



# Right to influence

Advocacy: experiences, challenges and ideas



This publication has been produced on the initiative of the Advocacy Group established under Thematic Forum, an association of 29 Danish organisations involved in development work.

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## Preface

Over the past year or so, the authors of this publication – making up the working group under Thematic Forum responsible for the issue of “links between local, national and international advocacy” – have compiled and discussed a variety of advocacy experiences among Danish civil-society organisations engaged in development cooperation. We are pleased to be able to present this publication as the tangible fruit of our labour.

We hope that it will serve as inspiration for organisations involved in advocacy.

It is our wish that it may prompt employees and volunteers to reflect on their own experiences, learn from those of others, and make further headway in their own support for advocacy.

Our ambition is to convey background knowledge about advocacy, while presenting a series of methods and tools that may be useful in planning and implementing such endeavours. Their practical application is continuously exemplified, primarily through a range of cases concerning Danish organisations’ support for advocacy along with partners in the South.

In our selection of cases, we have emphasised on their ability to illustrate concrete experiences involving different types of civil-society organisations, addressing both results and problems. It has not been our intent to portray a series of unqualified success stories, but to show examples of advocacy and the challenges that it entails for Danish organisations and their partners in the South. Our entry point has been the Danish civil-society organisations. To the extent possible, the individual organisations have strived to gather knowledge and experiences from their partners in the South.

## Introduction

Development aid has been on the Western world’s agenda for about 50 years. Originally, this was primarily about creating economic growth in the expectation that an increase in developing countries’ real incomes would reduce poverty and inequality. However, this assumption turned out to be too simplistic, and since then, our approach to development cooperation has changed repeatedly. Another modus operandi has been the needs-centred approach, setting out to meet the needs of poor and marginalised people by means of technical assistance and service delivery.

Today, there is general consensus that development cannot be brought about solely by delivering services to poor countries and populations. It is also necessary to build the capacity of civil societies and state institutions in developing countries with a view to strengthening their competence to plan and implement development activities.

Furthermore, in recent years, the focus has turned to the need for identifying and taking on the fundamental and structural causes of poverty and inequality, i.e. the conditions that marginalise and oppress sectors of the developing countries’ populations, hindering a fair distribution of resources, while disregarding and disrespecting the rights of the individual.

The struggle for just social structures calls on the actors of civil society to move into the political arena, not by entering the fray of party politics, but by strategically participating and influencing political processes where decisions are taken that have a bearing on people’s lives and opportunities for development. And it applies to all levels of society: the family, the market, the community, the office, the hotel lobby, and naturally the councils, commissions, parliaments and governments.

The strategic and political endeavour for the just and long-term combat against poverty is known in English as advocacy.

### What is advocacy really?

If we presume, in popular terms, that relief aid is the equivalent of giving a man a fish when he is starving, whereas development aid amounts to giving him a fishing net and teaching him to fish, then one could say that advocacy is tantamount to enabling him to attain his rights as a fisherman.

*It is advocacy when:*

*- Bono from the rock band U2 puts pressure on the world’s leaders to increase their assistance to developing countries;*

*- young activists build a 12-metre-high wall at the Roskilde Festival to symbolise the latest events in the Middle East;*

*- the chiefs in Senegal take the lead in efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation;*

*- disability organisations in Uganda put pressure on heads of state at the Commonwealth summit in Kampala in 2007, achieving the insertion into the final communiqué of a pledge by all Commonwealth countries to work towards ratifying and implementing the new UN disability convention.*



The common denominator of these examples is that they all involve an action that, at various levels, draws attention to a cause with a view to bringing about positive and, ideally, lasting change for a group of people.

Advocacy is essentially about fighting the structural causes of poverty and ensuring that everyone's social, economic and political rights are enforced. This happens by supporting poor and marginalised groups in strategically promoting their interests to relevant authorities and decision-makers, insisting on their responsibility and obligation to combat poverty.

Accordingly, advocacy aims to place a given issue on the relevant decision-makers' agenda, to hold those responsible to account for their actions, and to get them to change their practices in order to improve poor and marginalised men and women's rights, strengthening their access to and control over social, economic and political resources.

Advocacy should be embedded within and start directly from the people that it concerns, taking place in partnership with the groups whose rights are being championed. Accordingly, enabling people to exert influence on matters that affect their own lives – in the development-aid jargon so-called 'empowerment' – is at the heart of any advocacy endeavour.

### Our definition of advocacy

Danish civil society is characterised by its breadth and diversity. This has also given rise to numerous definitions of what exactly advocacy is, which springs mostly from variation in the history, particular nature and conditions of individual organisations.

**For the purposes of this publication, we have chosen to operate with the following definition of advocacy:**

- **Advocacy is a variety of strategies aimed at fighting the fundamental causes of poverty, and at permanently improving the living conditions of poor and marginalised people.**
- **Advocacy consists of influencing political, economic, cultural and social processes and decisions locally, regionally, nationally and/or internationally.**
- **Advocacy is based – to the fullest extent possible – on empowering poor and marginalised people to represent themselves to those in power.**

### The publication and its structure

This publication is based on a series of cases, which we have received from Danish organisations involved in development work. These have been examined through the prism of the theory, methodology and tools often used in planning and implementation of advocacy. In this manner, we have attempted to portray on-the-ground experiences alongside more general descriptions and considerations regarding advocacy.

**In Chapter 1**, we start off with a case from Ghana describing the work supported by the Ghana Friendship Groups in Denmark. They have been active for almost 30 years, and typify, in many ways, the story about overall trends in Danish development aid. In recent years, their focus has been on advocacy. This is in keeping with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' "Strategy for Danish support to Civil Society in Developing Countries", which has been in force since 2000. The revised version of the strategy will be introduced, while the Ghana Friendship Groups and MS ActionAid Denmark provide some examples of the challenges posed by the greater prioritisation of advocacy. Among the issues raised are the importance of striking the right balance between service delivery and advocacy, and how to deal with the conflicts that advocacy may stir up.

**Chapter 2** takes a closer look at the elements that need to be in place before taking up advocacy. Firstly, this is about the organisations – both the Danish and its partner in the South – having to start from a rights-based approach to development. This is illustrated by a case from India. Here, Disabled People's Organisations Denmark (DPOD) is supporting work in which people with disabilities take action to have their rights respected. The chapter also looks at the question of legitimacy, and what gives an organisation the right to represent particular groups. Another issue raised is an organisation's credibility and what it means for advocacy's prospects of success. This discussion is closely linked to a case from South Asia, where the Danish Family Planning Association (Sex & Samfund) supports a programme based on an effort to produce solid documentation, which helps strengthen the credibility of advocacy. The chapter is rounded off by a discussion of the organisational demands imposed by advocacy on the partners. AC International Child Support's contribution to advocacy for deaf people in Ethiopia is presented as an illustrative case.

**Chapter 3** underscores the importance of setting clear-cut goals for the advocacy, and of formulating strategies for how they will be reached. In addition to subjects such as problem analysis and capacity self-assessments, the chapter looks at advocacy in three areas, namely empowerment of marginalised groups, political participation, and policy change. These three areas are exemplified by three cases. Women's empowerment is at the heart of a project supported by Danmission in Tanzania aimed at combating domestic violence against women. A good example of increased political participation is an initiative in Honduras, where citizens' involvement in municipal budget planning is supported by MS ActionAid Denmark. Finally, a case from Bangladesh, where Save the Children is promoting the drawing-up of an ethical code of conduct regarding children in the labour force, illustrates how to influence legislative work.

**Chapter 4** contains a series of tools that may be applied in advocacy. Strategies and tactics for working with the press are presented alongside a case from Malawi, where ADRA Denmark has supported its local sister organisation in a media advocacy programme on the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The example of the organisation Stairway in the Philippines illustrates how theatre and other actions may play an effective part in campaigning and advocacy. This chapter also looks at lobbying techniques, alliance-building and other types of cooperation between organisations. Finally, there are some ideas for how to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of advocacy, including suggestions for the design of success indicators.



**The last chapter** addresses some other challenges faced by advocacy. This includes the link between the local and the global level, the question of how to defend the partners' security, and the importance of taking the private sector into account. It also discusses how Danish organisations can reach further and gain improved results from their advocacy. Tensions arising within partnerships when greater focus on advocacy detracts from service delivery can also be a challenge. Finally, the authors believe that a series of challenges lie within the organisational sphere, as well as in monitoring and documentation of the work.

As can be seen, this publication is essentially built upon the cases which the participant organisations have kindly shared with us. We wish to express profound gratitude to them and to their partners for these contributions. We hope that their experiences, along with the other elements presented in this paper, will serve to inspire others, thus strengthening poor and marginalised people's influence over their own lives and societies.



## From service delivery to advocacy

### CASE:

#### Afishetu becomes a politician

Actually, she had gone along just for the company, when her friend was going to a workshop on local politics in Savelugu in northern Ghana. But once she was there, the young Afishetu Alhasan was so gripped by what she witnessed that she decided to become a politician herself.

She was in luck. The election in her home district had just been postponed for four weeks. This gave her time both to register as a candidate and to run a campaign – through her Danish-supported rural-community organisation. She also won, outcompeting two men. She had managed to mobilise female voters massively, and after the poll, to her own surprise, she was able to take up her seat in the District Assembly as a representative of the Tulunga constituency.

The young rural woman's successful election owed much to the "Association of Community Organisations in Karaga District", which forms part of the advocacy intervention "CBO Empowerment Project" aimed at strengthening local community groups in participating actively in local decision-making processes.

The Ghana Friendship Groups in Denmark are behind the funding of this undertaking. Project officer Lene Marie Andreasen stresses the importance of supporting female political leaders in



a male-dominated society such as Ghana, admitting that this is about politics, though not party politics: “We support female candidates, but we don’t take a stance on their party. We have never deselected anyone due to party affiliation.”

The organisation has been active in supporting Ghana over the past almost 30 years. In four major Danida-funded programmes, up to DKK 170 million (23 million) has been spent on hundreds of activities, including education, health and hygiene, well-boring, a radio station and micro-credit schemes. In relation to these projects, user groups have been set up as so-called community-based organisations (CBOs). Many have existed for years, while others have been founded in connection with new projects.

The idea of the new CBO Empowerment Project is to gather the multitude of organisation into one large network, organised at the local, district and regional level. The networking aims to help the numerous community groups articulate their views towards decision-makers at the various levels.

The Ghana Friendship Groups’ local partner “Ghanaian Developing Communities Association” (GDCA) is in charge of practical matters, as well as of training and other inputs needed to get the numerous CBOs to join up, such as the political workshop that led to the election of Afi-shetu Alhassan.

“This is our most experimental advocacy project to date,” says Lene Marie Andreasen. “It works as a superstructure for many of our other projects. The idea is to support the establishment of a popular movement, so that there is something left when we are no longer here. Something that can live on,” she explains.

The new project heralds the phase-out of a project process that has been ongoing since 1979, in which a large part of the work has consisted of various types of service delivery, and the start-up of a new phase where the essence is advocacy. “But it’s all connected. We couldn’t build this structure of CBOs without everything that went before,” she continues, referring to the numerous projects that have delivered services.

Thus, 30 years’ support for communities in northern Ghana has come to epitomise Danish development aid and the changes it has undergone over three decades. While the work used to focus on delivery of concrete services, today advocacy and capacity-building are taking centre stage.

### Strategy for support for civil society

Over the past 10-15 years, Danish civil-society organisations involved in development work have focused increasingly on advocacy. While many organisation used to give top priority to projects delivering concrete services (such as wells, school buildings etc.) to poor target groups, the attention has gradually shifted towards enhancing capacity in civil society and towards advocacy interventions.

This trend springs from a series of circumstances. One is an overall tendency in the politics of many developing countries, where more and more have introduced multiparty democracy, thus opening the door to greater influence for the individual citizen and for dialogue between different stakeholders. At the same time, Denmark and the international community have focused more on strengthening civil society. The support no longer treats civil-society organisations as mere tools to offer services to the poor, but as a chance to champion the interests of the poor.

This has raised the profile of civil society as a political actor.

The prioritisation of advocacy in development work was reflected, for instance, in the development of Danida’s “Strategy for Danish Support to Civil Society in Developing Countries – including cooperation with the Danish NGOs” (in common parlance: the civil-society strategy), which was launched in 2000. Here, the three elements of service delivery, capacity building and advocacy, as well as their interrelations, were first set down as an overall strategic principle for the Danish civil-society organisations’ development work.

The civil-society strategy has steered the Danish organisations’ work. For instance, its focus has led many organisations to change their activities. Several have had to adjust the visions and goals of their development cooperation, become familiar with new rights-based approaches, reflect on future partner selection in the South, and so on.

The updated civil-society strategy<sup>1</sup> (published in December 2008) starts off by declaring that one of civil society’s new challenges will be “to operate within a new framework partly defined by the principles and targets set out in the Paris Declaration”, in which harmonisation and alignment of development cooperation are prominent goals.

**To this effect, the strategy establishes six objectives, of which two are directly relevant to future efforts in the field of advocacy, stating that Denmark will work to ensure that:**

- **“in the cooperation with civil society organisations, particular emphasis is placed on capacity building, and that the involvement of these organisations in advocacy work is promoted locally, nationally, regionally and internationally, and that the capacity to develop and participate in national, regional and international networks is supported”**
- **“civil society organisations engaging in efforts to ensure the implementation of international conventions and declarations on human rights are supported.”<sup>2</sup>**

In other words, advocacy is to be fostered, with a particular emphasis on capacity building, networking and promotion of rights-based development.

### Advocacy takes time

Although there is broad backing for the strategy and the importance of advocacy as opposed to stand-alone service delivery, Danish development organisations do not always report entirely positive experiences.

Lene Marie Andreasen from the Ghana Friendship Groups explains that – even if the shift towards advocacy has gone well – the transition has not been smooth. Advocacy requires patience, as it takes time to meet the expectations which the intervention sets out to address. “If, for example, lack of water is the problem in one place, then the project helps people organise to demand water from the appropriate bodies, exerting pressure on the authorities. But this obviously takes time. And I do understand when they say they prefer to get water, rather than having to secure it themselves,” she says.

