocacy as part of a single response strategy.** The same situational analysis and needs assessment should inform both.
- **Take advantage of the complementarity between organizational approaches** – NGOs may be more outspoken than UNICEF, but sometimes the 'good cop – bad cop' relationship can help.
- **The potential exists for more effective concerted advocacy through the Clusters, and UNICEF should have a lead role here** – but this depends in part on getting beyond contractual and financial relationships and the tensions these can generate.

ANNEX

[Save the Children Alliance] Template for a quick emergencies advocacy strategy –

Parts I, II, III

Part I—The overall strategy

The elements necessary – ideally for something 2-4 pages maximum. Try to be readable, timely, and to-the-point.

1. Summary Box (1 para) – all the main points about the key problem, the impact on children, Save the Children's profile and strengths, targets and timing.
2. Key messages: succinct and not too numerous
3. Background (1-3 paragraphs) – the immediate history and related facts that led up to the situation we are facing at the moment
4. Save the Children's role: (1-3 paras) any programme work or history, and ideas about our advocacy profile or niche. Good to be aware of any weaknesses as well as particular strengths. Alliance information key.
5. Power analysis:¹ -- Who are the key decision-makers, what are their motivations, and how can they be influenced? *Again, Alliance is key, but also consider internal factors.*
6. Aims and SMART objectives: what will achieve change for children, who has the power to make the change, and what Save the Children actions will influence these. *These can be immediate or more long-term, but emergencies/humanitarian objectives are often shorter-term.*
7. Allies and roles
8. Materials needed (fact sheets, letters, research, papers, creative materials etc)
9. Calendar of external opportunities or events
10. Risk analysis and how to manage/mitigate these risks

Other info to link in or to fold into

- Media plan or strategy
- Resource implications
- Monitoring and evaluation of impact
- Next steps

PART II. After the strategy is agreed, there will need to be 1-2-page advocacy paper stating the problem and specific recommendations for target audiences.

PART III. Periodic policy and situation updates will be necessary (probably by e-mail) for any alliance advocacy staff engaged on the issue.

¹ See below on strategy for more detail

Development of an advocacy strategy – the process (often useful to do with the field team, or with a group of people with a wide range of experiences)

1. **Power Analysis** -- dynamic
 - Who are the **key players**? Local, National, International
 - How do they interact?
 - What are **their key issues**? What is at stake?
 - How might that interact with Save the Children's priorities of child protection, education, health and hunger alleviation?
 - How might they **be influenced**?

2. What would happen to make a **positive change** on our issues?
 - *Can be a long list, will prioritise later*

3. What is **Save the Children's specific contribution** to the debates?
 - What is our niche, based on our programming and profile?
 - What is our strength, expertise, value-added?
 - Alternatively, where are other people better placed to lead?
 - How can we work with others to make the change we want to see?
 - What are some of the risks involved in working on this issue alone or in a network? (*more risk analysis later*)

4. **Aims** – what are our long-term policy goals that will have a dramatic and lasting effect on children on a national and international scale?

5. **SMART Objectives** – what are the immediate and medium-term goals to achieve real change for children?

6. **Prioritisation** – what are we going to focus on?
 - What is achievable?
 - Where could Save the Children have measurable impact
 - *Experience has shown that in order to really gain impact you must mercilessly focus on a small number of objectives*

HUMANITARIAN ADVOCACY

Support for non-lead members of Save the Children

ACE and BE READY

Emergency Standard Operating Procedures (ESOP)

