

Why advocacy?

Description This section will help participants explore what drives their advocacy work and understand why Tearfund is involved in it. It will also explore some of the benefits and potential drawbacks of an advocacy approach to development, and possible ways of addressing these.

Learning objectives

By the end of the section, participants will:

- be able to identify what motivates them in their own advocacy work
- understand why Tearfund is involved in advocacy work
- understand the overlap between advocacy and other development work
- understand the potential benefits and drawbacks of an advocacy approach to development.

Links

This links with SECTION A1 (Poverty and development) and SECTION A2 (Understanding advocacy). It is also the basis for SECTION A4 (Good practice in advocacy) and is linked with SECTION C3.6 (Risk management).

EXERCISE 6 **What drives you in advocacy work?**



Aim That participants will reflect on their own motivations in advocacy work.

Methods Flash cards, small-group work and feedback, buzz groups, ranking, agree / disagree

Handout Biblical values

This exercise is important because often people’s commitment to advocacy comes from their own personal beliefs. This exercise explores the personal beliefs that drive participants and helps them to see the link between advocacy and development.

Participants brainstorm in pairs or write directly on flash cards their response to the question ‘what drives you in advocacy work?’

- Group the answers and discuss the different motivations in plenary.
- Alternatively, collect the flash cards without discussion, read out the most common motivations and ask participants to move to either end of the room according to how strongly they agree or disagree with the motivation for themselves. This then leads on to a discussion.

Key point

- If people are certain of their own motivations, they are more likely to persevere.

EXERCISE 7 **Reasons for becoming involved in advocacy work**



Aim To explore the variety of reasons for becoming involved in advocacy work.

Methods Plenary discussion, small-group work, presentation

Handouts Why Tearfund is involved in advocacy work
Biblical values

There are many reasons for becoming involved in advocacy work. In addition to personal motivations (EXERCISE 6), these may include:

- the vision, mission and values of the organisation for which a person works
- the values of the community to which a person belongs
- biblical values
- being directly affected by a situation
- desire for long-term change.

Participants summarise possible reasons or motivations that people might have for becoming involved in advocacy work. After discussing these reasons, present some of Tearfund's thinking in the handout.

Consider what value the church adds to any existing advocacy or other development work, and how this links with the overall mission of the church – see SECTION B2 (The mission of the church) and SECTION B3 (Jesus the advocate). This helps participants to place advocacy in their understanding of integral mission.

EXERCISE 8 **Developing a vision for change**



Aim To develop a vision of a better society.

Methods Buzz groups, plenary discussion

Developing a vision at the start of any advocacy or development work is important, as it will help the advocate focus on a positive vision for change, not just problems or difficulties. This exercise encourages participants to think about their perfect world, whether this is a general vision for their country or a more specific one for their own local area. Vision provides an ultimate aim for what people are trying to do and helps to motivate them.

Ask participants some of the following questions so that they start thinking and express their dreams:

- What would your perfect world look like?
- What would you like your neighbourhood or community to look like in ten years time?

- What kind of world would you like your children to live in?

Ask participants to write down, draw or act out their vision.

EXERCISE 9 **Links between advocacy and other development work**



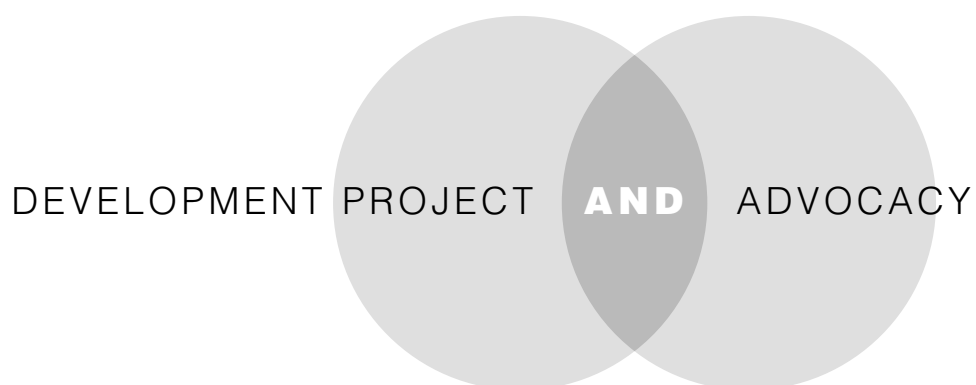
Aim To show strong links between advocacy and other development work.