**Advocacy requires patience, as it takes time to meet the expectations that the intervention sets out to address.**

### Weak structures

The experiences from Ghana also point to hurdles such as weak state structures. This is most evident when the advocacy concerns budget control. By means of training channelled by the project, community inhabitants obtain tools to make sense of how public funds are used in their local area. They can therefore see if the money has been spent as agreed, and react if this is not the case. However, such new knowledge may not always help the locals make a difference.

“The trouble is that there is often no counterpart. We have an NGO structure to control the authorities, but there may not be anyone that they can control, because the local governments are just too bad”, says Lene Marie Andreasen: “We would like to play ball, but we lack a wall to play the ball up against.”

**Lack of capacity and/or resources within public authorities can make it difficult for advocacy to have an impact.**

### Advocacy in combination with service delivery

MS ActionAid Denmark is one of the largest Danish development organisations. It was also among the pioneers of advocacy. Today, this field of work has top priority, and the organisation has hired staff exclusively dedicated to it.

Kristian Sloth, who is a ‘thematic coordinator’ at MS, says that the time when the organisation’s work revolved chiefly around service delivery is a distant memory today. In recent years, advocacy has become a requisite and fundamental feature of development cooperation. “Advocacy is an intelligent way of operating. Of improving people’s lives,” he says.

He also points out that some partners are troubled if support for specific improvements in their everyday lives is withdrawn completely. “We have had good experiences of combining tangible support with advocacy. For instance, in a project targeting the rural population, we may assist in improving cultivation methods, or other aspects of agriculture. And then we create a super-structure to conduct advocacy, for example helping the farmers obtain title deeds to their land.”

### Conflict can be a good sign

Kristian Sloth stresses that advocacy will often produce conflict. “Part of the poverty problem arises from the skewed distribution of resources. So advocacy seeking to address this issue will be met with opposition. This is a clash of interests. It’s the elites against the poor. Therefore, the conflict and this resistance can be a sign that we are dealing with the fundamentals. It’s an indicator that we are grasping the root of the problem.”

Advocacy is a huge challenge for the partners, but also difficult for the Danish organisation, he affirms. “It’s important to maintain the balance in the division of roles between the local and the Danish partner. It must be the local partner who is outgoing. International organisations should avoid becoming actors in the internal politics.”

**It must be the local partner who is outgoing. International organisations should avoid becoming actors in the internal politics.**

The Ghana Friendship Groups have not experienced conflict arising from their advocacy. “This may have to do with the subjects that we address,” says Lene Maria Andreasen, and points to the fact the gender issues and women’s empowerment have not caused them any serious clashes in Ghana. There is however, a potential for conflict. “Ghana is a patriarchal society, and gender issues can be highly contentious and collide with underlying structures, such as those that exist within a strong system of rule by chiefs,” she says.

Notwithstanding the problems and challenges, there is broad backing for the civil-society strategy and advocacy among the Danish organisations involved in development cooperation.





## Before advocacy begins

Before an organisation sets out to pursue advocacy, it is useful to take a critical look at its organisational strengths and weaknesses in regard of such an endeavour. Advocacy differs from other types of interventions, and a series of aspects of the organisation's modus operandi can be important in achieving the desired results.

This is about, for instance:

- Whether the organisation has a rights-based approach to development work.
- The organisation's legitimacy in the eyes of the world around it.
- The credibility attributed by others to the organisation's work as well as to the information and messages that it conveys.
- The organisation's capacity and style of work.

### A rights-based approach

An important precondition for working with advocacy is that the organisation has a "rights-based approach" to development work, i.e. one that is based on internationally recognised human rights and integrates these into development plans and processes.

It is at the core of this approach that the actual causes behind the violation of a right are identified, subsequently supporting those affected in demanding their right, while strengthening those entities that have a duty to fulfil the right. This could concern, say, the right to education, where people without access to schooling are made aware of this right, while the state – or other actors tasked with securing that everyone can get an education – are reminded of their obligations and assisted in complying with them.

An important pillar of a rights-based approach is the understanding that every individual is a "rights holder", who is entitled to have his or her rights enforced. For every right, there is a corresponding "duty bearer", who must respect and comply with this right. This means that the rights holder can hold the duty bearer to account as regards a given right. For example, all children have the right to attend school, and they can hold the state to account for the fulfilment of this right.

Development work will typically pursue a rights-based approach when targeting four areas:

- The most vulnerable groups in society.
- Identification of the actual causes of poverty and other violations of human rights.
- The relationship between rights holders and duty bearers.
- Boosting the chances of people influencing their own lives.

The Indian disability movement – supported by Disabled People's Organisations Denmark – conducts advocacy built upon a rights-based approach, fighting to have the rights of people with disabilities fulfilled. This is shown by the following case:



### CASE:

#### People with disabilities in action

The Indian disability movement has been successful in using public rallies and the media in its struggle for equal opportunities. This is what happened, for instance, on a Tuesday morning in September 2006, when 300 people with disabilities showed up in New Delhi near the Sansad, Parliament of India. Within just a few minutes, the entire road was blocked, while banners were handed out and displayed. Almost all disability groups were represented, from those with mobility disabilities using crutches and wheelchairs, to people with deafness, cerebral palsy, mental disabilities, haemophilia, and many more.

When the action began in the heart of New Delhi and near the legislature, it took barely ten minutes before the first police buses showed up. The crowd was soon surrounded by officers of the law with their characteristic six-to-seven-foot-long long bamboo batons. All the activists sat down, shouting slogans about rights instead of charity. The deaf gestured with signs in protest. Twenty journalists rushed around, taking pictures and interviewing.

The background to their rally was that earlier in the year, a group of leaders of the disability movement succeeded in gaining representation on some subcommittees reporting to the parliamentary Planning Commission. This body is supposed to exert influence over the five-year plan that sets out the budget framework for the state, and hence also the priorities for the next five years. However, what began as a triumph turned into frustration over poor coordination among the subcommittees, absence of meetings, and fear that everything would be lost due to deficient coordination by the Planning Commission.



*Dharna as a form of direct action*

The type of protest carried out by people with disabilities on that September morning is called dharna in India. Historically, a dharna is a hunger strike, in which the activists sit down and fast in front of the main entrance of the offending party in order to publicly invoke justice. This was a form of direct action also used by Mahatma Gandhi.

**It is useful to organise protests and other actions in a form of which there is a tradition, and which is recognised by the local society.**

The National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP), which is the partner of Disabled People's Organisation Denmark (DPOD) in India, uses dharna in its advocacy. The organisation is led by people who have disabilities themselves.

NCPEDP's work starts from the Indian disability legislation, which focuses on rights for people with disabilities. However, the law is far from being enforced, and this is why the organisation has worked to spread knowledge of the rights enshrined in legislation among other people with disabilities and their relatives, the media, politicians, national institutions, civil-society organisations, and so on.

*Own needs and interests*

A strength of this advocacy is that people with disabilities have set the agenda themselves by expressing and advancing their own needs and interests. At the same time, the disability movement has succeeded in speaking with a single voice. This has contributed to a sense of legitimacy in their targeting of particular authorities and institutions, according to DPOD.

By consciously choosing information and advocacy as a strategic approach to achieving its objectives, NCPEDP has managed to establish and mobilise a national disability network, gathering it around a shared cause, which has produced both national and local campaigns. The network covers more than half of India, and consists of grassroots and disability organisations, in addition to institutions and other outfits dedicated, in various ways, to meeting the needs of people with disabilities. The members mobilised through the network receive continuous electronic newsletters and relevant information, just as they attend meetings that highlight the rights of people with disabilities.

DPOD's contribution has been capacity-building of NCPEDP, including support for a communications unit. Furthermore, this umbrella organisation of Danish disability organisations has lent its experience and knowledge of working politically to bring about change and sustainable political results for people with disabilities.

These stories from Denmark, including possible channels of influence, have been discussed and shared with the partner organisation. The deliberations have shown how important it is to keep the current political context and traditions in mind.

Although some Danish experiences may inspire Indian partners, there are limits to how well they can be transferred from one context to another. What may work in Denmark, does not necessarily do so in the world's largest democracy, where political change and influence is achieved through other channels.

Nevertheless, the discussions have been enriching, fostering mutual insights into different approaches to advocacy within the disability movement, which works globally to champion a shared cause.

**What works in a Danish context does not necessarily do so in another country. It is important to know the local political context, and it is useful to build advocacy methods on local traditions.**

*Success at a cost*

The initial plan was for the project to wage one national campaign a year, but this turned out to be far too modest. In the course of a two-year period, no less than nine campaigns were carried out. In seven of these nine, the effort was translated into political changes in favour of people with disabilities. The work also resulted in 11 of India's 28 states today having a disability commissioner who is responsible for the disability policy pursued in the state concerned.

However, the success came at a cost. The staff received a much greater workload than expected. Since they were so involved and committed, they had to set aside other obligations during the periods of campaigning. Female staff members, in particular, found it difficult to combine Indian family life with long workdays. Over time, this led to some employees burning out or moving on altogether.

The vast number of campaigns that ended up being taken in by the project sprang mainly from the difficulty of foreseeing the political agenda. If a civil-society organisation's mission is to work to improve the plight of a particular target group, it must constantly be at the cutting edge of political initiatives and on the lookout for potential windows of opportunity in the political and legislative landscape. Such matters can rarely be planned.

*Meeting with the Planning Commission*

Back to New Delhi that Tuesday morning in September 2006. Less than an hour after the dharna began, the participants had managed to negotiate a meeting with the leaders of the Planning Commission the following day.

On Wednesday, the commission chairman welcomed a delegation from the disability movement without uttering a word about the drama the day before, expressing his wish for good cooperation.

The results were quite tangible. All the proposed representatives of the disability sector were included in all subcommittees pertaining to social policy. The deadlines for these bodies' final recommendations were deferred, so that all of them could session at least 2-3 more times. A new meeting was convened for the working group appointed specifically to enhance opportunities for people with disabilities. Another concrete political outcome of the disability movement's work was that, for the first time in the history of India, a separate chapter on disability was written into the national five-year plan.

**Legitimacy**

It is essential that an organisation working with advocacy enjoy legitimacy as regards the cause that it pursues. This is about who it represents, what relationship it has to this group, and whether it is perceived as a legitimate champion of its interests.

In the field of advocacy, two types of organisation can fundamentally be discerned. 1) Organisations working to help others, for instance for religious reasons, and 2) organisations or movements that defend their own members' interests and pursue their own causes, such as trade unions, women's rights groups and disability organisations.

The "Strategy for Danish Support to Civil Society" attributes a central role to legitimacy concerns in the selection of partner organisations, which should: "ensure that cooperation takes place with organisations with determination, ability and popular legitimacy to participate in decision-making processes, as well as with formal and informal organisations representing marginalised groups."

For organisations wishing to help others, legitimacy is something to be built over time. It may be achieved, for instance, through concrete deeds showing genuine will to cooperate with a group of people over improving their lot, while also demonstrating an understanding of their problem and offering them opportunities to take part in or contribute towards the advocacy in other ways. Legitimacy can also arise as the organisation develops special expertise in the issues addressed by the advocacy.

#### *On behalf of the children*

Stairway Foundation is an organisation working to help others. It fights sexual abuse of children in the Philippines. The efforts are led by two foreigners (from Denmark and the USA, respectively), who founded the organisation in 1990. Activities are conducted in close cooperation with many of the children who have been subjected to sexual abuse (see the presentation in Chapter 4). How does this construction affect the question of legitimacy in advocacy?

Lars Jørgensen from Stairway explains that part of the legitimacy is derived from working next to the children. "Since our humble beginning, the children's participation has been a cornerstone. This can be seen in the daily wrap-ups, which is a forum where all children and staff members sit in a circle, sharing what they have gone through over the past day. This is where the children can raise whatever has caused them joy or worry during the day. And once the children start to put their trust in Stairway, they become good at expressing their feelings about personal experiences".

He continues: "Of course, we don't know everything about the kids that we advocate for, but Stairway quite deliberately runs its advocacy programme side by side with a service programme, where we are constantly very close to 12-14 children with the direst backgrounds one can imagine. All our people are in direct contact with the target group that we represent. This is a fact that strengthens our position greatly, particularly in our dealings with the police, where we work methodically to change attitudes regarding children and their rights."

Moreover, he explains that Stairway includes the children in advocacy whenever possible, which helps boost their legitimacy. This happens, for instance, in the theatre work that they perform (more about this in Chapter 4).

#### *Looks after own interests*

In the Indian disability organisation, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP), people with disabilities look after their own interests (see the description of its work above). This ensures solid legitimacy, and it is hard to sow doubts about their motives when they speak in public or negotiate on behalf of people with disabilities.

Karen Reiff, Head of the International Development Department of Disabled People's Organisa-

tions Denmark (DPOD), points out that NCPEDP has great impact in society due to its legitimacy. "The fact that these are people with disabilities, who know what kind of challenges they face every day, enhances NCPEDP's legitimacy and clout when presenting their demands for gaining the same rights and opportunities as those given to all other people," she says. Legitimacy is further boosted by NCPEDP advancing unified views on behalf of a wide range of disability groups. "This makes it hard for the authorities to ignore the organisation, or to try to play the different disability groups up against each other," she continues.

Another element favouring legitimacy is that NCPEDP has, over several years, compiled and disseminated knowledge about the living conditions of people with disabilities, and about the social conditions that need to be changed for them to enjoy the same rights as other people. "Over the years, NCPEDP has attempted to convey those rights, or the lack of them, through the media, and has thus become a well-known advocate of disabled people's rights," she concludes.

#### **Credibility**

Another significant element of all advocacy is the use of information and arguments to substantiate the case that an organisation wishes to make. Consequently, it is important to present accurate and factual information as well as well-founded arguments. The organisation must be credible and trustworthy to make an impact. If the public and the stakeholders supposed to be influenced by the advocacy disbelieve the organisation, the road to success will be a rocky one indeed.