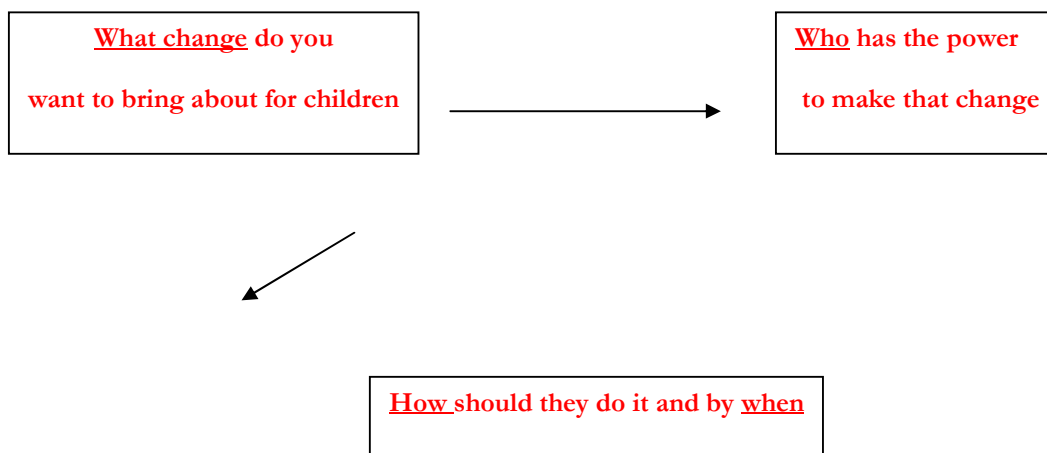
INTRODUCTION

Advocacy is an important tool in Save the Children's humanitarian response. Drawing on our knowledge and experience, we speak out to ensure that the overall response in any emergency situation respects humanitarian principles and is appropriate to children's needs and rights. By giving a voice to children in emergencies and putting pressure on people with power, we can make a difference for many more than those who we reach through our programmes alone.

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

For Save the Children, advocacy is acting with and on behalf of children to influence policies and practice of others to improve the fulfilment of child rights.

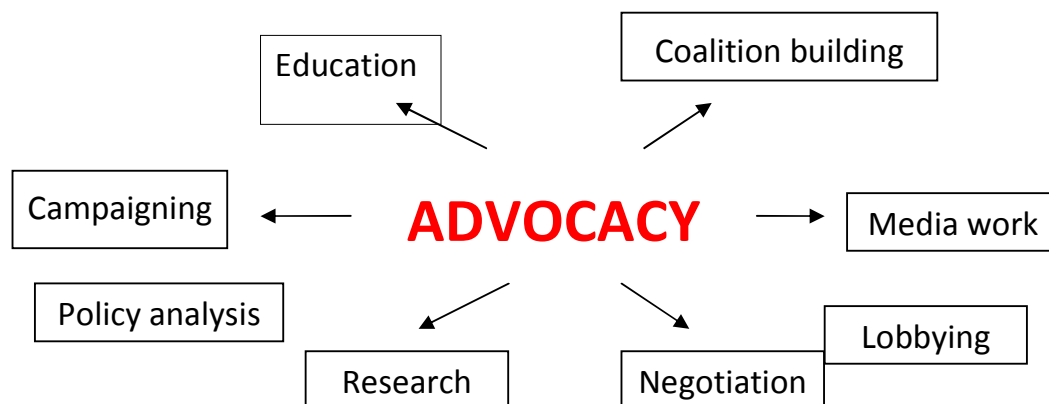
ADVOCACY GENERALLY CONSISTS OF:



In emergencies we may advocate towards national governments, donors or international institutions to keep children high on the agenda so that promises are kept and properly resourced. We may also advocate at the local level, with community leaders, militia heads or police, for example, if our assessment shows that they have the power to make the changes needed.

This document presents an introduction to effective advocacy on emergencies for members of Save the Children who are not operational on the ground. There is another ESOP for lead members and those carrying out advocacy strategy work in the field².

WHAT COULD ADVOCACY INVOLVE?



WHY DO ADVOCACY?

