

# Understanding advocacy

**Description** This section will give a general introduction to advocacy. It builds on the understanding of poverty and development and aims to place advocacy in the context of poverty alleviation and development work.

**Learning objectives** By the end of the section, participants will:

- be able to give a definition of advocacy and understand the basic components
- understand the different approaches to advocacy, and various situations in which advocacy can occur
- understand the potential roles of an advocate.

**Links** This section builds on the understanding gained in SECTION A1 (Understanding poverty and development). It also links with SECTION A3 (Why advocacy?), SECTION A5 (Understanding politics and power) and SECTION C3 (Planning), which develop the advocacy components in more detail.

## EXERCISE 3 **What is advocacy?**



**Aim** To come to an understanding of advocacy and its basic components.

**Methods** Flash cards, small-group discussion, case studies, plenary, role play

**Handouts** Three approaches to advocacy  
 Advocacy case studies of Tearfund partners  
 Advocacy definitions  
 What is involved in advocacy?

People will have different experiences of advocacy. Some reactions will be very positive, but other people may have had bad experiences and see advocacy as something to avoid. It is therefore a good idea to start the session by finding out people's understanding and reactions. This exercise is used to make some basic points and to correct common misunderstandings. There are many different ways to approach this. Three are offered below.

- Participants write on flash cards the words that come to mind when they hear the word 'advocacy'. Stick the cards on the wall or place them on the floor. Participants group the ideas in themes. Lead a discussion, using the handouts to add anything that is missed out.

- Alternatively, present the ‘Advocacy definitions’ handout and ask participants to draw out the key themes, issues or statements in each definition. Use this as a basis for coming to a common understanding of advocacy. Then present the ‘Three approaches to advocacy’ handout and ask participants to use the case studies to identify the different types of advocacy.
- Another way of doing this exercise is to ask participants to use the case studies and their own examples to prepare a role play that acts out each of these approaches to advocacy. Use this as a basis for discussion.

**Key points**

- There are three approaches to advocacy (advocacy **for**, **with** and **by** the poor or those affected by a situation). It is likely that most participants will initially focus on advocacy as ‘doing something **for** someone else’.
- There are different objectives associated with each approach, such as trying to change policy, or to increase participation.
- The most sustainable advocacy is often done **by** those who are directly affected by a situation. Capacity building may be needed before this can happen. However, there may be situations when people cannot, or will not, do advocacy for themselves, such as due to fear.
- Many advocacy initiatives will use all three approaches at different times.
- Some participants may have objections to doing advocacy work. Most of these objections will be tackled in later sections of the Toolkit, but if they are raised earlier, write them onto a wall chart so that participants know that their objections are being taken seriously.

EXERCISE 4 **Where does advocacy take place?**



**Aim** To show that advocacy takes place all of the time in all situations.

**Methods** Small-group discussion, case study discussion

**Handouts** Levels of advocacy  
Advocacy case studies of Tearfund partners

Many participants are likely to see advocacy as a ‘professional’ activity that a few people can undertake, on behalf of the rest of the population. It may be seen as confrontational, or something done by politicians behind closed doors. This exercise will challenge people about their understanding of advocacy, and help them to understand that it takes place in different contexts, all of the time.

Using the case studies in the handout, ask the question: ‘Where does advocacy take place?’ and group the responses to show that it takes place at all levels of decision-making. Ask the participants why it is necessary for advocacy to take place at different levels.

- Key points**
- Advocacy takes place at all levels of decision-making.
  - Advocacy is needed at all levels because decisions at top levels affect those at lower levels. Actions at lower levels can determine policies at higher levels.
  - The church has a key role in speaking out for justice. It has the strategic advantage of local knowledge and relationships, as well as links to regional and national structures.