Credibility can be achieved by several means. It is important to ensure that information and studies presented have been prepared on a solid professional basis, and that others are allowed insight into underlying calculations and analyses. At the same time, conclusions and messages must appear as unbiased as possible. When organisations use very harsh wording and a stream of adjectives in their public pronouncements and press releases, rather than more sober and matter-of-fact language, they run the risk of coming across as untrustworthy and manipulative.

Credibility is also related to who represents the organisation and speaks on its behalf. If it is someone known for his or her professional and personal integrity, or who is otherwise highly regarded by the public, credibility will be boosted. These can be distinguished professionals, as when experts within a particular field offer their assessment, or they can be celebrities, as when famous artists are enlisted to act as 'ambassadors' of an organisation.

Credibility may have a self-increasing effect. The more recognised an organisation is, and the more high-level contacts that it achieves, the greater the credibility attributed to it. But at the same time, credibility is a kind of capital that must be constantly maintained and can easily be squandered, for instance, if it is revealed that wrongful information has been given, that the leaders have acted dishonestly or have otherwise failed to live up to the integrity which the public and decision-makers had ascribed to them.

**Credibility must be constantly maintained, and can easily be squandered.**

The Danish Family Planning Association (Sex & Samfund) has for some years supported an undertaking in South Asia, where documentation and analysis of injustices and other problems related to reproductive health constitute a core element. Securing the quality of this documentation effort – and hence of the advocacy's credibility – is an important aspect of the partnership.



**CASE:****Documentation as building block in advocacy**

Laila hails from a poor family in Pakistan. Her husband is very poor too. Her first-born baby died from epilepsy after two months. In the course of her second pregnancy, she suffered abdominal pains, and the baby died in childbirth. In the seventh month of her third pregnancy, the pain returned, and she insisted on seeing a doctor, but could not afford it. During labour, the baby got stuck, and the family sent Laila off in a donkey cart to reach the hospital. But it was too late, and she had another stillborn child.

Later Laila gave birth to five healthy children, had a spontaneous abortion and became pregnant again. Laila's husband does not let her take breaks between pregnancies, even though repeated births have weakened her severely. The doctor has recommended treatment, but there is no money for that.

Laila's tough situation is one of many cases documented through an extensive effort aimed at improving the reproductive health of marginalised women in South Asia. The work has been organised around a partnership between local and national organisations in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, and coordinated by the Malaysian network organisation Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) in cooperation with the Danish Family Planning Association.

The project focuses on achieving better health policies and services within its field of work. Consequently, their sights are trained on decision-makers and authorities locally, nationally and regionally. They are challenged to live up to their political promises, and to generally comply with their duties and responsibilities.

Documenting cases such as Laila's is at the core of the work. A vast number of people – organised within local outfits in the four countries of cooperation – have been trained in recording violations of women's rights to sexual and reproductive health. The wealth of data is compiled centrally, and used to analyse to what extent local health facilities fulfil these rights. In this manner, the organisations monitor how far the government and other authorities have come in complying with promises and commitments to which they have committed themselves in national legislation and international agreements.

In parallel with the data collection, the local organisations are being strengthened in their capacity to conduct advocacy.

Henny Hansen, Head of the International Department of the Danish Family Planning Association emphasises how they go to great lengths to ensure the quality of the data obtained, for instance through frequent monitoring visits. However, the trust placed in the partners also plays a major role. "We have worked together for many years, and know each other well. This makes us much more forthright with one another. We trust the information that we get. Of course, we can't guarantee that no mistakes are ever made, but the cases are serious enough without being exaggerated."

Using documentation and analyses as their platform, the women link up with local civil-society organisations to enter into dialogue with local health authorities and decisions-makers about how they can improve women's – and particularly young women's – access to sexual and reproductive health services.



The same process operates at the national level, where nationwide organisations – by means of dialogue – call on the government to take on responsibility and implement health programmes in keeping with national and international laws and commitments.

The process is also carried forward at the South Asian regional level, partly by letting the parties inspire each other, partly by coordinating the effort to appear as a unified force. The documentation, say, about rights violations and the work to secure rights locally and nationally, is used for advocacy within the myriad regional forums and contexts, to which the partnership has access.

Bringing pressure to bear on the states ensures that authorities in the four project countries are reminded of the conditions prevailing, of their duties, as well as of the adverse consequences that may occur if they fail to act (fewer votes, declining international respect and cuts in donor grants), and the favourable effects if they do act (re-election, international status and donor funds).

The project has produced results, for instance in Bangladesh, where two national partner organisations and their civil society network have, for some time, worked to secure equal access to public healthcare services. Thanks to pressure from these local organisations, drawing attention to the discrimination and misdiagnosis suffered by poor women, the health authorities were successfully galvanised. One outcome has been that the doctors show up more at the clinic, rather than going out for consultations in the patients' homes, where the doctors could demand money under the counter for their services. Furthermore, it has led to noticeably more women receiving treatment, and an improvement of services at the local clinic.

Henny Hansen says: "The women need to know which health services they are entitled to at their local clinic. Such as free medicine. Otherwise, the doctor may well be tempted to charge



for it, giving him a little income on the side.” She points out that many challenges must be faced in this work. “For example, it may be difficult for low-caste women, who feel that it’s completely beyond their reach to do anything about their relationship with a doctor. They need to be organised to carry this effort forward.” Advocacy can indeed help bring about such organisation, thus setting out to combat the inequities of distorted power relations.

### Capacity and work style

When Danish organisations, in cooperation with their partners, become engaged in development work, it is crucial to assess the aforementioned criteria: rights-based approach, legitimacy and credibility. A dialogue must be held with the partners on these topics, covering also the extent to which they believe that they meet these criteria.

At the same time, it is essential to discuss the partner organisation’s overall objectives (its vision and mission). Is advocacy a strategy that has a natural place within the organisation’s field of activity? What prospects does such work hold out for the organisation? In some countries, advocacy may be dangerous. Is this a risk that the organisation, its staff and volunteers are willing to take? Furthermore, working with advocacy differs markedly from, say, service delivery. It is one thing for a teacher to prepare a teaching plan and then teach, quite another to demand respect for the right to education. Is the organisation open to this kind of more political work?

**It is important to assess the risk that advocacy may entail for those involved.**

Finally, it is important to assess the organisation’s capacity to conduct advocacy. Are there people in the organisations who have experience of such work? Does the organisational set-up facilitate the implementation of advocacy, for instance, does it have a clear and responsive decision-making structure and a flexible form of organisation capable of adapting to and taking advantage of political windows of opportunity? If the capacity is absent, it could possibly be built as part of the financial and technical assistance offered by the Danish organisation to its partners.

In the following case from Ethiopia, a partner running a school for deaf children entered into a project aimed at promoting the cause of deaf children. The contrast between school management and dynamic project work turned out to be one of the major challenges.

### CASE:

#### School for the deaf as platform to promote deaf people’s cause

“Talk with the Deaf” is the title of a project implemented by AC International Child Support in the capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, in cooperation with the private “Mekanissa School for the Deaf”. The project title alludes to the isolation that deaf people, and not least deaf children, suffer in society as well as in their close surroundings.

In the family, deaf children may feel excluded and unhappy, without anyone realising it, not even the parents. This is so because, when the children cannot tell anyone about their feelings, it seems as if they have none. Deaf people are often overlooked or misunderstood when moving around in the community. They cannot understand, and they cannot speak. Therefore, they can easily be mistreated by the authorities, for instance by the police and health services.



Accordingly, the central element of the project has not been advocacy, but teaching of sign language for parents and siblings of deaf pupils at the school, thus enabling them to talk with their deaf family members.

“The project has been an eye-opener for the parents”, says programme coordinator Ina Lykke Jensen from AC International Child Support. “We began to develop the project by holding some workshops with a group of deaf pupils from the school and their parents. Through sign-language interpreters, the children were given a chance to offer their perspective. They also ended up communicating their feelings. This led to some touching scenes, when the parents realised what was actually going on in their own children’s heads. ‘We thought we were doing the best for them’, they would say. For example, some parents hadn’t brought their deaf children along to family weddings. Or they hadn’t let them out to play, thinking they didn’t want to.”

#### Agents of advocacy

The project contains an advocacy component aimed at promoting deaf people’s cause in several neighbourhoods of the Ethiopian capital. This has been done by recruiting 40 so-called agents of advocacy from local citizens’ associations or authorities, as well as from other organisations in the community around the school for the deaf.

The agents of advocacy have been thoroughly schooled in the plight of deaf children, using this to pass on information and promote messages about deaf children to families and institutions in their local areas.

Finally, the project contains a third leg, providing support for Tegegne Jaleta, a journalist from the government-owned television channel, ETV. Tegegne Jaleta has for some years, on his own initiative, produced television programmes for and about deaf people. It is thanks to him that



ETV has introduced a weekly programme with news and documentary presented in sign language.

#### *Challenges on the way*

The project has resulted in more people in the community gaining greater knowledge of what it means to be deaf. Nevertheless, there is a long way to go before deaf people's cause is placed on the wider political agenda. Only when this happens can schooling for deaf children become possible, along with support facilities, so that the deaf and hearing-impaired can communicate with those around them if they have to see a doctor, get an education, contact the police, make inquiries with the authorities and the like.

There are several reasons why this advocacy in Ethiopia has fallen short of placing deaf children's cause on the political agenda. They include the difficulty of combining the school's work style with the project approach of advocacy, political limitations, and problems forging alliances.

Prior to the project's start, AC International Child Support conducted a dialogue with the school for the deaf about the challenges to be overcome in implementing a project which differs in work style from running a school. Ina Lykke Jensen recounts: "It was openly discussed with the school that the project was also intended to try out a different way of working. They had long-standing experience of running a school for the deaf, but the project modality was new to them. And it actually turned out to be difficult for them to relate to the project approach. But we are aware that this is a learning process that takes time."

She also points out that the school has judged it to be politically hazardous to become too engaged in the project. "Ethiopia is a difficult country to operate in. It's very centrally ruled, and there is widespread scepticism towards NGOs from the side of the government. The school has a license to run a school, not to conduct advocacy. And they may have felt that this license would be revoked, if they became too active in advocacy," she says.

**Advocacy can be politically hazardous for the organisation, as well as for individual staff members or volunteers. Accordingly, an organisation must carefully assess the risk elements that such work may entail.**

One aspect of the advocacy strategy was an attempt to forge alliances with other organisations. This turned out to be much harder than expected. The national association of the deaf seemed an obvious partner. However, they showed no interest in cooperating, seeing the school as a competitor rather than an ally.

The project "Talk with the Deaf" ended in 2008. In the final stages, special priority was given to advocacy. Although the project has not succeeded in changing policies, the first step has been taken. Dialogue and attention have been generated in many places, and the resulting motivation – demonstrated not least by the advocates of deaf people's cause – gives ground for hope that a seed has been sown that will sprout, even beyond the delimited project period.



## Strategy development

Before an organisation gets involved in advocacy, it is important for it to come clear about what exactly it wishes to achieve. Is the aim to help the poor and marginalised to gain greater influence over decisions affecting their immediate every-day lives? Does it concern checks and balances on local politicians and their decisions as regards the use of resources? Is it some overall political level that is targeted, for instance special legislation to be drafted or revised? Or does it primarily have to do with strengthening other people's possibilities and capacity for advocacy?

Before these strategic aspects are addressed, it may be useful to look at the various stages that advocacy will typically go through. Ideally, it will evolve over three phases:

- Phase I: Generating attention
- Phase II: Political changes
- Phase III: Changes in people's lives

The contents of these phases will depend on the aims of the advocacy. For instance, if it pursues direct political influence, the process may take the following shape:

Greater attention to an issue ==> contributions to debate ==> change of attitudes ==> change of policies ==> implementation of policies ==> positive changes in people's lives.

On the other hand, if the focus is on building an organisation's capacity to conduct advocacy, the course of events may be the following:

Formation of groups ==> group activities ==> association of groups above community level ==> beginning of movement working for its members' interests ==> groups of poor people involved in drafting of legislation and gaining control over resources.

Such sequences can inspire the planning of an advocacy intervention, but should not be perceived as blueprints for all contexts. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that there is nothing automatic about the transition from one phase to another. Instead, it should be perceived as a potential development that may lead to change, in which a special effort is needed for the various phases to unfold. There are countless examples of progressive legislation being enacted, yet not implemented, as insufficient resources are allocated to enforcement, or due to other obstacles.

**Planning of advocacy**

As in all other project work, the planning of specific advocacy will typically go through the following phases: Problem analysis and setting of objectives ==> Analysis of political context and political stakeholders ==> Assessment of own resources ==> Development of strategy ==> Implementation of advocacy ==> Evaluation.



**Problem analysis and setting of objectives**

The aim of advocacy should start from a central problem that you wish to solve.

The book "A New Weave of Power, People & Politics" emphasises that advocacy seeks solutions to concrete problems. "The success of advocacy depends on how the problem is selected, who cares about the problem, and how well it is understood". The authors point out that many advocacy strategies have difficulties achieving their goals because:

- The problem is not clearly defined
- There is not a good understanding of the problem
- It is not perceived as a priority problem by a large number of people.

One reason that this can happen is, for example, that problems are given priority on the basis of donor interest rather than reality on the ground, where poor people find themselves. Consequently, it is important that the problem to be addressed is defined in close cooperation with those poor and marginalised groups who are directly affected by it. This process is vital for the advocacy. Furthermore, it must be the core problems that are identified. It is not enough to just scratch the surface of the problem, for instance, of farmers in a community having no property rights over their land. What matters is to get behind the problem, analysing why the farmers lack this property right, who has got it, and why.

When a problem is identified, it should be articulated as specifically as possible. In order to serve as the point of departure for advocacy, it should also be a problem that can be acted upon. This means that it must be possible to relate it to a political issue or a political solution, and that it has to be easily communicated to a large audience.