- To save more children's lives by influencing others, in addition to our own programmes
- To help shape the international response to a crisis to support children better, be it at the level of individual governments, multilateral donors, international finance institutions or the United Nations
- To hold duty-bearers to account for their responsibility to address children's rights in emergencies
- To ensure that children's voices are heard
- To take country or region-wide messages to international audiences
- To secure funding in support of children in new and ongoing emergencies
- To raise international awareness of children's needs and rights

² For more information see "Humanitarian Advocacy ESOP last updated 21.10.08" or the ACE Rules and Principles document. More guidance is also being developed.

Overall: What does Save the Children want to achieve in Global Advocacy:

These change objectives have been agreed by members of the Save the Children Alliance working together on advocacy as part of the Alliance Cooperation in Emergencies (ACE) initiative:

- Increase donor support for assistance and protection for children in conflict and disasters
- Ensure that donors fund post-conflict and reintegration work as well as first-phase emergency response
- Ensure humanitarian access to children in need
- Make education an integral part of every humanitarian response
- Reform the international humanitarian system so that it works better for children (including improving quality and accountability of UN and NGOs, and ensuring the independence of humanitarian aid)
- Improve the impact of children's voices and expressed needs in emergency response
- Increase government's delivery of their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in emergencies, as well as UN Security Council resolutions and other instruments of International Humanitarian Law

WHO DOES ADVOCACY IN AN EMERGENCY?

Emergency advocacy often begins at the local level, with field staff seeking to influence or persuade those in power to improve conditions for children or their families.

In a large-scale emergency we aim to coordinate our advocacy in order to have maximum effect, both locally and internationally. SC members with staff operations on the ground, or the Unified Presence structure, will decide the advocacy lead and the initial sign-off procedures, balancing staff security with other considerations. Through the Advocacy Working Group, this information will be transmitted to members for any ACE-declared emergencies.

Save the Children also has designated advocacy staff in its HQs, New York, Brussels, Geneva and in some regional offices and country programmes. These people are there to provide support and guidance to country programmes and to carry our advocacy messages to important international targets, such as the UN, EU and major governments.

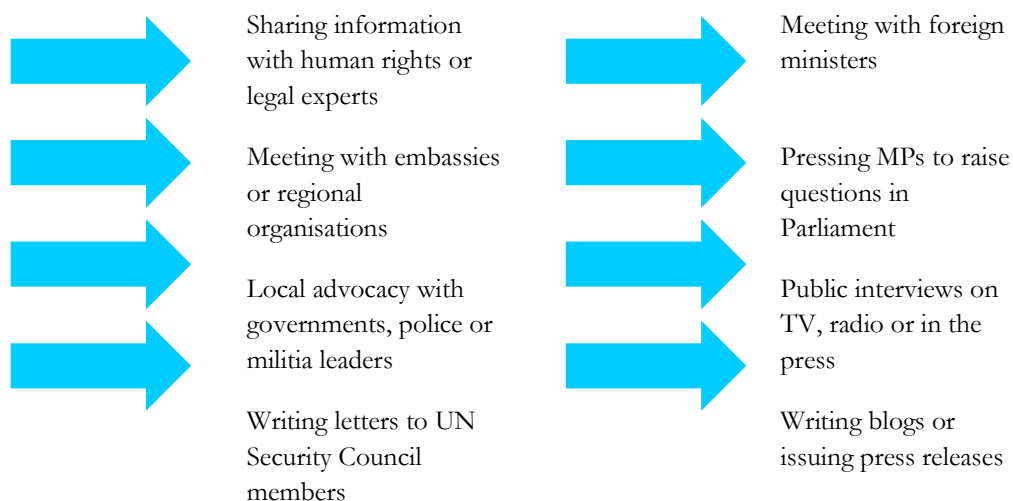
WHAT IS STRATEGIC ADVOCACY?

In order to be effective, advocacy should be organised along the lines of a strategy. The strategy is the way forward, based on an analysis of the core problems for children, a power analysis of the main targets

and players, an assessment of SC capacity and positioning, a security review of risk, and a sense of where allies or coalitions may help.³

An advocacy strategy may involve many elements of private or public advocacy, depending on the assessment of effectiveness and risk. Below are examples of activities along the range from more “quiet diplomacy” to more assertive and public advocacy.