## EXERCISE 5 **Potential roles of an advocate**



**Aim** To show that those involved in advocacy can take on many different roles.

**Methods** Brainstorm, plenary discussion, case studies, small-group discussion, drawing

**Handout** Roles of an advocate

- Based on the understanding of the different types of advocacy, and where advocacy takes place, brainstorm (either in plenary or in buzz groups) the different roles of an advocate. Participants then discuss the characteristics of each role and relate this to examples from their own experience, or use the case studies to identify how the roles operate in practice.
- Alternatively, draw each of the ‘roles of an advocate’ diagrams from the handout onto a separate wall chart. Ask participants to describe what is happening in each picture and to write on the charts the characteristics of the role and relate it to some examples from their own experience. They can also add any roles that they think are missing.

HANDOUT **Three approaches to advocacy**

Table of advocacy approaches

| APPROACH TO ADVOCACY             | ADVOCACY <i>FOR</i> THOSE AFFECTED BY A SITUATION  | ADVOCACY <i>WITH</i> THOSE AFFECTED BY A SITUATION   | ADVOCACY <i>BY</i> THOSE AFFECTED BY A SITUATION   |
|----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Advocacy work done by            | Professionals, NGOs, church leaders  | A mixture of professionals, NGOs and local community groups  | Local community, workers   |
| Main objectives for intervention | Change in law, policy or practice  | Increased access to decision-making<br>Change in law, policy or practice<br>Build advocacy capacity of those affected by situation | Increase in awareness of advocacy possibilities and capacity to do advocacy                              |
| Characteristics                  | Issues often identified by outsiders<br>Usually targeted at official decision-makers               | Issues identified by community<br>Shared planning, resources and action<br>Outside organisers mobilise capacity                    | Issues identified by community<br>Learning by involvement<br>May have significant outside input at start |
| Advantages                       | Quick access to decision-makers<br>Good access to information about wider context                  | Increase access of poor to decision-makers<br>Advocacy skills and capacity developed   | Empowering – poor see themselves as agents of change<br>Sustainable<br>Can correct power imbalance       |
| Disadvantages                    | Could strengthen existing power structures<br>May not increase the capacity of local groups to act | NGO often in control and sets agenda<br>Slower due to need for agreement between all parties                                       | Access to fewer resources and information<br>Risk of revenge<br>Policy change may take longer            |

It might be appropriate to use a mixture of the three approaches to advocacy at different times throughout the process. Development organisations that support the principles of participation and empowerment should aim to see the poor undertake advocacy themselves and become agents of change in their local area. However, due to risk or lack of skills and knowledge, advocacy for others may be the only option at the start.

HANDOUT **Advocacy case studies of Tearfund partners**

## Orphans in Rwanda

African Evangelistic Enterprise (AEE) works with orphans whose parents have died of AIDS and child-headed households in the Kibungo Region in the east of Rwanda. They have two associations that operate through a sewing workshop and a carpentry shop where children are trained and sell their goods. The Rwandan Revenue Authority (RRA) is responsible for collecting taxes and they asked the associations to pay (which they could not afford) or close down. AEE, as a partner of these associations, used its size and contacts to arrange a meeting with the Ministry of Social Affairs. At the meeting they explained that those working in the associations are either orphans or members of child-headed households and should therefore be treated in a more charitable way and exempted from paying taxes. The ministry agreed and said that all partners of AEE should be exempt due to the development work they are doing.

Applying for refugee  
status, Egypt

The Joint Relief Ministry (JRM) works in Cairo with displaced people from the Horn of Africa. It offers spiritual support, medical clinics, basic relief supplies, skills training and education. In 1998 there was an attempted suicide at All Saints Cathedral. This initiated a workshop in which the displaced community asked for further training to help them make applications and appeals to UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), which has responsibility for determining refugee status in Egypt. Although the community was receiving material and spiritual support from JRM already, they also needed to know how to represent their case to UNHCR in order to give them the best chance of being allowed to remain in Egypt or to settle permanently in another country.