Methods Flash cards, plenary discussion

Handout Why Tearfund is involved in advocacy work

It is important to make the necessary links between advocacy and other development work, so that advocacy is seen as integral to development work and not separated from it. The best advocacy work is motivated by the existing development concerns of a community.

Give everyone a flash card or post-it note and split the participants into two groups. Each person in one group writes down a reason for getting involved in a development project or programme with which they are all already familiar such as drilling wells or improving farming practices. Each person in the second group writes down a reason for involvement in advocacy work. Each set of reasons is then placed on two separate pieces of flip chart paper representing advocacy and development project 'circles'. Between these two pieces of paper is a blank piece of paper, which represents the overlap. Ask the participants to place any similar or related cards from the advocacy and development circles on the blank sheet of paper between the two. Do this until all connections are made.



- Key point** ■ There is not complete overlap between the two circles, but the ultimate aim of development projects and programmes, and advocacy work, is the same: to restore relationships with God, each other and the environment, and to tackle poverty and injustice.

EXERCISE 10 **Benefits and drawbacks of an advocacy approach to development**



Aim To identify the benefits and drawbacks of an advocacy approach to development.

Methods Plenary discussion, presentation, buzz groups, small-group discussion, ranking

Handout Benefits and drawbacks of an advocacy approach to development

Split participants into two groups and ask one to brainstorm the benefits and the other to brainstorm the drawbacks of an advocacy approach to development. Write the benefits and drawbacks onto flash cards and ask participants to place them in order, from the most positive aspect of advocacy to the most negative. Discuss why the group has come to that conclusion and distribute the handout.

- Key points**
- Advocacy is one of a number of possible options to tackle poverty and injustice.
 - Advocacy is not always the best response.
 - Each case needs to be considered carefully according to the context.

EXERCISE 11 **Ways to overcome concerns and risks in advocacy**



Aim To explore ways to overcome common concerns, threats and risks of advocacy.

Methods Buzz groups, small-group discussion, plenary discussion, presentation, role play

Handout Common concerns with advocacy work and how to overcome them

Split the group into pairs or small groups and give each group a flash card of one or more of the concerns, risks or drawbacks identified in the previous exercise or in the 'Common concerns with advocacy work and how to overcome them' handout. Each group discusses how these concerns, risks or drawbacks can be overcome and feeds back to the plenary for discussion.

Another approach is for the participants to prepare a short drama based on the case studies in the handout to illustrate how the concern was overcome.

HANDOUT **Why Tearfund is involved in advocacy work**

Refer to Tearfund's definition of advocacy given in the handout in SECTION A2.

**Main reasons
for involvement
in advocacy
work**

BEING MOTIVATED BY THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST Christ is our motivation and our strength in all that we do. He has compassion for those in need, those suffering injustice, oppression or poverty. Our compassion is based on the love and the mercy that Christ has shown us.

FULFILLING THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH TO BRING GOOD NEWS God uses the church to help extend his Kingdom. This includes preaching, prayer, caring for those in need, defending the cause of others, speaking out against injustice, working for change and looking after God's creation. Advocacy is therefore part of the overall mission of the church. We are motivated to do this out of obedience to God, compassion, and in order to point people towards Jesus.

VIEWING THE POOR AS AGENTS OF CHANGE Part of the development process is helping the poor to see themselves as agents of change. Advocacy work can help to achieve this, so that poor people are more in control of their lives and better able to participate in decision-making that affects the future of their community and wider area.

ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES OF POVERTY AND INJUSTICE AND PROVIDING LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS Development work should deal with the root causes of poverty as well as tackling the symptoms, so that development will be sustainable. Advocacy tackles the root causes by asking what policies, practices or other factors are leading to poverty and injustice and challenging these.

SHARING GOOD DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE A key part of advocacy work is showing what works in practice and persuading others to do the same. For Christians, this is part of what it means to be a light to the world, demonstrating God's Kingdom. Building on good development practice and promoting positive change is central to advocacy work. Advocacy work is not only about preventing negative change.