Quiet diplomacy → → → → → → → → → **More assertive advocacy**



THE RED CROSS and NGO CODE OF CONDUCT

The key document that all staff working on humanitarian issues should be familiar with is the **Red Cross and NGO Code of Conduct**. The Code of Conduct lists 10 principles that apply to all aspects of our work.

These 10 principles should guide the choices we make in our work and our communications, and increase our accountability to the children and communities we aim to serve. They sometimes challenge our advocacy work.

It is important to ensure that in everything we do, we put – and are seen to be putting – the humanitarian imperative first, using balanced wording and, importantly, preserving the independence, impartiality and neutrality of our work.

The ten principles are:

1. The Humanitarian imperative comes first

³ For more detailed information about preparation of an advocacy strategy, see “Development of an advocacy Strategy – the process” updated 7 December 2007

2. Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone
3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint
4. We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy
5. We shall respect culture and custom
6. We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities
7. Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid
8. Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs
9. We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources
10. In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects ⁴

A NOTE ON TIMING...

Timing is essential in humanitarian advocacy. This is especially true during fast-onset emergencies such as a cyclone or earthquake, but even in slow-onset emergencies there may come a time when Save the Children decides to step up our communications and advocacy – perhaps if we’ve decided to launch an appeal or if there has been a clear deterioration in conditions for children. At these times, advocacy and media messages often need to be ready within 48 hours of the declaration. Initial advocacy messages in the appeal and in early Situational-reports (“SitReps”) will be expanded on by the Lead member in the first days and weeks. Because of staff security, these may initially be general messages and/or mainly about private advocacy. As the weeks continue, more detail will be shared about a full advocacy strategy, agreed with the Country Director, based on the situation on the ground and Save the Children’s profile.

THE ROLE OF THE LEAD AGENCY IN COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY:

The SC member delegated as Lead will have extra responsibilities to link our operations on the ground, and an appropriate assessment of risk, with messages for public or private use. There are different ways to proceed in this, as articulated in the Alliance document “Advocacy Matters” and the tools already mentioned above. In general, advocacy is a process or cycle which can be described in 10 steps.

Advocacy is very rarely an ordered, linear process. Particularly in emergency situations, it often takes place in a chaotic environment, seizing opportunities – such as major events, meetings, news stories or visits – as they arise. The ability to exploit opportunities, however, does not reduce the importance of a sound process and careful planning. An advocacy strategy enables Save the Children to identify the messages where our efforts will have most effect and target them towards those who have the power to make changes.

In order to advocate effectively in an emergency, you need to understand the causes and effects of the emergency situation. This analysis should be conducted as a team effort involving staff, partners and