The book "A New Weave of Power, People & Politics" claims that there are two types of problems: process problems and concrete problems.

Process problems have to do with the way in which decisions are taken and implemented. This type of problem includes lack of transparency, corruption, discrimination and oppression. It can be difficult to develop advocacy and mobilise many people around process problems, as they may seem abstract and intangible.

Concrete problems could be non-fulfilment of basic needs, or violation of basic rights, such as access to nutrition, health or education. In order to solve concrete problems, it is often important to solve process problems. However, since the concrete problems relate to something that can be immediately addressed, they tend to be a good point of departure for advocacy.

Once the problem has been identified, the objective to be achieved by means of advocacy must be formulated. This will be to solve – fully or partially – the identified problem. It is important that the solution deals with the root of the problem, rather than just seeking a temporary and superficial remedy.

**Analysis of the political context and the political stakeholders**

After identifying the problem, the next step is to assess how to solve it. Among the important elements are to analyse the political context and to map out the decision-makers with influence on the problem. Who holds the power, who must be sought out, and what can be done to influence decision-makers?



It may even be relevant to carry out a more fundamental political analysis. This can, for example, be divided into the following three parts:

- A structural analysis, which describes how the economic and social structures are organised. Who has got resources, and who has not?
- Naming of those in power, identifying decision-makers and persons with influence on political decisions. Here, it is important to look both at formal power (e.g. of those elected to public office) and informal power (e.g. of religious leaders).
- A historical analysis of the political landscape, looking at the relative power, autonomy and strength of, respectively, the state, market (including the private sector) and civil society.

This analysis can be conducted at several levels – the local community, nationally and internationally – depending on the focus of the advocacy.

The political context is in constant flux. Accordingly, the political analysis must be conducted continuously. This will also enable an assessment of the best timing for particular initiatives.

**Stakeholder analysis**

In connection with an analysis of the political context, it is relevant to carry out a stakeholder analysis with a view to understanding, influencing and mobilising the various actors who are influenced by or have an interest in a given problem.

The first step is to identify all relevant players through brainstorming. It is important to look beyond formal decision-makers, such as members of the town council or parliament, involving more informal decision-makers and opinion-formers (such as parents, school teachers, local councils, chiefs and religious leaders), as well as those groups who are affected by the problem. Once the various stakeholders have been identified, they can be divided into rights-holders and duty-bearers.

List of stakeholders:

	Rights-holder or duty-bearer
Stakeholder A	
Stakeholder B	
Stakeholder C	
Etc.	

Advancing in the analysis, the stakeholders' influence must be examined in relation to the objective pursued, along with their views of the cause, as well as the likelihood of their support or opposition.

The table below can be used as an aid to categorise the various actors according to their stake or interest in the cause (positive as well as negative), and their chances of making a difference to it.

**INFLUENCE OF STAKEHOLDERS**

				STAKE OR INTEREST IN THE CAUSE
High	SECONDARY STAKEHOLDER (is kept informed)	PRIORITY STAKEHOLDER (is involved)	PRIORITY STAKEHOLDER (is involved)	
Medium	IGNORE	SECONDARY STAKEHOLDER (is kept informed)	PRIORITY STAKEHOLDER (is involved)	
Low	IGNORE	IGNORE	SECONDARY STAKEHOLDER (undergoes capacity-building in order to increase influence)	
	Low	Medium	High	

Once the priority (and secondary) stakeholders have been identified, it is time to take a closer look at their views and potential roles in the advocacy effort.

**INFLUENCE OF STAKEHOLDERS**

		Opponent		Potential ally / opponent	Ally		STAKE OR INTEREST IN THE CAUSE
High							
Medium							
Low							
		Strongly disagrees	Disagrees	Neutral	Agrees	Strongly agrees	

### THE STAKEHOLDER'S VIEWS OF THE CAUSE

The aim of the stakeholder analysis is to understand each actor and lay down a strategy for how to involve and mobilise them.

Accordingly, the following should be reflected upon:

- How do you communicate with the various stakeholders?
- What information does each one of them need?
- How do you empower marginalised stakeholders, who are directly affected by the issue addressed, to gain greater influence?
- Who influences each stakeholder's views in general and in relation to the cause at hand?
- If the stakeholder is opposed to the cause, what might prompt a change of position?
- If an opponent is not expected to be susceptible to arguments about the importance and/or rightfulness of the cause, then how should the opposition be handled?

A useful way of getting answers to these questions is to talk directly with the various stakeholders. People are often quite open about their views.

### Development of a strategy

A strategy can be defined as a set of activities in pursuit of the same goal. As regards advocacy, the strategy determines the activities which – in combination – will bring about a solution to the problem defined.

The choice of strategy depends on a range of factors, including the political context, the opportunities existing at a given point in time, and the organisational strengths and weaknesses of the entities behind the advocacy.

In the book "Advocacy for social justice", the authors stress that the strategies must be developed in close interaction with the political space existing within a society. In a country with relative openness in its political space, say, a democratic regime with good opportunities for citizen participation, a strategy may be chosen that develops proposals for policies and legislation. Conversely, when operating in a confined political space, such as a dictatorship, it may be difficult to even conduct advocacy in the first place, and one strategy might be to go into exile and exert pressure from the outside.

At a more detailed level, the strategy will contain a series of activities designed to address the areas targeted by advocacy.

Below are some examples of the three areas on which advocacy often focuses, and the strategies that may be devised within those:

- Empowerment of marginalised groups
- Political participation
- Policy changes

### Empowerment of marginalised groups

Advocacy in this area is basically about assisting underprivileged people in knowing and defending their rights, and about supporting them in getting through loud and clear to political decision-makers by means of democratic and transparent structures. This may occur, for instance, by building a network of civil-society organisations that enables poor people to represent their

interests as a unified group, or by expanding their knowledge of political issues and processes, thus making it easier for them to argue their case in front of decision-makers.

In the following example from Tanzania, efforts are made to combat violence and discrimination against women. The emphasis is on strengthening women's position in the community and in the home. This is achieved primarily by working with the men in order to change their attitudes and conduct.

#### CASE:

#### When legislation is not enough

A widow is chased away from her home and the fields she used to farm with her husband. It is her late husband's brothers who evict her, as they want the land. One of them says: "The person who brought you here is dead. There is no reason for you to stay. Get lost."

We are at the southern shore of Lake Victoria in northern Tanzania, where the struggle for gender equality has entered onto the agenda.







“The problem is not just the laws”, says Anthena Bethge, Head of the Project Department of the Lutheran Church in Tanzania. “After the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the Tanzanian parliament changed plenty of laws to reinforce gender equality and punish discrimination. For example, the law awards the widow full rights to her land and to the house she shared with her husband. The trouble is that these laws are meaningless to many rural dwellers. Even the elected members of local councils are unaware of the laws, or refuse to accept them, or blatantly choose to use their position of power for their own gain,” she says.

The example illustrates the core of the problem addressed by a project developed by the Lutheran Church. It is about male dominance in a patriarchal society, where legislation to ensure equality and respect is in place, but where practice is a different matter. The project's primary focus is on violence against women.

Surveys show that about half of all marriages in Tanzania have, at some stage, been affected by violence. The victims are usually women and children, the victimisers mostly men. Consequently, the project has chosen a strategy aimed at drawing attention to this scourge, proposing solutions, and ultimately getting the men to stop behaving violently at home.

#### *Three approaches*

The project has confronted the problem in three ways: information, training in conflict management and advocacy towards public authorities.

The information campaign is intended to generate greater knowledge and attention concerning the problem. Through frank discussions, addressing the men directly – be they violent spouses, chiefs, local civil servants, priests or judges – the project has highlighted the silent violence. Many women are subjected to physical, psychological, sexual and financial abuse. This problem cannot be remedied solely by offering help to the victim. A durable solution is one that changes the violent conduct of the victimiser.

Men known to be particularly violent are invited to the seminars – without being told why they have been selected. Many of them are so moved by the role play that they proceed to give their public testimony. “Lots of women then come to us and say: what did you do to him? He stopped just like that,” Anthena Bethge recounts.

At the same time, community leaders from civil society and local authorities have been trained in conflict management. This has taken place through hundreds of seminars, mobilising more than 10,000 leaders to intervene and mediate in connection with domestic and community violence. They have also been equipped to advocate against violence.

Finally, the project has carried out advocacy aimed at strengthening the official systems' responses to violence.

“We use a bottom-up approach and work at all levels,” Anthena Bethge explains. “We definitely create change in many people's personal lives, in their conduct and decisions. But our approach is systemic and far-reaching. We cover over 100 districts, where we involve leaders and decision-makers.”

She continues: “We take full advantage of our special position as church, that is, its grassroots structure, its moral authority, and not least its safe haven to cry and seek care, to break the silence and be heard, to ask for forgiveness and be forgiven, to re-establish peace between neighbours and within families.”

The project has helped shape public opinion, and the first step has thus been taken towards mobilisation for women's rights. In addition, the project has drawn the community leaders' attention to human rights violations in terms of physical, psychological, sexual or financial violence, while enabling them to intervene at an early stage of conflict situations.

#### *Limited opposition*

The Lutheran Church and Danmission – which has supported the project – were taken by surprise by the scant opposition from the men's side. The intention has been to create more balance in relations between men and women, and this will usually be resisted.

Anthena Bethge explains: “The same man who is a violent spouse is shocked to hear that his sister has been beaten up by her husband. What we do is this: We involve him in solving the problem of violence in his sister's home, and then we move on to his own case. Since he has taken part in a positive process, through which safety and peace have taken hold in his sister's home, he already knows the benefits of our work, and usually accepts the same for himself.”

It has been a solid foundation for the project that a majority of the population see violence as a problem that not only harms the victims, but also disturbs peace and social development. The timing has been beneficial too. There has been a willingness to discuss the problem of violence in an open and unprejudiced manner, and to embrace change.

In addition, the project has applied a genuine gender perspective. Experiences during the project's pilot phase showed unmistakably that the struggle for women's rights makes the greatest headway by targeting the intervention not only at the children and women affected by violence, but also at the men and local power structures. Lasting and positive social change is best achieved if, for instance, the struggle against domestic violence is waged both by women, who have the right not to be subjected to violence, and by men, who have a special responsibility for respecting women's rights.

It is not a perfect approach, as it cannot stop the criminals who consciously set out to harm others, particularly their partner. “But most gender-related violence isn't committed by hardened criminals”, says Anthena Bethge, “It's committed by the decent family man who lives next door, who sings in the church choir and helps the orphans. He can be reached by us, easily and effectively.”



**Agosto Boal's method of conflict resolution**

The human-rights office of the Lutheran Church in Tanzania has developed a participatory approach to solving conflicts without use of violence. Based upon the principles of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, it includes:

- Oral and written information about violence, its consequences and national/international legislation in this field
- 'Peer-to-peer' counselling
- Learning through play (about power, communication and cooperation): communication exercises, role play and theatre

As described by theatre director and politician Agosto Boal in 'Theatre of the Oppressed' and 'Games For Actors and Non-Actors', theatre and role play are good methods to demonstrate the causes and consequences of violence, but also to show how violence can be prevented and conflicts solved.

**Political participation**

The case from Tanzania illustrates some of the strategies that can be chosen when advocacy focuses on empowering poor and marginalised groups.

If the advocacy aims to advance these groups' political participation, other strategies must be brought into play. In this area, advocacy seeks to change the terms of political participation in order to achieve political results over time. This is about working to change 'the rules of the game', i.e. the ways in which political decisions are taken. One aim of this type of advocacy is to open channels through which the poor and marginalised can join in decision-making processes.

The following case from Honduras demonstrates how the citizens of a municipality gain insights into and influence over the use of public funds.



**CASE:**  
**Popular budgets**

A new wind is blowing in Opalaca. The usual westerly wind, which whips dust into irritated eyes and into the small houses along the gravelled road is no longer the only one in town. With support from MS ActionAid Denmark, the 5,000 inhabitants here in the western part of the Central American Republic of Honduras have created a new wind of change blowing through the town and right into the mayor's office, re-shuffling his papers and priorities. The wind has a name. In English we may call it "popular budgets".

"Popular budgets mean that we as citizens are consulted about what the municipality's money should be spent on. This is the first time that a Honduran mayor has gone along with this sort of thing, and we are proud of that. A few other municipalities have a tradition of the mayor informing people about the planned spending, but there are no other examples of us as citizens being genuinely able to say yes or no to a budget", says Carlos Lorenzo. He has taken part in the work with popular budgets from the very outset, when this was still not about budgets and figures, but merely about being heard.

*Wishlist from municipal citizens*

"In the beginning, the issue was to enable citizens to help decide what's important in our municipality. We have previously tried to get access to mayors, always in vain, but last year we succeeded. Suddenly we got through all the way, and the mayor accepted carrying out a course of events in which 36 citizens' groups from Opalaca and the hinterland villages were to identify the two most important tasks for our municipal government", Carlos Lorenzo explains.

The background to drawing up a "wish-list of citizens" was the happy news that Opalaca, in 2007, could look forward to a financial shot in the arm related to the distribution of resources from the debt-relief programme joined by Honduras in 2005. Following agreement with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, Honduras has had a large section of its huge foreign debt of USD 5.3 billion written off, thus owing 'only' 2.5 billion. However, it is a non-negotiable stipulation that what the Honduran state saves on debt repayments has to be invested in projects that reduce poverty.



And this is where Mr. Lorenzo and the other inhabitants in Opalaca, along with MS's partner organisation ADROH, come into the picture.

“In the beginning of 2006, we in ADROH – Association for the Development of Honduras – received a development worker through MS. She was actually meant to work on some other matter, but suddenly the chance was there, and so we seized it. We had a development worker with the necessary knowledge, the mayor was open to the idea, the funding looked realistic, and above all, the citizens were keen on the opportunity. So it was just a matter of plunging headlong into it,” reminisces ADROH's secretary-general Maria Paulina Bejarano.