LEVERAGING GREATER CHANGE Advocacy work can generate or attract resources and actions that would not be available in individual development projects. As a result, advocacy work can have a significant multiplier effect on development work that is already happening.

HANDOUT **Biblical values**

- Key points**
- Biblical values are constant but they only become our values when we live by them.
 - Because we each prioritise values differently, we should be careful to understand how and why others have prioritised values in their approach to advocacy.

Some biblical values which link with advocacy work are:

COMPASSION

For the vulnerable, marginalised and oppressed. The Israelites were told not to ‘take advantage of a widow or an orphan’ (Exodus 22:22) and to look after the poor (Leviticus 23:22). The psalmist speaks of God as being ‘gracious and compassionate’ (86:15) and ‘slow to anger and rich in love’.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Many of the laws in Leviticus were written to promote justice, such as using fair measurements for trade (19:36), not charging interest (25:36), fair distribution of land (25:8-54) and paying fair wages to labourers (Malachi 3:5).

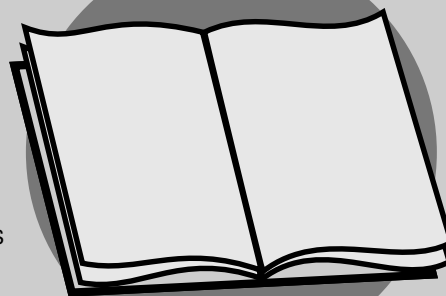
LOVE AND ACTIVE RESPONSIBILITY TO OTHERS

Jesus placed love at the heart of all commandments (Matthew 22:37-40).

EQUALITY OF ALL HUMAN BEINGS BEFORE GOD

This includes equality regardless of age, gender, race, or intelligence and recognises human beings as made in the image of God (Genesis 1-2).

WISE STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES which means treating the environment with respect, taking proper care of all animals, fish and birds, and using the earth’s natural resources to the benefit of all people, not just a few (Genesis 1-2).



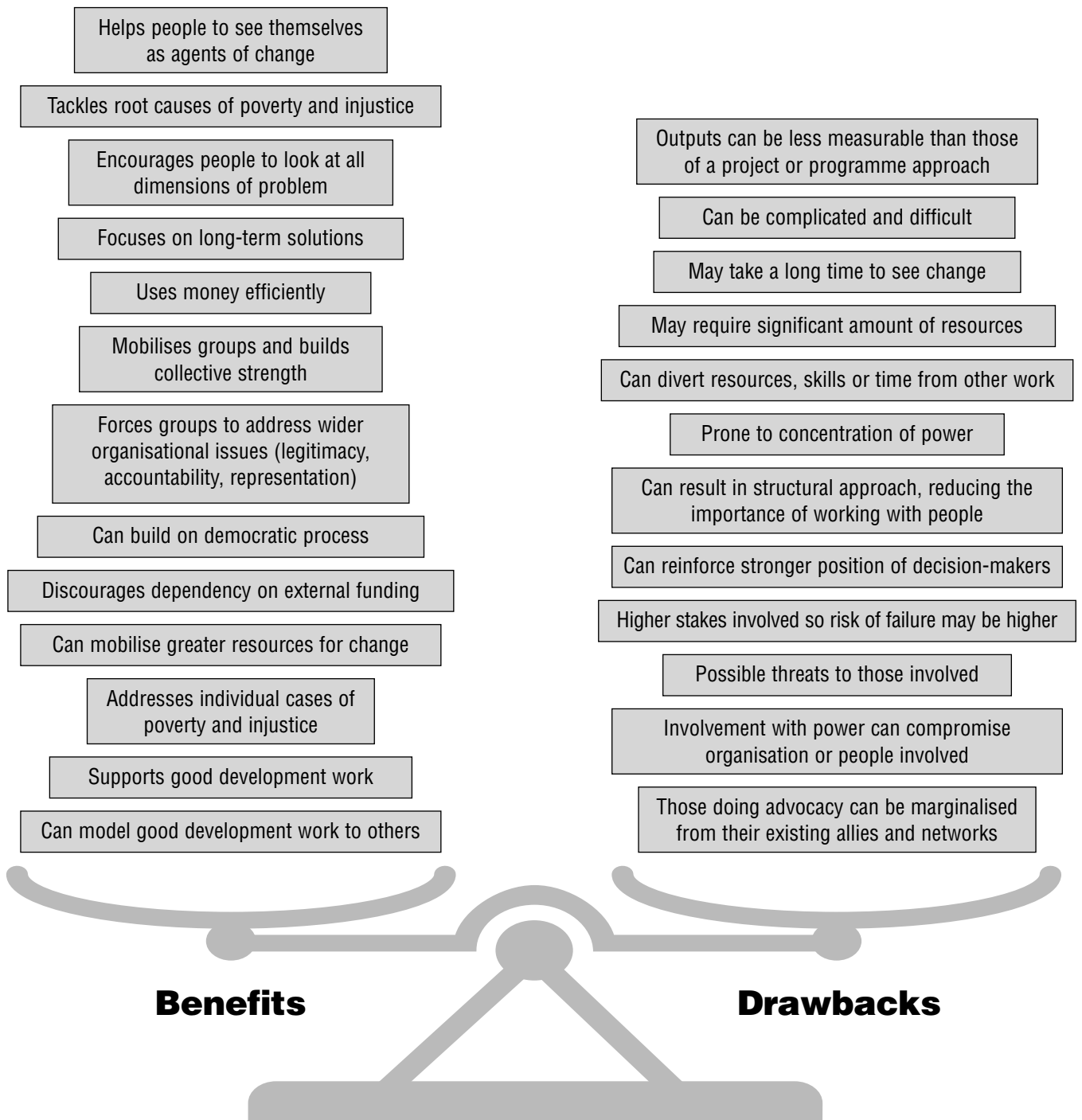
PARTICIPATION and responsibility of people in determining their own lives and the lives of those in the community and nations.