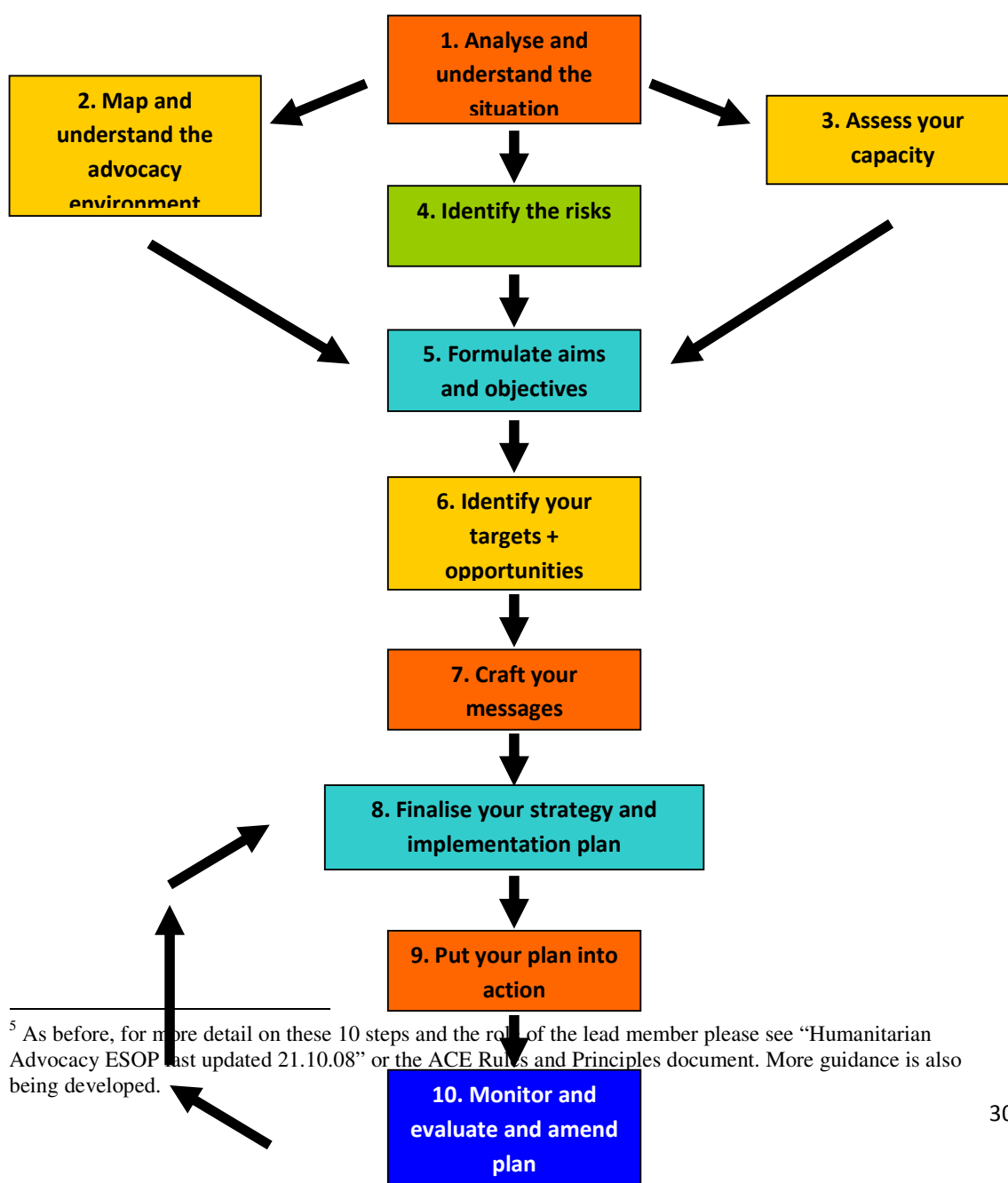
⁴ More detailed information and translations are available on this link:

<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/code-of-conduct-290296>

children (whenever possible) in order to develop the fullest possible picture and to establish broad ownership and consensus around Save the Children's advocacy.

Humanitarian advocacy is most effective when it is based on information gathered at the field level. This includes information gathered during assessments and an analysis of what staff and community members are seeing on the ground. Those present in the field are the best placed to identify the biggest issues for children in the context in which they are operating and advocacy messages generally have greater credibility – and therefore impact – when accompanied by information from the ground.

The following ten steps outline how a Lead member or field Advocacy person may want to develop and implement an advocacy strategy in an emergency context. These steps are presented sequentially, but in practice many of them will take place simultaneously. While it may take time to develop a strategy fully, some of these methods will be useful even under immediate time pressure.⁵



⁵ As before, for more detail on these 10 steps and the role of the lead member please see “Humanitarian Advocacy ESOP last updated 21.10.08” or the ACE Rules and Principles document. More guidance is also being developed.