#### *Received by the mayor*

The first step was a written appointment with the mayor. At first, he was not keen on the idea, but ADROH convinced a progressive municipal secretary, thus creating an unofficial channel to the mayor's office. Meanwhile, several citizens' meetings were held close to his office, and after thinking the matter through, the mayor changed his mind, embracing the idea. There was nobody pushing him into a corner with absolute demands, just a little popular pressure, plenty of time, and an ally at the mayor's office. Once the agreement had been made, a number of coordinators were trained in interviewing people about their needs, and so they set off into the field with their notebooks. The outcome was a long list of citizens' needs, which the participants themselves had to prioritise, so that each of the 36 citizen groups presented one need. All the others were shelved for later use.

Everyone remembers the huge citizens' assembly as a major hurdle on the road. It was not going to be as tough as persuading the mayor to take part, Maria Paulina Bejarano recalls, but nevertheless looked quite difficult. Because how would those placing bridges top of their list react if water or school kitchens were chosen?

#### *Awaiting answer from the state*

This fear turned out to be unfounded. The mayor presented the figures, and people realised the limits to what could be done. Accordingly, it was quickly agreed to prioritise roads and improved coffee production. The people plainly decided they were going to produce their way out of poverty, and without better roads, the new and improved coffee could not be brought to market.

In each village, they subsequently agreed how much of the collectively-owned land should be set aside for improved coffee cultivation, and shortly after, a plan lay on the mayor's table, setting out the citizens' wishes for development in Opalaca for many years ahead. Here it was approved and passed on to the office that assesses the various municipalities' spending of the released debt repayment. And this is where it lies today. In Opalaca, they are anxiously awaiting an answer.

“I know that the funds have now been transferred to the central state account, from where they will be passed on to the municipalities, so we reckon they will be here soon. And then we can finally begin,” says Carlos Lorenzo with excitement in his voice. The entire process has only been in train for just under a year, but for those waiting, time seems to drag.

#### *Participation in budget work*

However, the story of popular participation in Opalaca does not end here. The citizens' appetite had been whetted, and now they wanted to take a closer look at the mayor's budgets. This brings us to the point of Carlos Lorenzo's “popular budgets”.



“We felt like continuing, and so the mayor accepted presenting the budget to us. After that, we went out to check if what was listed in the budget was actually true. In several places we discovered that the budgeted projects had been started, but never completed. After spending the allocation, the undertaking had been registered as ‘completed’, but in fact we were left with a series of unfinished projects. And this was when we as citizens came up with ideas to shuffle the items around to release money, for instance to finalise some nearly-finished bridge works,” Carlos Lorenzo recounts. Even the mayor could see the benefits of practising genuine democracy, letting the citizens contribute ideas. Outside the municipality, a certain interest was stirred as well.

“Several municipalities have been interested in the project. I think it's incredibly important for us and for democracy that we now have a positive example of popular participation and popular budgets to show for it. This makes it easier for other mayors and citizens' groups to try out the approach. Already this year, we are expanding the programme to four more municipalities,” explains Maria Paulina Bejarano, who looks forward to letting the wind of change blow in new directions.

#### **Policy change**

The experiences from Honduras show how citizens, who have thus far enjoyed very limited involvement in local decision-making processes, gain greater influence by taking part in discussing municipal budgets. Advocacy has strengthened their political participation.

In addition to the aforementioned areas and examples of empowerment and political participation, there is a third area often addressed by advocacy, namely changes in policy and legislation.

Such work looks at whether specific policy areas, legislation or programmes capable of producing improvements for poor and marginalised groups are passed and implemented. It is about gaining influence by having an effect on the legislative and policy field.

The following case from Bangladesh illustrates this area, as children's rights are used as a lever to work for change in national legislation regarding children in the labour force.

**CASE:****Child labour in Bangladesh**

“Today’s children are the pioneers of tomorrow’s development of Bangladesh. Physically and mentally healthy children have the capacity to govern the country as competent citizens.” Thus reads the preamble to the proposal for a national child-labour policy, which is the culmination thus far of advocacy supported by Save the Children Denmark in Bangladesh.

The proposal deals with a wide array of subjects related to child labour. One chapter of the document is an ethical code of conduct, to which informal-sector employers should adhere when hiring and using child workers. This particular code is one of the tangible results of a process supported by Save the Children. It springs from the working children’s own advocacy through cooperation with children’s rights organisations, government and employers.

Official Bangladeshi figures show that about 7.2 million children aged 5-17 are economically active, of whom about 3.18 million are considered “child labourers”. Of these, about 93% are employed in the informal sector, where working conditions tend to be extremely poor. Among the problems are long workdays, unsafe use of chemicals, and bad lighting. Many children, particularly those who perform domestic chores, live with their employers, and are often separated from their families. Children are habitually prevented from going to school, because they are too busy working, or because the employers do not want them to.

Kristine Zeuthen Jeppesen, who is programme coordinator, explains that Save the Children supports a policy that bans hazardous tasks, but allows children to work, if it is not harmful and if the children can continue their schooling. “We have held the view that some work can indeed be beneficial for children, who learn skills and gain status and self-confidence from it. The income from a child’s job may often make the difference between being able and not being able to afford school,” she says, and continues: “Ideally, of course, no child should have to work until reaching a certain age. But if the alternative is to be kicked out into the street and forced into even more dangerous work, this doesn’t help the child at all. As a children’s rights organisation, we always pursue the child’s best interest.”

*Ethical code of conduct*

Save the Children has eight partners in Bangladesh, who have been addressing child labour since the mid-1990s. Until 2004-05, this effort consisted primarily of direct service delivery to working children, along with information campaigns targeting the employers. The various partners did not cooperate much among each other. However, in 2005, Save the Children’s child-labour partners established an informal network which Save the Children, after a couple of meetings, was invited to join on a par with the Bangladeshi organisations. They now call themselves “Together with Working Children”.

The network chose to focus on two subjects: an ethical code of conduct for informal-sector employers and finalisation of the national child-labour policy. The effort to draw up a code of conduct took shape, for instance, through a project which documented good examples among employers in the informal sector. Turning the spotlight on ‘success stories’ turned out to be a highly effective way of convincing others.

Against the background of this effort, the partners drew up a realistic ethical code of conduct aimed at setting acceptable minimum standards for informal-sector employers with due regard for the child’s best interest.

The code of conduct has since been promoted in various ways, such as meetings and consultations with employers, children, parents, communities and local elites. A drama programme was produced and broadcast on national television. Various debate programmes on child labour and child work have been aired as well, along with a documentary about the ethical code of conduct.

*Dialogue rather than confrontation*

Save the Children chose a dialogue strategy towards the government rather than a more confrontational approach. “We were convinced that this would get us further. At the same time, it must be kept in mind that our local partners must be able to operate within the country’s borders, and all projects must be approved by the NGO Affairs Bureau. A confrontational strategy can make it difficult to work and get approvals processed in Bangladesh. Of course, we would have considered how to go about it, if a more confrontational strategy had been required,” says Kristine Zeuthen Jeppesen.

In 2005, an agreement was made with the Ministry of Labour and Employment, providing for the training of a group of staff in children’s rights by Save the Children. This was decisive in paving the way for a later agreement with the ministry that contemplated the finalisation of the child-labour policy.

In connection with this effort, a working group was designated, composed of representatives of the ministry, Save the Children and the network. The group appointed a consultant, who presented a revised proposal for the child-labour policy, which has now obtained preliminary approval. The policy contains elements of prohibition of hazardous child labour, improvement in children’s working conditions, and prevention of child labour.

*The road to success*

An important precondition for this success has been the partners’ informal network, as well as a shared vision and set of values. It has also been important that these partners enjoy broad recognition due to their longstanding delivery of services to child labourers. Meanwhile, Save the Children and its partners have carried out surveys on various topics related to child labour, thus acquiring solid knowledge of the subject.



“The hiring of staff in the Ministry of Labour and Employment has been important, since we have continuously gained greater understanding of what goes on in the ministry. This cooperation plays an important role in raising awareness and creating overall pressure to improve children’s working conditions,” says Kristine Zeuthen Jeppesen.

She also highlights the benefit of a formal agreement between Save the Children and the Ministry of Labour and Employment, which meant that the effort did not have to rely on certain individuals.

“The reason that Save the Children signed the agreement was that the ministry refused to let the local network do so. Accordingly, as an international NGO, we perceived our role as a nexus between the government and our partners. It was mainly their agenda that we were pursuing. It must be said that they have been partners for many years, the cooperation has been very close indeed, and this is how mutual understanding has taken root between Save the Children and the partners,” she says.

The process has been full of challenges. “One difficulty has been the massive turnover of ministerial members of the working group. It has been hard to keep up the ministry’s interest in finalising the policy. It has been a long, tough process to get the ministry to assume ownership of the policy,” Kristine Zeuthen Jeppesen recounts.

**Three areas, three strategies**

The three cases – illustrating the areas of empowerment, political participation and policy change, respectively – show how different strategies are employed depending on what objective is to be pursued. On the opposite page, these strategies are presented along with more general strategies as described in the book ‘Advocacy for social justice’.



**Objectives and strategies**

	Objective	Strategies (in general)	Strategies (in cases)
<b>Empowerment</b>	Increase civil-society organisations’ capacity to articulate their interests to powerful stakeholders, and to hold the (national, local) government and private sector to account for their actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grassroots organisation</li> <li>• Information work and education on issues selected for advocacy</li> <li>• Strengthening of representative organisations</li> <li>• Creating networks</li> <li>• Building self-confidence, dignity and courage</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tanzania: when legislation is not enough</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information campaign, including role plays targeting men</li> <li>• Training of community leaders in conflict management</li> <li>• Meetings to strengthen public authorities’ response to violence</li> <li>• Use of the church’s network and moral authority</li> </ul>
<b>Political participation</b>	Access to decision-making processes that lead to political gains or gains for civil society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing public discourse</li> <li>• Creating, opening and consolidating channels for civil-society participation</li> <li>• Strategic alliances for articulating common interests to increase power</li> <li>• Strengthening vehicles for expressing civil society interests (media, governance structures)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Honduras: popular budgets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with citizens about their needs and wishes</li> <li>• Formation of citizens’ groups</li> <li>• Pressure from citizens’ groups</li> <li>• Written agreement with authorities</li> <li>• Ally in the mayor’s office</li> <li>• Public meetings between citizens and authorities</li> </ul>
<b>Policy change</b>	Policies, laws or practices leading to improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobbying to advance particular positions</li> <li>• Proposing alternatives</li> <li>• Media campaigns to influence decision-makers</li> <li>• Research, monitoring and investigations</li> <li>• Monitoring, e.g. by media or watchdog organisations</li> <li>• Policy alliances with decision-makers to increase leverage</li> </ul>	<p><b>Child labour in Bangladesh</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of informal networking between children’s rights organisations</li> <li>• Cooperation between children’s rights organisations, government and employers.</li> <li>• Good examples of child work used in lobbying</li> <li>• Meetings and consultations with main stakeholders</li> <li>• Debates and television programmes.</li> <li>• Training of ministerial employees in children’s rights</li> <li>• Participation in drafting of legislative bill</li> <li>• Research into the subject matter</li> <li>• Written agreement between Save the Children and ministry</li> </ul>

Source: David Cohen et al (2002): Advocacy for social justice, Kumarian Press, page 238, and cases presented in Chapter 3.



## Tools of advocacy

A series of tools are applied in advocacy. These should be developed and combined depending on the cause at hand. Most of these instruments fall within the following categories:

- Media work
- Direct action
- Lobbying
- Cooperation with other organisations

### Media work

An important part of advocacy is to draw attention to a problem, thus increasing the likelihood of the various players taking action towards solving it. The media can play a major role in this effort. By having an issue covered by the media, a wider group of people can become aware of it, thus helping to influence and form public opinion about it. At the same time, media coverage can contribute to stepping up the pressure on decision-makers, such as politicians, who are interested in their good standing with the public.

If the media cover a particular subject, it may in some cases lead to groups choosing to act on this basis, for example, by citizens joining forces to solve a problem that has surfaced in the media. Media coverage will often disappear after a while, either because its new value subsides (journalists are mainly interested in covering news), or because the media are manipulated by those in power, who have a financial or political stake in erasing an issue from the media's agenda. In countries where the state exerts influence on or control over radio and television channels, direct interference may occur through censorship or propaganda. The powers that be

can also sway the media by indirect means, for instance by redirecting state advertising to those more sympathetic to their views.

In order to make the most of the media in advocacy, it is important to draw up a special media strategy, specifying the aims of the media work, and how to achieve them. This strategy should be subordinate to the overall strategy for advocacy, i.e. it should work towards the same objective, acting in unison with the other elements of the campaign.

### *The media strategy*

A media strategy will typically seek to have the cause concerned raised and treated in a manner consistent with the message on which the advocacy is built. There is a major difference between a media strategy whose primary aim is to draw widespread attention to an issue, which may, over time, prepare the ground for political action, and a strategy that goes one step further, working to convince decision-makers to carry out certain actions, such as supporting particular legislation. If drawing attention is the immediate goal, there is greater leeway in the choice of methods to deal with the media. Conversely, if the ambition is to affect a particular political process, the media strategy must be fine-tuned and focused, and there must be scope for reacting promptly to new developments and for making adjustments when the political process changes course.

In the formulation of a media strategy, it must be decided whether to place one's own case on the agenda, or whether to piggyback on situations already being addressed by the media. Ideally, one's own case will take centre stage, but this is also the hardest to pull off, as the media must be convinced that it is worth covering. Consequently, good arguments and strong proof must be put forward, combined with the media's assessment that this is a subject that interests their readers, listeners or viewers.

It is easier to lend your voice to an ongoing case being raised by the media, and which relates to the issue addressed by the advocacy. If this tack is chosen, the strategy will aim to impact the way in which the story is covered, for example, by contributing special information and new arguments, or by bringing people affected into the limelight.