JRM, other supporting institutions and members of the displaced community set up an advocacy organisation called Musa'adeen (Helpers). They developed a handbook to guide individuals when making an application to UNHCR. Members of the displaced community were trained so they could help others in the application process. The group worked closely with the UNHCR and made a video to help reduce fear and enable applicants to present their cases effectively.

However, some of those who were trained did it only to improve their own applications rather than to help others to write theirs. Others started charging fellow applicants for their help, which was forbidden by the organisation. Musa'adeen therefore started to ensure that their trained members operated from six designated centres and the centre leaders forwarded names of trained members to the UNHCR.

Lessons learned:

- Ongoing support of the trainers was required to give them the necessary skills and expertise to help others.
- Legal advice was needed to improve training and to get help with difficult cases.
- Good relationships with UNHCR were vital to ensure that the help given was useful and to improve the procedure that determined status.

HANDOUT **Advocacy case studies of Tearfund partners** (continued)Peace and Hope,  
Peru

In the 1980s harsh 'anti-terrorist' measures were introduced in Peru, which gave police the power to arrest people on suspicion of terrorism. Those convicted could be released or have their sentences reduced if they gave information that led to the arrest of others. Those arrested often gave false information, leading to many other wrongful arrests. As a minority group, Christians have often been targeted and arrested wrongfully.

Peace and Hope has advocated in a number of ways. First they campaigned to get innocent individuals freed from prison.

However, even when proved innocent, a pardon is not automatic. Therefore, together with other human rights organisations and the Catholic and evangelical churches, Peace and Hope has pressured the government to create an Ad-Hoc Commission. This Commission will recommend the pardon of those who have been unjustly imprisoned to the President, so that they can be freed. The advocacy work has involved writing letters, protest marches and interviews with the media. In one example, Tearfund supporters in the UK wrote to the Peruvian President and to the Embassy in the UK asking for innocent people to be freed.

When people are released, some still have a criminal record that prevents them from working. This is despite the fact that there is a law in place to cancel this criminal record. Peace and Hope are therefore also lobbying for all criminal records to be cancelled automatically on release.

Access to health and  
housing, India

Over three million people in Delhi live in slums. The government has been unable to provide services as the slums grow. ASHA works in 30 slums, carrying out community and health development work.

The slumlords make all the decisions about what happens in the slums. Often, the needs of the poorest people have been ignored. ASHA has built up a relationship with the slumlords and tried to show them that slum development should be encouraged. The Mahila Mandals (Women's Action Groups, which ASHA mobilised to address health issues in the slums) have also been active in confronting slumlords. The Mahila Mandals now represent their concerns to the local authorities. As a result, most groups now have access to water points, sanitation and health services.

ASHA also mobilised 475 families in 1989 to form a co-operative housing authority. ASHA represented the community to the Slum Wing of the Delhi Development Authority to arrange housing loans at low interest. As a result, the community now has houses, roads, drainage, clean water, electricity, healthcare, a school and a park. This initiative has become adopted as a model for the government's new housing policy.

HANDOUT **Advocacy case studies of Tearfund partners** (continued)Finding bread in  
Turkmenistan

The organisation Jahan currently works in a Tajik-Turkmen refugee settlement of 350 people. The village has a gas supply, but no running water, roads, school, and until recently, no electricity supply. The inhabitants of the village are amongst the poorest in Turkmenistan. The government does not recognise any local village leader, but has given the responsibility to oversee this community to the leader of an established Turkmen village 15km away.

Jahan is involved in building a school in the village. Jahan staff visit the community a number of times each week and are often approached by its inhabitants. On one occasion, a very poor single mother told the staff that since the President stopped free rations of flour, it had become extremely difficult to find bread for her children. Jahan's co-ordinator went to see one of the labour chiefs of the village to explain this situation. They, in turn, spoke with the village leader, who agreed to take a quota of the rice crop growing on the family's designated land on the commune farm, in exchange for a regular amount of flour. This solution used the resources the mother already had and enabled her to bake her own bread and feed her children.