FOR NON-LEAD MEMBERS: ESSENTIAL STEPS IN YOUR COUNTRY

A) ANALYSE YOUR NATIONAL ARENA:

Save the Children can be a very powerful voice in emergencies. We have on-the-ground expertise, a global presence, a strong profile and many experienced staff who can get our messages across effectively to a wide range of audiences. However, we also need to be conscious of our limitations and to ask ourselves how (or whether) we can address them. There also may be others who are better placed than us with a particular message, or perhaps with no staff on the ground so a different calculation of risk.

The Lead member and field team will start the Power Analysis about who (nationally and internationally) has the power or position to make the changes that will improve the situation for children. It may turn out that your national government or an association you are part of (for example, the European Union or ASEAN) is key in some aspect of the advocacy strategy. In that case, the information should flow two-ways between you and the Lead agency so that all can benefit from intelligence gathered. Useful questions for you to consider include:

- **The policy environment:** how is your issue perceived by your governments or other power holders? Is it a priority or a neglected area? Do they have a history with that country or region? Is it politically sensitive or fairly straightforward? What might link children's issue to their agenda? Alternatively, are their policies largely an obstacle to Save the Children's goals?
- **Key actors:** who has the power to effect the required change? What are their goals/objectives? Do they have an interest in changing the situation? Who has influence over them? Disaggregate your targets as much as possible. E.g. rather than simply targeting the Government, identify which department, whether you intend to target junior officials, senior officials ministers, or all three using a combination of approaches. Don't forget in-country embassies and ambassadors as well.
- **Identify entry points:** are there any upcoming opportunities, such as donor conferences, anniversaries, peace talks, visits or media interest?

B) ANALYSE YOUR CAPACITY AND SAVE THE CHILDREN'S POSITION

Questions to consider include:

- Do you have someone responsible for Government relations and/or advocacy? Sometimes this is the CEO of a member agency; in other members it can be a whole department.
- Do you already have the relationships with various government offices, targets or allies? If not, is this a big enough issue to start those discussions, with desk officers, coalitions, etc?

- How much influence can we have? Do we have useful connections already with possible targets or with others who may be able to influence those targets?
- Are we best placed to take a lead or are others better placed? How can we work with others to make the change we want to see?
- Are there any other materials that we need – e.g. talking points, photographs, more detailed research?
- How will our advocacy affect our longer-term relations with our targets, allies or beneficiaries?
- Are there any institutional campaigns (such as the *Campaign for Newborn and Child Survival*) that may link to this emergency? These can help bolster situational advocacy messages.

C) IDENTIFY YOUR OPPORTUNITIES:

At this stage, you should also identify opportunities to get your messages across and put together an advocacy calendar. You may already have regular meetings with your target, or this may be the chance to set one up. Meetings can be done with other agencies or just with Save the Children, depending on the situation. The range of opportunities, linked also to specific timing, might include:

- Meetings (private or public)
- High-profile visits by your government or a UN official
- Conferences
- An anniversary (of a conflict starting/ending or a UN official date)
- A UN Security Council Resolution Discussion
- A media event with celebrities.

D) CRAFT YOUR MESSAGES FOR YOUR TARGETS

The Lead member and field teams will provide you with key messages. They will generally be along the lines of these agreed baseline messages below: The following messages that have been agreed across the Save the Children Alliance can be taken as starting points by anybody considering advocacy in an emergency. They should obviously be targeted towards the particular context and your advocacy objectives. It is important to support them with relevant local and/or country-wide information from the field.

Alliance Core Emergency Advocacy Messages – General and public

1. Children bear the brunt of any humanitarian crisis. Humanitarian assistance must assess and meet the needs of children. The international community must focus on the protection of children in every emergency.
2. Education should be part of every emergency response to protect children and provide them with the building blocks of an economic survival strategy.
3. International humanitarian law and human rights law must be respected in all conflicts and emergencies. All parties must ensure that civilians, particularly children, are protected from the worst aspects of war, violence, deprivation and displacement.
4. Every child has a right to humanitarian assistance; the international community and warring parties must guarantee humanitarian access.
5. Donors must increase funding for sectors key to child survival and development, such as protection, health, sanitation, nutrition and education.