### *Target groups*

It is important to specify who is to be reached through the media strategy. They will typically be political decision-makers with influence on the cause advocated for. Moreover, the target audience will often encompass the people affected by the problem to be solved by means of advocacy. Finally, there may be a wish to get the message out to more diverse sections of the population, especially if the strategy aims to draw widespread attention to a cause.

Once the target group has been defined, it is easier to decide which media should be sought out. Those preferred by decision-makers and the political elite frequently differ entirely from those used by poor and marginalised groups.

### *Messages*

The overall messages of the advocacy must be fine-tuned to optimise their chances of making an impact in the media. It is important that they be tailored to the advocacy's target audience, while also keeping in mind the nature of the media through which the messages are to be channelled. If the messages are of a more abstract nature, say, involving the presentation of figures and calculations, it is better to direct the effort at the written media, which are more suitable for such coverage. If the conditions to be highlighted are concrete, and if people affected by a



problem are ready to step forward, it may be better to contact the broadcast electronic media. It is important that those designated as spokespersons have a high degree of credibility, either by suffering the effects of the problem themselves, or by being recognised as legitimate representatives of those affected.

The messages must refer specifically and directly to the reality and the problems to be solved through advocacy. This may involve descriptions of personal experience, or studies adding scientific gravitas to the presentation of the issue.

#### *Media analysis*

It is relevant to conduct an analysis of the media featured in the strategy, thus setting out which ones should be targeted in particular. This includes deciding on the types of media: electronic (radio, television, Internet-based) or written (newspapers, magazines). Furthermore, it should be assessed whether to work with national or local media, or both. In some cases, it may also be a good idea to use the international media, for example, to draw the world's attention to the cause, thus increasing external political pressures.

Finally, the media must be assessed for their editorial line. It may often be possible to divide the media into three groups: the friendly, the hostile and the neutral. Ideally, a case should be covered in a fair and balanced manner, listening to the various parties. However, this is rarely the reality. There will typically be friendly media, who are more interested in pushing the cause to be promoted through advocacy. Perhaps this fits the editorial line naturally, or individual journalists may be more interested in covering a particular subject.

The hostile media will toe the line of, and could be controlled by, the opponents of the advocacy. Here, it will be difficult to make the case. It might be completely neglected, or arguments against the cause could feature prominently.

Finally, there may be neutral media, not leaning either way.

It will be important to work with the friendly and neutral media, but this is often insufficient, particularly if the aim is to convince political decision-makers who might be opposed to the cause. Here, the possibility of getting some views across in relatively hostile media should be looked into, for instance by identifying journalists within those media, who are interested in the issue.

#### *Activities*

There is a wealth of methods to gain access to the media. Some options are to write articles or letters to the editor, issue press releases and reports (presented in formats that are easy for the media to use), and to convene press conferences. At the same time, it is important to contact journalists directly, presenting the news and stating the case for them. It is often possible and useful to enter into a long-term relationship with individual journalists, who have a particular interest in the cause or issue concerned.

Last but not least, the other activities carried out as part of the advocacy – such as demonstrations and conferences – need to get the best possible media coverage.

#### **CASE:**

#### **Debate on HIV/AIDS in Malawi**

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is an international network of church organisations, whose work includes development projects in some of the world's poorest countries. ADRA Denmark has cooperated with ADRA Malawi on an advocacy project with special focus on the media as a platform to bring HIV/AIDS-related issues into the public sphere. This has mainly been achieved by introducing radio and television debate programmes, where listeners and viewers have been able to join in, contributing their experiences and viewpoints.

“We give a voice to those who are usually silent. In this way, we can help turn the spotlight on the tremendous problems that HIV/AIDS is causing in this country,” says Michael Usi, who was director of the (now completed) project “Let's Talk” in Malawi.

The intervention was carried out in the period from April 2005 to May 2006 as a Danida-funded pilot project in cooperation between ADRA Malawi and ADRA Denmark.

HIV/AIDS is a grim concern in Malawi, one of Africa's poorest countries. Of the approximately 12 million inhabitants, over 14% are infected with HIV. The epidemic has significantly depleted the ranks of the labour force, orphaned thousands of children, and brought the average life span to barely 40 years.



In the effort to fight the disease and prevent more people from becoming infected, one problem that came to light was that the general information and debate on HIV/AIDS in Malawi was too one-sided. It was also strongly influenced by traditional and religious leaders' views, which were not always in keeping with the guidelines that the health sector and the government wanted to promote.

This gave rise to a massive need for an open, nationwide HIV/AIDS debate aimed at enhancing the communities' chances of preventing and fighting the disease. This was precisely what ADRA's pilot project set out to do. By means of workshops and broadcast debates, the intention was to give a broad sweep of the population – particularly those infected or in other ways affected by the disease – an opportunity to share their experiences and opinions with others.

In this manner, the debates were to improve, over time, the exchange of knowledge and experience within the general population, among politicians and others in civil society, thus lowering the barriers to effective HIV/AIDS prevention.

#### *Preparatory workshops*

To ensure the local population was heard, and that the contents to be debated in the radio and television programmes reflected people's problems and needs, the project "Let's Talk" started off with a series of preparatory workshops. Here, representatives of 10 different target groups discussed human rights, in addition to analysing and identifying the HIV/AIDS problems in their community. These events were attended by people directly affected by the epidemics, as well as by decision-makers and opinion-formers.

#### **Target groups**

- Orphans, other vulnerable children and young people**
- Widows**
- Migrant workers on farms**
- People living with HIV/AIDS**
- Religious leaders**
- Traditional leaders**
- Traditional birth attendants**
- Civil servants**
- The private sector**
- Home carers and people providing care and support for orphaned children**

#### *Radio and television debates*

In the course of the year over which the project ran, the number of debates amounted to 24 on television and 52 on radio, being broadcast by the state-controlled national TV channel and one of the radio stations with nationwide coverage.

The debates featured a discussion panel with representatives of several of the ten population groups targeted by the project. The composition of the panel varied from one session to another, depending on the exact issue to be debated. "Very different kinds of people could be in the same panel", says Inger Olesen, programme advisor from ADRA Denmark, "anything from ministers to prostitutes."

At the same time, the opportunity to take part in the debate was extended to a studio audience, as well as to viewers and listeners, who could call in during the transmissions.

Among the issues debated were rituals and customs, women's rights, use of condoms and discrimination against those who are HIV-positive.

This type of programme had never been seen in Malawi before, and the chance of an inclusive and participatory debate made the format highly popular. Inger Olesen recounts: "We were surprised by the huge interest in the programmes. Many feelings came to the surface during the discussions. There was criticism of the government, which was admonished for not fulfilling its duties." She also relates that very politically sensitive issues were raised, and there were times when they feared the transmissions would be suspended. "But the debates had become so popular that it became impossible to shut them down," she says. When the project was over, and there was a nine-month break before beginning a new project, it created huge uproar, and many viewers and listeners urged that the debates be continued.

The broadcasts established a forum where vulnerable and marginalised groups were able to speak up for their rights, thus influencing opinion-formers, politicians and private-sector actors.

After the debate programmes ended, a series of follow-up workshops were held, discussing the results of the various debates, while developing plans for future advocacy.

#### *Good results*

At the evaluation, the project was found to have stirred great interest among decision-makers, civil servants and a handful of ministers. Even President Bingu wa Mutharika referred to the debates. His wife, who is director of an organisation working in healthcare, asked that some of the programmes be repeated, and used them at her own workplace.

The listeners and viewers turned out to be civil-society actors, politicians and planners, as well as the population at large. The evaluation concluded that the programmes had limited impact among younger people and rural inhabitants, amongst other reasons due to limited access to television and less interest in the issues debated.

At the national level, the project led to debate and dialogue among all relevant stakeholders. This was palpable from, for instance, the increasing number of callers to the programmes, the political leaders' participation in the debates, and the rise in enquires received at ADRA's office.

The project also helped to give expression to some problems, spurring dialogue and debate in many communities. In this manner, it played an important strategic role in terms of taking on issues such as stigma and discrimination of HIV-positive people.

Furthermore, the increased attention to topics such as deprivation of property, abuse of orphaned children and discrimination of HIV-positive people has influenced families' and young people's views of HIV/AIDS and its consequences.

However, it is hard to gauge whether the project has contributed to an actual lowering of barriers as regards effective HIV/AIDS prevention. This is difficult to measure, and the causal relations are further complicated by extreme poverty and food insecurity in Malawi.

#### *Could more have been achieved?*

The project's aim of highlighting and creating debate around HIV/AIDS-related issues was attained to a great extent. This left ADRA in a good position to move on to the next stage, taking a more overtly political approach, for example by seeking to promote certain laws or political



decisions. However, the organisation chose not to take that step. Inger Olesen says that the intention was to let the population speak out, thus influencing opinion-formers and decision-makers. Through the project, ADRA was to help them have a say, but the idea was never to have the organisation's views expressed directly. "It was not the intention to have ADRA take on a special political role", she affirms.

Bettina Ravn, who is Programme Coordinator in ADRA Denmark adds: "There would also be too much at stake if ADRA's work became openly political. Other projects could end up in the firing line, and 10-15 years of work could be jeopardised." ADRA Malawi has a certain type of political clout in the field of HIV/AIDS through its participation in various government bodies. This influence might be lost, if the organisation began to engage in political activism on other fronts.

She also points out that ADRA is a church organisation, and that religious institutions interfering with politics can be a delicate matter in Malawi. "There are some goals that we can reach, and certain other paths we cannot follow," she says.

The pilot project led to a media component being integrated into ADRA's other HIV/AIDS work in Malawi. Thus far, the debate programmes have been continued on two radio stations with nationwide coverage.

#### Direct action

An effective media strategy may draw attention to the cause to be promoted. Media work can often go hand in hand with direct action that brings about public exposure. Imagination is the only limit to the kinds of direct action that can be taken. Demonstrations and marches may be one way. Cultural events, such as concerts and theatre plays (as presented below in a case from the Philippines) are another. Public hearings and civil disobedience can also be used.

In addition to drawing attention, direct action can help widen and boost public support for the cause pursued. It can also show that there is broad backing for the organisation's demand, which confers legitimacy and strength, for example, if a large crowd shows up for a rally.

The support of Disabled People's Organisations Denmark (DPOD) for the disability movement in India is one example of direct action being used to draw attention and mobilise vis-à-vis decision-makers (see the presentation of that case in Chapter 2). Karen Reiff from DPOD stresses that direct action must be well prepared and coordinated to achieve the intended impact. "This means setting aside resources, usually over a longer period of time. This can affect an organisation's other tasks, particularly in the case of a small organisation, where all resources must be activated to wage a campaign with maximum gains."

She also points out the importance of reflecting on the context in which the action takes place. "Is it a type of direct action that is recognised and used in the country context concerned? For instance, if there are many examples in India of organisations and rights activists 'taking to the street' to draw attention to their cause, then it's okay to support this kind of action, even if the disability movement in Denmark doesn't usually resort to it in its struggle for rights and equal opportunities."

Karen Reiff gives assurance that DPOD has never experienced its partner organisations and movements using types of direct action that verge on illegality. "We believe that the cause espoused by disability organisations across the world can and should be negotiated within the social structures and the frameworks existing in the societies concerned. The trick is to find openings

that enable direct involvement of people with disabilities in decision-making processes, and that foster dialogue and understanding of the living conditions faced by millions of people with disabilities. We have to help decision-makers to think," she concludes.

#### CASE:

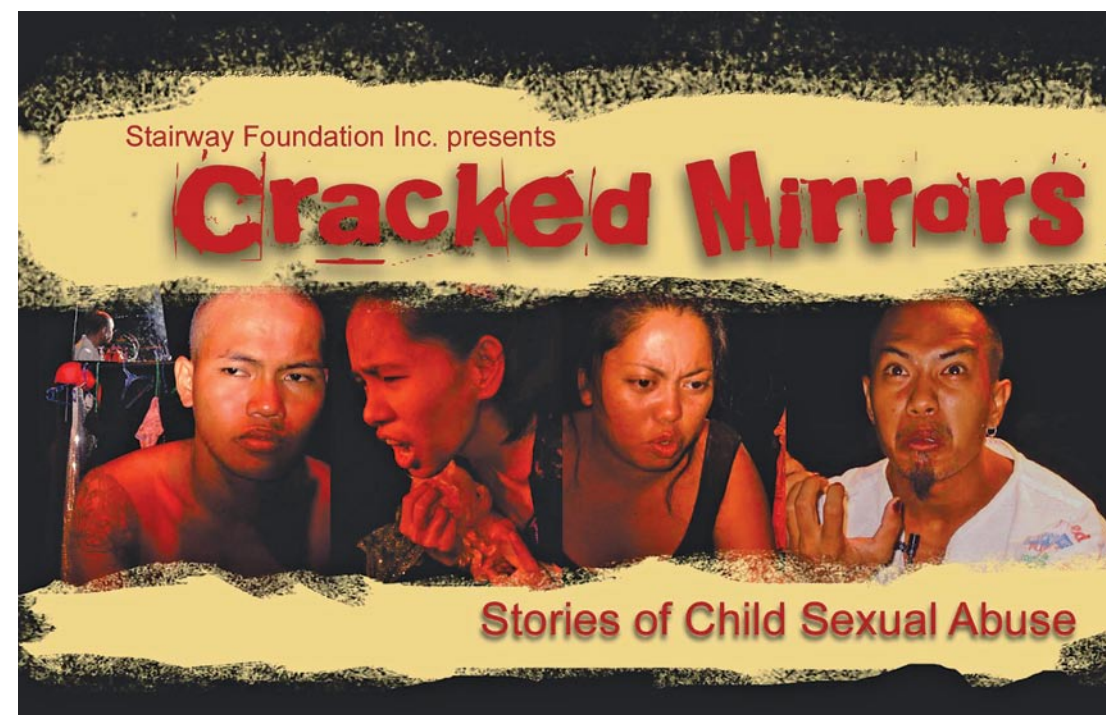
#### Theatre in the struggle against sexual abuse of children

The call to his mobile phone from the capital Manila is crackly and the line is lost several times, but there is no mistaking the enthusiasm of the speakers. For project coordinator Lars Jørgensen and the young former street children in Stairway's theatre troupe, the past few weeks have produced a culmination that makes the long and laborious process worth it.