Stigmatisation  
through HIV / AIDS,  
Thailand

Almost 80% of the HIV infected women in the Siam Care project tried to get rid of their children's vaccination records because 'HIV positive' was stamped in big letters on the front page. This told anyone who saw the book that the mother was HIV positive. The mothers wanted their privacy respected and did not want health personnel to know about their HIV infection through reading their children's vaccination books. Unfortunately, when the books were destroyed, important vaccination, child development, and health records were lost.

In August 2000 Siam-Care, together with CAR (Centre for Aids Rights) organised a meeting with other NGOs working with HIV-infected women to find out whether the problem existed elsewhere. It did and the information was documented. Together the NGOs came up with a new design for vaccination books, which did not state whether the mother was HIV positive. Siam-Care and CAR then organised a seminar for representatives of the Ministry of Public Health and presented the problem and possible layouts for new vaccination books. The Ministry of Public Health appointed a committee (including NGOs) to look at a new vaccination book. In March 2001 a new vaccination book was produced, leaving out the mother's HIV status.

By uniting with other NGOs and preparing the case in depth, with well-researched and good information, real life stories and case studies, Siam Care was able to ensure that changes were made, even with a slow-working ministerial department.

HANDOUT **Advocacy case studies of Tearfund partners** (continued)

African Revival  
Ministries (ARM),  
Burundi – working  
with the Batwa

The Batwa are a group of pygmy people in Burundi. They used to be nomadic, until government policy meant that they had to settle in local communities with other ethnic groups. However, this has been difficult because they are discriminated against. All people in Burundi have the right to primary education, but some school teachers refuse to take Batwa children because they do not dress neatly and because classes are overcrowded. The Batwa people have no history of land ownership, and local authorities have been reluctant to provide land for them. This has meant that they cannot build houses or farm any land to provide food for themselves.

ARM has worked with the BATWA in many ways to address their problems:

- They have lobbied local authorities and schools to accept Batwa children. This has involved fighting for their right to education, as well as helping to provide uniforms and school equipment so that the Batwa children are not discriminated against when they are in school.
- ARM has also lobbied the local authorities to provide the Batwa with land. They started in Gitega province and in 2001 the local government agreed to provide a plot of land for each Batwa family. ARM is now planning to lobby the local authorities in Kayanza province.
- ARM has worked with churches to address their prejudices and encourage Christians to care for the Batwa in their community. Some churches are now helping them to build houses on the land they have been provided with.

This whole process has enabled the Batwa to have dignity within Burundi. They are now advocating for their own rights to equal treatment and equal access to services.

## HANDOUT **Advocacy definitions**

There are numerous definitions of advocacy. Below we offer Tearfund's definition as well as some other ones.

**'Seeking with, and on behalf of, the poor to address underlying causes of poverty, bring justice and support good development through influencing the policies and practices of the powerful.'**

**Tearfund views advocacy as part of its mission to bring good news to the poor, motivated by the compassion of Christ.'**

*Tearfund*

'The promotion of a specific message and / or course of action in order to influence or contribute to the development and implementation of public policies which will alleviate the causes and consequences of poverty.'

*Oxfam GB*



'The process of influencing key decision-makers and opinion-formers (individuals and organisations) for changes to policies and practices that will work in poor people's favour.'

*Action Aid*



'What the process involves is not defined, but it must include education of either the powerful or the powerless.'

*World Vision International*



## HANDOUT What is involved in advocacy?

### Advocacy involves

- **ASKING WHY?** until you get to the root of the problem
- **ENSURING POWER IS USED WELL**, enabling those without power to gain access to it, and helping those who feel powerless to see what power they already have
- **EDUCATION** of the powerless and the powerful
- **SEEKING JUSTICE** for those who are oppressed or treated unfairly
- **BRINGING CHANGE** for individuals, through changing their personal situation and through changing systems, structures and policies
- **BEING A VOICE** for the voiceless and enabling the voiceless to find their own voice.