6. In the face of climate change leading to increasing natural disasters, donors and country governments must prioritise the needs of children and vulnerable communities. Preparedness and disaster risk reduction are key to creating more disaster-resilient communities.

Note: in any disaster or conflict, these messages would be contextualized and strengthened to in order to make sure that advocacy is relevant, influential, focused on children, and agreed with the programme.

Some examples of country-specific and thematic advocacy related to emergencies:

- The implementation of this peace agreement in eastern DRC must focus upon the ongoing and serious child protection concerns. In particular, it must ensure that all child soldiers amongst fighting parties are immediately released, that no further recruitment or re-recruitment of children is undertaken, and that immediate action is taken to end the widespread acts of sexual violence committed by members of the fighting parties
- At the Conference of Parties (COP) in Copenhagen in December 2009, industrialised countries should enact binding commitments to reduce carbon emissions by 80% by 2050 in order to limit global warming to no more than 2° Celsius.
- Early-recovery activities in Myanmar are underfunded. Medium-to-long-term commitments are needed for livelihoods support to get communities back on track. Investment in food security and livelihoods now will play a key part in preventing malnutrition and ill-health in the coming year.

In any emergency, but particularly in sensitive and/or conflict-related emergencies, consideration must be given to whether advocacy messages should be **external** or **private**. External messages can be used in any form of media, statements, on the web, etc. Private messages can not be shared with any non-Save the Children person in written form. They can be used in meetings with governments, the UN, or journalists “off the record” – if it is agreed ahead of time that they are confidential.

This distinction is important in certain cases where there is extreme government sensitivity, oppression, or risks to staff or communities with whom we work. Emergency advocacy is often done in this context of private confidentiality.

TAILORING MESSAGES

The core message(s) provided by the lead agency will guide your development of more specific, tailored messages, which will be directed at different audiences. When adapting your core message for a specific audience you will need to consider:

- What will be the most persuasive for that audience
- What information that audience needs to hear
- What action you want that audience to take (given that different audiences have different capacities to bring about change)

- What are their *political* interests? What are their self-interests in relation to the issue? What group of people do they represent?
- What do they *already* know? What new information are you offering?
- Do they already have an *opinion*? What is it, how strongly held? Do they have a public position?
- What *objections* might they have? What might they lose? What misconceptions or arguments to counter?
- What *personal* interests do they have? What hobbies or passions?
- Do their *backgrounds* (personal, educational, professional) suggest a bias? Can you link your issue to something you know they support?

The one-minute message

You should be able to summarise and present your advocacy messages in 3-4 sharp sentences, for situations where you have very limited time to present your case in very short time, during chance meetings (such as finding yourself standing next to Bill Gates in the elevator), TV interviews, etc.

The one-minute message consists of:

Statement + evidence + example + action desired

One-minute message for ACE

- **Statement:** Children bear the brunt of any humanitarian crisis.
- **Evidence:** In emergencies, 50 percent of affected populations are children.
- **Example:** Your own story (local if possible).
- **Call to action:** All parties must ensure that civilians, particularly children, are protected from the worst aspects of conflict, violence, deprivation and displacement.
- **Our special role:** Save the Children has a deep and steadfast commitment to helping children in emergencies.

The statement is the central idea in the message. The evidence supports the statement with (easily understood) facts and figures. An example will add a human face to the message and the action desired is what you want your target to do.

General guidance on developing messages:

- ✓ Make messages clear, compelling and engaging.
- ✓ Avoid jargon.
- ✓ Put your 'frame' around the issue (i.e., highlight your perspective).
- ✓ Use clear facts and numbers creatively.
- ✓ If possible include information that is local so that it is relevant for people.
- ✓ Allow your audience to reach their own conclusions.
- ✓ Present a solution if possible.
- ✓ Remember: concise and consistent messages are critical for advocacy.