In cooperation with UNICEF, among others, Stairway has staged the touching, gripping and disturbing theatre play "Cracked Mirrors" about sexual abuse of children. There have been ten sold-out performances at schools and universities in Manila, and the reception has exceeded all expectations.

"The atmosphere has been electrifying. The audience is totally engrossed, and at times, one might hear a pin drop," Lars Jørgensen tells.

The play – written and directed by the other Stairway founder, Monica Ray from USA – narrates the story of three abused children through a series of monologues. The roles are interpreted by young people who all have a past living in the street, but are now part of Stairway's junior staff. From their childhood, they know what it is like to be sexually abused.





“After the play, the four actors sit on the edge of the stage to tell of their own experiences and share a discussion with the audience. It’s deeply moving, and captivates people every time,” Lars Jørgensen reports. “On several occasions, people in the audience have stood up during the discussion and told of their own experiences of abuse. Many have also stressed that the problem is not confined to street children. It exists in all circles, and all social strata, which some of them exemplify,” he says.

The audiences at the ten performances have been a mix of young students, street children, teachers, lecturers and invited guests. This has created a very special atmosphere in the auditorium before, during and after the play.

“We find that our slogan ‘Break the Silence’ is just perfect. Because we are dealing with an immensely complex problem, which has no simple solutions. But one thing is for sure. The first step is to break the silence, to acknowledge the problem’s existence, and to start talking about it,” says Lars Jørgensen.

He explains that theatre can sometimes reach further than dry figures and statistics: “Over many years, we have experienced a fabulous effect of using creative expressions in advocacy. Speeches and documents with terrifying statistics on the vilest breaches of millions of children’s rights have come to be handled by most of us on a cognitive level, whereas a single child’s story told in an animated film, or better still, on stage, goes straight to the heart. And it’s from the heart that motivation and strength are gathered to create change,” he argues.

**Theatre and other forms of cultural expression can be important tools in advocacy, since they target the emotions, and can interact forcefully with other parts of the campaign effort, where information and arguments tend to address the level of objective knowledge.**

#### *From holiday camp to resource centre*

The story behind the theatre company begins in 1990, when Lars Jørgensen and Monica Ray, during a holiday in Manila, were completely overwhelmed by the vast numbers of street children moving around everywhere in the big city. They decided to found a centre on the island of Mindora a couple of hundred kilometres south of the capital.

Initially, Stairway was a kind of ‘holiday camp’, where children from the street stayed for some weeks or months, after being referred by the partner organisations, which Stairway soon found in the local civil society. Since then, the place has evolved into an actual rehabilitation centre for boys with long criminal records. They all come from Manila’s prisons, and many of them have tuberculosis on arrival. They typically spend one year at Stairway, where they recover physically and mentally before being eased into families or looked after by partner organisations in Manila.

Advocacy was a central issue for Stairway from the outset. The children performed theatre and prepared exhibitions about the lives of street children. The aim has been to give these marginalised children a voice through artistic expression, and to let them relate their experiences to as many (and as influential) adults as possible.

Gradually, it became clear that a vast proportion of the children – boys as well as girls – had been subjected to sexual abuse. For the children coming out of prisons, the proportion is closer



to 100%. The abuse may have taken place in the family (and has often been the provoking factor in the children ending up on the street), or it may have been committed by local and Western paedophiles, who prey on the street children’s vulnerability.

As a consequence, advocacy has today become the paramount strategy of Stairway under the heading of “Break the silence”. It is pursued, first and foremost, through hundreds of workshops, where teachers, social workers, priests, policepersons and other ‘care givers’ are trained in children’s rights and in prevention, particularly of sexual abuse of children.

Some of the funding of the campaign has come from the support organisation Stairway Denmark, which was granted close to a million Danish kroner from the Mini Project Fund for this purpose. This has been a major contribution towards professionalising and raising the efficiency of the endeavour.

#### *Sexual abuse is taboo*

Seen from the starting point, the task looked like an uphill battle. The Philippines is a conservative and deeply Catholic country, where subjects such as incest and paedophiles’ sexual molestation of children are taboo. It is embarrassing to talk about, not just for the victims, but also for teachers, social workers and other adults, who may be confronting the harsh reality on the job, but who are completely devoid of a language and tools to cope with it.

“Even among those who work face to face with street children, there is incredible ignorance, prejudice and reluctance to deal with sexual abuse of children,” says Lars Jørgensen. “I remember a workshop attended precisely by NGO staff, where emotions burst into flames. This happened after one of the male participants had reacted to the question about incest with the comment ‘so, what if the mother fails to satisfy her husband sexually?’ I had never expected to hear the leader of a charity organisation justify a father abusing his own daughter by referring to poor marital sex! His remark did indeed provoke angry uproar, especially among the women present. But it shows just how serious the need for information and openness is.”





#### *Animation as battering ram*

For Stairway, it comes natural to use artistic and creative forms of expression to break the silence, setting off a public and professional debate. This has been done first through theatre and musicals, and since then through a series of novels by Monica Ray based on the life stories of street children. Recently, two of these novels have become screenplays for animated cartoons, and a third is in the offing. The animations are used as central teaching aids at the numerous workshops, and deal with, respectively, incest, paedophiles' sexual molestation of street children, and trafficking of young girls for prostitution.

Using the animations as a battering ram against walls of silence, and applying a template for workshops, which has been gradually fine-tuned and tested into the tiniest details, Stairway has begun to notice an effect of its effort in Philippine society.

A series of cooperation agreements have been made with both NGOs and authorities. For instance, in Calapan City, which has 285,000 inhabitants, all primary and secondary school teachers have gone through Stairway's courses, and a group of municipal staff members have been prepared to carry on the effort and train new instructors themselves.

At City College of Manila, attended by 10,000 students, Stairway has, for several years, conducted courses for future social workers. In the coming year, Stairway is to train a group of "grass-roots therapists", who will work on abuse cases, first at the university, and later as graduates in their professions.

A third example is a partnership with the National Police Academy in Manila, where the country's elite of police officers are trained. Here, Stairway teaches all cadets in children's rights and prevention of sexual abuse.

In parallel, Stairway's teachers and psychologists work with prisons, schools, charities and increasingly also with the powerful church organisations.

"We obviously cannot solve the problem on our own, and our efforts are just drops in the ocean. But we do believe in the importance of reaching and opening the eyes of people who have

or will attain influence and power. By breaking the silence and touching people's hearts, we unleash a process, which will, over time, gain its own momentum. We notice an increase in attention and understanding. Even if there is still a long way to go, we notice an effect," says Lars Jørgensen.

#### **Lobbying**

Theatre, as in the above case, demonstrations and other forms of direct action are indirect methods to be deployed in the attempt to reach decision-makers. Conversely, lobbying is a way of arguing one's case directly to decision-makers. Most forms of advocacy contain elements of lobbying and negotiation.

Lobbying sets out to persuade decision-makers that the problem that you are working on is important, and that it is necessary to find a solution to it. Lobbying can be formal (meetings) and informal (conversation in the corridors, a talk over lunch, etc.). The book "A New Weave of People, Power and Politics" divides lobbying into four phases.

##### *1. Familiarise yourself with the corridors of power*

Examine how decisions are taken in the forum that the lobbying is targeting. For instance, which readings must a legislative bill go through prior to passage? Where are decisions taken on this, and by whom? It is often the early stages of the legislative process that offer the best possibilities of exerting influence. Once a bill has been drafted, it is harder to change it. It must be kept in mind that, even if fixed procedures are in place, the actual process will always be marked by chance and coincidence, and decisions will sometimes be taken in other places and at other times than what was planned or prescribed.

##### *2. Classify the players*

Identify the persons who exert the greatest influence on the decisions, and get to know them. What are their views of a particular subject, which arguments do they use, and how much power do they wield? It may be useful to distinguish between those with power to take decisions, and those well-positioned to bring pressure to bear on decision-makers.

##### *3. Inform and build relationships*

It is a good idea to build a relationship with decision makers that goes beyond the specific case on which you work at a given point in time. This can be done by serving as a resource capable of providing decision makers with particular types of information. They need to know what you stand for, but also that you have specific knowledge of particular subjects and represent certain interests. Inform decision makers through personal visits, letters and reports with more in-depth explanation of how to comprehend the problem.

##### *4. Get attention and show your power*

Visits and other types of contact with decision-makers should be followed up by activities demonstrating that you have power and represent an important constituency. This can be done in myriad ways, such as letter-writing campaigns, declarations of support from influential persons and institutions, massive turnout at events and demonstrations, and favourable coverage in the media.

Kristine Zeuthen Jeppesen from Save the Children tells of the lobbying techniques used to promote a child-labour policy in Bangladesh (see the presentation of this case in Chapter 3). They chose a dialogue strategy rather than a more confrontational approach, since they estimated that this held out the best prospects of getting the government on board. At the same time, they

found this to be a better way of ensuring the sustainability of the decisions, since the government would thus gain ownership of the policy.

They expended much energy on getting the issue on the political agenda, using instruments such as roundtable meetings, discussions, television programmes, theatre and drawing contests. However, they were also involved in the actual formulation of the child-labour policy. Save the Children paid for a consultant, who was employed at the ministry responsible, and who was engaged in the policy development. Once the process went into the decision-making stage, when the policy was to fall definitively into place, they made use of traditional lobbying, including meetings with high-ranking officials.

Kristine Zeuthen Jeppesen explains that the lobbying varies widely from one situation to another, and that their goal as an organisation is to have their partners gain influence. "It's often a good idea to start from what actually motivates individual civil servants in the ministry, those in the key positions. What's in it for them? And how will it further their careers, legacy or the like? Sometimes you also come across staff members who want to do 'something good' for vulnerable children," she says. In the project in Bangladesh, one of the key persons was the chairman of the commission responsible for coordinating the policy formulation within the ministry. One of the arguments used to sway him was that such a policy would look good as the fruit of his labour. "This was a significant factor in motivating him," she says.

**Cooperation with other organisations**

It is usually an advantage to establish various forms of cooperation with other organisations in the development and implementation of advocacy. This enables drawing on each other's strengths and covering each other's weaknesses. One organisation may be particularly adept at media work, another could contribute its legal expertise to the work with law texts, while a third may rally its huge membership for effective demonstrations. Such cooperation can ensure that greater attention is drawn to the cause, while conferring strength on the demands for change. Finally, it may secure coordination of activities, so that the organisations avoid duplicating efforts.

**It is a good idea to establish various forms of cooperation with other organisations in the development and implementation of advocacy. This enables drawing on each other's strengths and covering each other's weaknesses.**

Cooperation between organisations may be more or less formalised, and pursue short- or long-term goals. It is possible to speak of three expressions of cooperation: networks, coalitions and alliances. A network is a looser structure, a coalition more fixed, yet short-term, while alliances sustain permanent cooperation over the long haul. The more permanent the structure, the more effective a cooperative arrangement can be, though it will also be more demanding in terms of coordination and resources.

**Cooperation with others lessens the vulnerability of the individual organisation.**

The figure below defines and describes the three types of cooperation in more detail.

**Networks, coalitions and alliances**

Degree	Type	Definition	Method / Characteristics	Degree
Increasing degree of contact and organisation ↓				Increasing degree of coordination, time, manpower and resources ↓
↓	Networks	Networks are loose, flexible associations of people and groups who gather around a common cause to share ideas and information.	Active exchange of information with a coordinating secretariat. Takes on few specific tasks. Recurrent contacts to selected persons. Information exchange has higher priority than joint campaigning.	↓
↓	Coalitions	Coalitions are often short-term communities focused on a particular purpose. Since they are limited in time, they are less demanding for the members.e.	One-off joint campaign events between various organisations, trying to share out the tasks. The limited durability of cooperation is accepted due to the organisations' different missions.	↓
↓	Alliances	An alliance is a more formalised structure founded on a long-term community between its members. Its permanence may enhance its impact.	Long-term attachment to shared ideals between partners who trust each other and engage in frequent consultations.	↓

Figure developed on the basis of Save the Children (2006), page 317 and VeneKlasen & Miller (2007), pages 311-317.

Despite the myriad advantages of cooperation, it can easily lead to problems. Working within a coalition or alliance can be highly time-consuming. Furthermore, it is likely that some organisations spend more time on maintaining the cooperation than others, which can easily cause conflict. Cooperation can also mean that an individual organisation loses public exposure. Finally, if one organisation runs into troubles, say, with its credibility or legitimacy, the other members of the cooperative arrangement may be tarnished with the same brush.

In order to avoid such problems, the various organisations should reconcile their expectations



among each other, while clearly defining each party's tasks and areas of responsibility.

Henny Hansen from the Danish Family Planning Association explains that their work on reproductive health in South Asia is built on a long-standing partnership between six national and one regional organisation (this case is presented in Chapter 2). "The six national organisations differ widely. Some are more advocacy-minded, others are more courteous, talking oh-so-nicely to the minister. At the beginning of our cooperation, this disparity was seen as a problem, as some organisations were more developed than others as regards advocacy. But over time, we have come to understand that diversity is enriching. Each one of us is suitable for a different task, and this is a strength," she affirms.

She also explains that, at the beginning of the cooperation, there was a tendency for the various partners to perceive each other as rivals. This is no longer the case. Now they use each other as resources. This can be seen, for instance, at the annual meeting, where organisations from various countries meet and advance their planning together. They provide comments and ideas on each other's plans, and develop joint initiatives. Their strong partnership enables them to face the world together when waging campaigns and other advocacy initiatives in the South Asian region.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

Major challenges exist in the monitoring and evaluation of advocacy. This being a new field in development aid, it is devoid of the same standard methods and approaches as other development work. At the same time, advocacy is a relatively diffuse area, where it can be hard to assess if political change springs from a successful campaign or some completely different factors. The campaign-like nature of advocacy is also conducive to blunting the self-critical sense of those behind the effort, since a negative evaluation may be perceived as a weakening of their organisations, thus undermining future advocacy.