RECONCILIATION AND PEACE WITHIN COMMUNITIES

God intends that all people should live at peace with each other and reconciliation is at the heart of his plan (Matthew 5:9). We need to promote peaceful and supportive relationships within communities, and to seek reconciliation in all situations.

HANDOUT **Benefits and drawbacks of an advocacy approach to development**

Advocacy work might not always be the best approach to development. The table below looks at the advantages and disadvantages of an advocacy approach to development. Some of these advantages and disadvantages also apply to a project or programme approach to development.



HANDOUT

Common concerns with advocacy work and how to overcome them

Many organisations have concerns about becoming involved in advocacy. Some common concerns are listed below, with advice on how to overcome them.

‘Speaking out will threaten ourselves or those for whom we speak’

- In extreme circumstances, buildings could be closed down, property confiscated, or people could lose their jobs, end up in prison or be physically threatened as a result of taking part in advocacy work, particularly in countries where law enforcement is weak.
- If there is a potential risk, advocates and those affected by a situation should be aware of the risk before any action is taken.
- Use organisations outside the country, or undertake advocacy as part of a coalition in order to keep a low profile.
- Cultivate strong relationships with some people in power, who can act as bridges to others or help you if you get into difficulty.

Churches, Sudan

The Sudan Council of Churches (SCC in the north) and the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC in the south) represent the majority of Christian denominations in Sudan. They have information and advocacy departments and collect information on issues such as food shortages, fighting, human rights abuses, the peace process and movement of refugees. They use this information to alert the world media, the Sudanese government and the international community about their situation. They also pass the information on to a network of development and human rights agencies in Europe and North America that will lobby and campaign on their behalf, especially when it is difficult for the churches to speak directly in Sudan.

‘We will be ostracised if we speak out’

- Some advocacy work can involve a risk to those involved, in terms of being ostracised from the community, losing friends and, in extreme cases, losing a job.
- Be aware of these risks.
- Minimise the risk through respecting those with power and influence, and giving them clear explanations about what is being done.

‘We do not know enough about the situation’

- Contact other organisations and networks to see which have any information and are already involved in advocacy work on the issue. You may find that collectively you have all the information and contacts needed.