E) ADVOCACY AS A RANGE OF ACTIONS:

Don't forget the range of activities that can constitute advocacy (page 3) Also, the Lead member and the Advocacy Working Group can help with suggestions for furthering advocacy on the national level.

Lobby meetings can be a particularly powerful way of influencing decision-makers. The following tips for successful lobbying may be useful.

Before the Meeting:

- Don't organise a lobby meeting unless you have an idea of what you want to achieve. Why are you meeting with this person at this time? Are they the most appropriate person? How does it fit with your overall strategy? Who do you want them to report the meeting to? What are the specific things you want them to agree to do? Or is the object simply relationship-building? It isn't always most effective to aim for the most senior people as often key decisions are actually made further down the hierarchy
- Prepare your three strongest talking points. Try to develop points that appeal to your target's political or organisational interests, rather than simply appealing to their charity. Keep your talking points to within 5 minutes to allow time for interruptions and questions. Points will be better received if they are based on Save the Children expertise and programming (rather than just informed opinions).
- If you are part of a group, ideally limit its size to fewer than six people. Make sure that the entire group agrees on specific talking points so that your message is clear during the meeting. Designate a lead spokesperson(s) for your group and prepare a rough running order. Ensure that someone in the group is keeping an eye on the time during the meeting. If the group is larger by request, it will be more of a "consultation" meeting than a decision-making or influencing meeting.
- Make sure your information is accurate. Anticipate any queries or disagreements people may have and prepare an intelligent (but non-defensive) response.
- To the extent you can, do a little homework beforehand about the person you're meeting with, e.g. what are their interests or experiences? Is there a "hook" that is relevant to your issue?
- Prepare brief materials – such as a one-page memo or a fact-sheet summarizing your main concerns – to bring to the meeting and leave with the official. Avoid long reports or presentations.

During the Meeting:

- Be up-front if the meeting is under "Chatham House Rules" or not. Chatham House Rules mean that people cannot be quoted outside to the press or third parties. They are generally invoked to encourage people to speak more frankly in order to share ideas.
- Be clear in your message. Have a specific "ask" - i.e. a specific action you want the target to take. The more specific you can be about our position and recommendations the better. Try to remain focused on things that your target can actually influence.
- Don't be too boring! Whenever possible, use personal examples to reinforce your position and humanise the issue.
- When answering questions, be brief and to the point. If you don't know an answer, tell them that you will get back to them and be sure to follow-up. Never give an answer that you are not sure of.
- Be positive, polite and constructive; don't preach or talk down to the people with whom you are meeting. Avoid direct criticism or antagonising your target. Remember that lobby relationships should be for life, especially as people often move on to other interesting positions which may be useful to us in the future.

After the Meeting:

- Follow up your visit with a thank-you letter reiterating your main points and any actions that were agreed.
- Send a brief report on the meeting to your colleagues, both in country and in the relevant Alliance HQ advocacy teams. If the meeting was under Chatham House Rules, you can only share things in a general sense and can't name names.
- Think of creative ways to maintain your dialogue with the target's office, e.g. send positive newspaper articles, invite them to events etc.

F) FEEDBACK INFORMATION AND PROGRESS TO THE LEAD MEMBER AND THE ADVOCACY WORKING GROUP

Please do take the time to share a short write-up of your advocacy activities and intelligence gained with the wider group. If aspects are confidential or should be treated internally be clear that is the case. However, the overall pooling of information is very valuable to the Lead agency, the SC's Advocacy offices, and to the Alliance as a whole. It will help us be smarter have more strategic plans for this issue, and for future issues as well.

WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

- ESOP
- 2-pager
- Advocacy matters
- Extranet page on AWG?
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