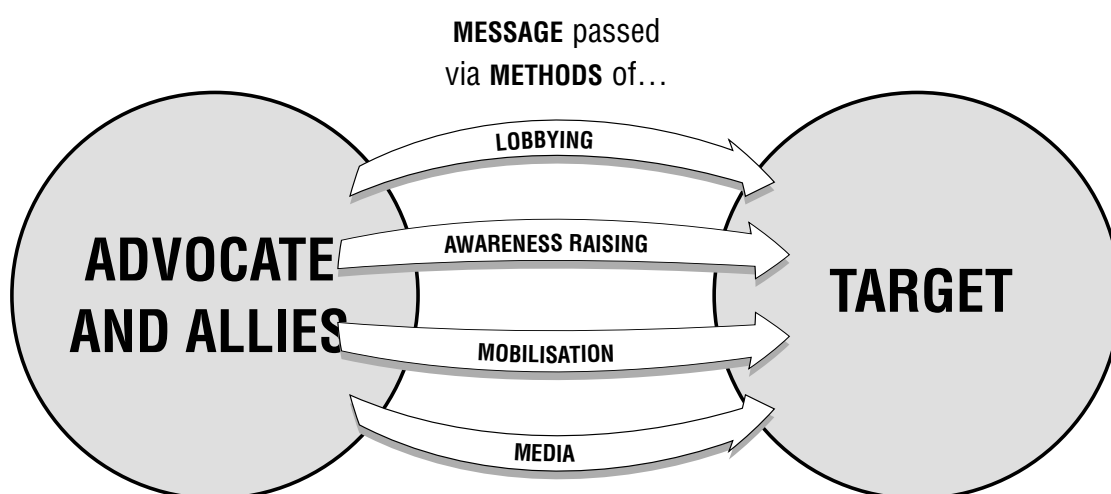
### Important activities in advocacy

- **CAPACITY BUILDING** so that the poor will become agents of change themselves
- **NETWORKING** in order to pool resources
- **PRAYER**
- **GOOD RESEARCH** so that the problem and potential solutions can be clearly identified

Advocacy is about working on individual cases, such as campaigning to release those who have been wrongly imprisoned, and about campaigning on issues, such as access to water.

The advocacy objectives are based on good research. They should be presented as a clear message directed at those who have the power to bring about change (the targets) or those that can influence them. These advocacy activities are done by those working to bring about the change (the advocate and allies and those affected by a situation) and will be communicated through a variety of methods and activities.

This will all come together to form an advocacy strategy, the practical process of formulating and implementing of which is explained in Part C of this Toolkit.



The overall objective is to change the particular policies or practices of the target for the benefit of the poor.

HANDOUT **Levels of advocacy**

Advocacy takes place at many levels, wherever there is a relationship. It varies according to the problem and the types of groups involved. Examples of decisions made at different levels include:



Decisions made at one level affect people at another level. Therefore, advocacy is necessary at all levels for lasting change. For example, international debt means that national governments have little money to spend on healthcare and education. Therefore, the local authority cannot fulfil its role in delivering primary education for everyone. Advocacy work aimed at local authority level will not bring much change unless the issue of debt at international level is also addressed.

People in communities suffer the effects of decisions made at higher levels. However, people in communities can influence these decisions by voting and lobbying decision-makers at higher levels.

**The church is present at all levels, and is therefore in a strategic position to bring about change. It can connect those in communities to those in power.**

## HANDOUT Roles of an advocate

An advocate will take different roles depending on the objectives. Some possible roles are shown below:

Possible advocate roles

| ROLE      | CHARACTERISTIC                                      |  |
|-----------|---|--|
| Represent | Speak <b>for</b> people                             |  |
| Accompany | Speak <b>with</b> people                            |  |
| Empower   | Enable people to speak for themselves               |  |
| Mediate   | Facilitate communication between people             |  |
| Model     | Demonstrate the practice to people or policy makers |  |
| Negotiate | Bargain for something                               |  |
| Network   | Build coalitions                                    |  |

**Key**