HANDOUT

Common concerns with advocacy work (continued)

‘Advocacy is confrontational’

- This is not necessarily the case. Governments and authorities are often aware that there is a problem and will welcome suggestions as to how it can be solved.

Innerchange House of Hope, Cambodia

In Cambodia thousands of girls under 18 are drawn into prostitution and live and operate from brothels. The Cambodian law says that girls who want to leave brothels should be released, but many girls are unaware of this law, brothel owners do not publicise it and many of the law enforcers are unsure of the law’s detail.

The first task was to make the law more understandable and more available. A member of the Innerchange staff, who had experience with civil servants and who was older and respected in the community, summarised the current law and asked the Governor to sign a document endorsing it. He did so and the one page summary was given to police and brothel owners to ensure that girls under 18 years could be released from brothels.

The key issue was to make information accessible to the key policy implementors, and to give them the tools and confidence to implement a law that already exists.

‘Romans 13 says submit to authority, so advocacy work which challenges authority goes against biblical teaching’

- The assumption in Paul’s writing about authority is that those in power are God’s servants. This appears just after Romans 12, when Paul is instructing the Christians not to repay evil with evil, but to overcome evil with good. He instructs them to leave room for God’s wrath, some of which will be administered through his servants who are in authority on earth. However, what happens if those in authority are not governing according to God’s laws? We cannot just sit back and watch a government abuse its power and role as a servant of God. It is our role, both as citizens and as Christians, to hold the governments to account, so that they fulfil the role that God has appointed them to do.

Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia (EFC)

The government of Cambodia is concerned about the issue of pornography. The church and many other groups agree with the government’s stance and want to show that they support it. This not only gives the government confidence to act in a stronger way, but encourages churches to co-operate and have detailed discussions about how to achieve this joint aim.

The Youth Commission, a working group of the EFC, made up of Cambodian pastors, Christian professionals and Christian youth, are encouraging the churches to organise a March Against Pornography. Women’s groups from churches in the city of Phnom Penh and beyond, will be invited to the march to protest against the rapid increase in explicit videos and magazines. Many talks are planned in churches before the march. The march includes the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia Youth Commission, the Women’s Commissions and the public.

HANDOUT

Common concerns with advocacy work (continued)

‘We are too small and can make no difference’

- Use the information, contacts and networks you already have and form alliances.
- Talk to as many other organisations as possible to find out whether they are acting on the issue or know of others that are.

Cigarette advertising, Sri Lanka

Tearfund partner organisation, Navajeevana, is a group of people who live together in Christian communities, supporting each other as they seek freedom from drug addiction. They wanted to respond to a major cigarette advertising campaign that was targeting the ports of Galle and Colombo. An international tobacco company was using a yacht as their main promotional strategy as well as distributing branded promotional materials. Schools were invited to take their children on the yacht and Navajeevana felt this was a case of exploitation that promoted a glamorous image of smoking. Navajeevana visited schools and encouraged them to cancel any proposed visits to the yacht in order to benefit and protect the children. Navajeevana decorated a bus to make it look like a yacht and drove it round the local area, performing street drama and mocking the cigarette company’s advertising slogans. When the yacht eventually arrived, there was little interest in the advertising campaign. Local people also became more aware of the risks associated with smoking.

‘Advocacy can raise unrealistic expectations about how fast change can come’

- Ensure that the community participates in identifying the problems, proposing solutions and assessing what chance they have of influencing change.
- Establish a realistic advocacy strategy that takes account of the resources available, the skills of the community, the accessibility of the targets and likelihood of change.

‘Advocacy will divert resources away from other work’

- If possible, advocacy work should come out of existing development activities.

‘Advocacy work can compromise people in the organisation and the organisation as a whole’

- A danger in advocacy work is that an organisation or community becomes too close to those in power and compromises its message, forgets the people it is representing or fails to represent them accurately. Promote participatory policy-making to ensure that policy is made by a group of people.
- Ensure that prayer underpins all actions, and there is clear understanding of any biblical mandate for action.
- Avoid condemnation in advocacy activities.
- Ensure that those affected by a situation represent themselves.
- Ensure that different people have contact with decision-makers so that all contacts and influence are not focused on one person (usually the Director!).
- Have a clear internal system of accountability.