In the light of these challenges, it is no wonder that the monitoring and evaluation of advocacy that does take place is often insufficient in scope or depth. This poses a problem, since it prevents the organisations involved from learning from their mistakes and from appropriately fitting the advocacy into a process.

Consequently, it is important to develop a monitoring system that enables continuous adjustment of the advocacy. The use of indicators to measure progress as well as more lasting results is essential in this regard.

The opposite figure presents a proposal for indicators that may serve to monitor policy changes and development of capacity for advocacy.

The monitoring may also assess how an organisation manages to carry out its advocacy. For example, it may be relevant to evaluate an organisation's relationships with others (do they develop over time?), and how it is seen by others (is it perceived as legitimate, and is it sought out by groups who are affected by, or have a stake in, the cause being pursued?).

A host of methods are available to monitor and evaluate advocacy, such as interviews, media coverage, legislative analysis and budget assessments. It may be useful to carry out monitoring and evaluation in partnership with others.

In the project supported by the Danish Family Planning Association in South Asia (see presen-

**Possible indicators showing progress and results of advocacy**

Area of advocacy	Indicators showing progress/regression	Indicators showing changes and more lasting results
<b>Policy change</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National level (government, parliament, military, police, judiciary)</li> <li>Regional and local governments</li> <li>International organisations</li> <li>Private sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased dialogue about an issue</li> <li>Higher profile of an issue</li> <li>Changes in attitude</li> <li>Changes in rhetoric</li> <li>Changes in media coverage</li> <li>Strengthening of relations with the media</li> <li>Replacement of personnel</li> <li>Financial support related to an issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changed policy</li> <li>Changed legislation</li> <li>Policy/legislative reform implemented</li> <li>Persons with influence and prestige are responsible for implementation</li> <li>Positive changes in people's lives as a results of changed policies and legislation</li> </ul>
<b>Development of capacity for advocacy among organisations</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Civil-society organisations</li> <li>Movements</li> <li>Trade unions</li> <li>Academic organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in skills, knowledge and efficiency of individual members</li> <li>Greater synergy between the various activities/objectives</li> <li>Changes in cooperation between organisations</li> <li>Greater freedom of expression</li> <li>Greater acceptance and recognition of civil-society groups</li> <li>Establishment of forums where groups from civil society can contribute to various decisions</li> <li>Greater legitimacy of civil-society groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased participation of civil-society groups in decision-making processes</li> <li>Change in accountability and transparency in public bodies</li> <li>Changes in accountability within civil-society organisations</li> <li>Firms respond to stakeholder consultations</li> </ul>

Figure developed on the basis of Save the Children (2006), p. 183-184

tation in Chapter 2), an attempt has been made to set up a systematic monitoring system. The partners have been asked to develop indicators to measure the results of the various activities. "Indicators are something that has given our partners a hard time. They have seen it as a donor requisite, and not as something they had any use for," says Henny Hansen. She explains that, once the partners have participated actively in the evaluation of the various projects, it dawns on them why it is important to develop accurate indicators, including for their own monitoring.

**Indicators can be something partners find it hard to see the point of. Active involvement of partners in evaluation may be useful to show the importance of accurate indicators.**

Carrying out a joint evaluation, where the various partners in the regional network assess each other's and the combined work together, fosters understanding of synergies in the shared advocacy effort, and of the need to use indicators to demonstrate an effect. Thus, the evaluation serves as a learning process among all parties to the partnership.

## Challenges in advocacy

Danish civil-society organisations have accumulated a great deal of advocacy experience in recent years. However, there are still many areas in which these efforts can be refined. The working group behind this publication has continuously discussed which challenges are the most important to address to move one step further. We have also asked the various organisations contributing their cases to this publication what they see as the major challenges ahead.

Through their comments and our own discussions, we have identified a number of areas which we find important to be aware of. Some are related to the development of society in the countries where development work is carried out. Others have to do with the organisations – both the Danish and their partners in the South – as well as their capacity and resources.

Here is a brief presentation of these challenges, adding suggestions as to how they might be tackled.

### Global challenges

The globalisation process has a series of consequences for the way in which development cooperation and advocacy are dealt with. The world is becoming ever more closely interwoven, and what happens in one country or local area may be influenced by events far away, and vice versa. Climate change, the HIV/AIDS epidemics, and the international market mechanisms illustrate this phenomenon. In advocacy, this means that problems identified at the local level will often have an international dimension, making it useful to tackle them in cooperation between organisations and movements at both the local and international level. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that international agreements frequently set the framework for development locally. Accordingly, it is important to know these intergovernmental instruments, even when addressing local problems. Some agreements may be causing the problems, or certain conventions and declarations may be used as points of reference and arguments towards authorities and other duty-bearers responsible for fulfilling certain rights.

In internationally organised advocacy, different actors may bring their special resources into the work. Some can exert pressure for influence locally, while others may have easier access to the international sphere. Such cooperation, however, requires clarity regarding roles and areas of responsibility of the respective parties. Moreover, it is important to discuss and reach agreement on common goals.

The integration of the global dimension into advocacy does not in any way imply that the effort should be concentrated on the international level, where it takes plenty of time and money to attend summits. It may be important to be present on such occasions. However, the chief challenge is to think through how advocacy and its strategies can link the local to the global level.

### Limits to democracy

Chapter 1 points out how democratisation has led to greater focus on advocacy in development work. However, this is not a one-way trend, in which the state of the world moves steadily towards more democracy and greater participation of individual citizens in political decision-making. The terror attack in the USA on 11 September 2001 led many governments to tighten the control over civil society. Some of them undoubtedly used the “war on terror” as an excuse to increase surveillance and turn the screws on individuals and organisations that they see as “undesirable”. Furthermore, many of the so-called new democracies are structurally weak.

Although there is a formal democratic system up and running, there may well be decision-making processes belonging to a not-so-distant past, for example, where traditional elites wield greater power than they are supposed to on paper.

At the same time, many countries remain saddled with authoritarian forms of government, where civil society organisations and others demanding change face very harsh conditions.

In other words, although the global trend is towards more democracy, in many countries it remains difficult and dangerous to advocate actively for social change. This makes it important that Danish organisations, in cooperation with their partners, conduct a thorough risk assessment before launching an advocacy effort, particularly in countries with a very hostile attitude towards civil society organisations and the political dimension of their work. The conclusions should inform the strategy for advocacy. There must be an open discussion with the partners about the hazards associated with such work.

At the same time, the risk assessment may help improve the advocacy strategy. For instance, the work may follow a route that is more dialogue-oriented and less confrontational, say, by seeking cooperation with the authorities rather than attacking their policies. In the pursuit of such a strategy, Danish organisations should be aware that support towards giving the local populations greater knowledge of their rights must be accompanied by activities aimed at strengthening the public institutions in constructively complying with these rights. Such a strategy can go hand in hand with increased international pressure on the governments of the countries concerned in order to secure progressive legislation that helps rather than hinders the work of civil-society organisations.

### The private sector: friend or foe?

Much advocacy is directed against corporations or other actors in the private sector. This has usually taken on the shape of campaigns trying to compel the firms to show more consideration, and to engage more respectfully with local populations in countries where they operate. Polluting oil-drilling in Ecuador's rainforest, logging in Indonesia, and patent rights pushing up the price of HIV/AIDS drugs are just some of the cases that spring to mind. In advocacy on these and similar cases, the corporations have been enemies to be forced to mend their ways.

However, many firms have learned the lesson and changed the way in which they operate. In recent decades, the business community has increasingly engaged in social commitments based on ethical and moral principles. The term corporate social responsibility describes the approach taken by more and more companies, according to which they take on – in principle – responsibility for affairs in society beyond the goods or services that they are paid to deliver. Consequently, such firms are potential players on the same rather than the opposite team in a drive to improve the plight of poor and marginalised people.

An organisation's cooperation with a business must, however, proceed with care. There are undoubtedly some companies who claim to want to further social development, but whose commitment is in fact superficial and primarily concerned with improving their image and standing. By working with such firms, civil-society organisations may end up serving as a rubber stamp that undeservedly improves a company's reputation.

Consequently, it is important that the firm be scrupulously assessed before any cooperation is launched. It is essential to specify where interests converge and where they diverge. It is also crucial to establish a division of roles and responsibilities.



### **The difficult balance between advocacy and service delivery**

In recent years, Danish organisations have placed less emphasis on service delivery and more on advocacy. This shift has, in some cases, caused tensions with partner organisations failing to see any immediate interest in this reorientation.

Experience shows that partners initially hesitant about starting up advocacy come to see the benefits over time. Nevertheless, this still represents a challenge for the cooperation. It would be a good idea if Danish organisations could share their experiences on this topic in particular. For instance, it could be discussed how to strike the right balance between service delivery and advocacy, since the two areas can often interact to positive effect in development work on the ground.

### **Tensions in the cooperation with partner organisations**

The demand that Danish aid focus more on advocacy may lead to partners in the South seeing advocacy as a condition to gain access to other types of support, such as service delivery.

The partner may not agree that advocacy ought to be a top priority, which could entail the suspension of some partnerships. Another possibility is that the partner in the South reluctantly tolerates an advocacy component, with the potential consequence that only a half-hearted effort is delivered. There may be perfectly legitimate reasons why the partner does not prioritise advocacy. Perhaps the organisation's primary field of activity is service delivery, or it may find advocacy to be too risky.

Tensions may also arise between the Danish organisation and its partner in the choice of focus area for the advocacy. It ought to be the partner in the South who selects the issue to be addressed, but in practice, the Danish organisation may bring pressure to bear in favour of particular subjects. This raises the question of whether it is legitimate that a Danish organisation raises a problem, even if there is no local understanding of its serious dimensions.

The best way of coping with this challenge is to clarify – as much as possible – whether the Danish organisation and its partner in the South share a common objective, and hence hold out genuine prospects for cooperation.

### **Limited scope of advocacy**

Our contacts with Danish organisations have shown that they – in particular those that are small and medium-sized – focus much of their advocacy on information and campaigning in order to draw attention to a particular cause or problem. However, few of them take the next step that may bring political change in earnest, for example by supporting lobbying or the drafting of legislative bills. This may stem from many causes. It can be difficult to make such a move, since it would turn the organisation into a more overtly political actor, which is perhaps beyond its mandate or interest. Another limitation could be lack of sufficient technical capacity to enter into negotiations and legislative work.

It is important to respect the various organisations' boundaries defining how far they believe they should go in an advocacy endeavour. Nevertheless, advocacy exclusively aimed at drawing attention risks being a wasted effort. If the partner organisation only wishes to focus on information and campaigning, it should establish cooperation with other organisations capable of getting the added attention to an issue linked to the weightier political work, e.g. in a drive to change the legislation.

If the advocacy results in new or revised laws, new and no less demanding challenges lie ahead in the implementation. When people from the government and authorities are against a particular piece of legislation already in force, this is precisely where the effort must be targeted. Perhaps the authorities have failed to allocate resources to enforcement, or politicians and civil servants may block the law from attaining its intended effect. The problem might also be of a technical nature, such as lack of staff with the necessary knowledge and training to translate the law into action.

The challenges of having legislation implemented are often overlooked in advocacy, but they should be incorporated into the strategy in order to ensure that the political changes do in fact make an impact. Cooperation with other organisations is one means of tackling this.

### **Organisational challenges**

It takes special know-how and capacity for a Danish organisation to effectively support advocacy among partners in the South. In addition to familiarity with the issues addressed, the organisation should have a firm grip on advocacy as such and the processes that it involves. Several of the large Danish development organisations have for some years employed personnel exclusively dedicated to supporting advocacy. The small and medium-sized organisations face a different situation. Here, very few staff members must undertake support for advocacy alongside a series of other tasks. This presents them with some extraordinary challenges. They may not have the required technical skills and knowledge regarding advocacy and the methods available. This makes it important for them to be able to draw on external resources for this line of work. Thematic Forum is one place where the organisations can discuss and test their advocacy ideas with others. The Project Advice and Training Centre can also play an important role in this, for example through guidance and training. However, more offers of advocacy-related expertise are probably required to cover the needs of small and medium-sized organisations.

### **Increased demands for documentation of results**

In recent years, Danida and other donors have made tougher demands for documentation of results from the development work. Projects and programmes must deliver measurable outcomes. This calls for greater precision in the formulation of programmes and their expected outputs, as well as in the identification of indicators to be used to monitor progress and the attainment of results.

The demand for measurability entails a risk that Danish organisations will prefer to work with partners who offer the best possible guarantee that the results will be delivered. Accordingly, the Danish organisation may overlook potential partners who may be organisationally weak, but who represent important target groups, for example, and who may over time – given the right mix of capacity-building and advocacy – produce a kind of results that would have been difficult to reach in any other way.

Therefore, one thing to avoid is to let the demand for measurability lead to favouring partnerships with organisations which are already strong. This requires a clear strategy for how to make advocacy and capacity-building play off each other, and that the Danish organisation succeeds in convincing the donor about the relevance of such a strategy.

## Literature and other resources

### Books and articles

**Clark, C., Harrison, B., Miller, V., Pettit, J., VeneKlasen, L.** (2002): Making change happen: advocacy and citizen participation, PLA notes (Participatory Learning and Action), International Institute for Environment and Development, no. 43, London

This is a series of articles discussing a vast array of aspects and several cases related to advocacy. Some of the questions addressed are: How does advocacy relate to social change? How is representation and accountability ensured in advocacy? How is advocacy monitored and evaluated? The publication is available at: [http://www.planotes.org/pla\\_backissues/43.html](http://www.planotes.org/pla_backissues/43.html)

**Cohen, David** et al (2002): Advocacy for social justice, Kumarian Press

The book is divided into three parts. The first presents general reflections on advocacy. The second sets out a series of tools for advocacy. The third is a detailed analysis of six cases and a comparative analysis of these.

**Eade, Deborah** (editor, 2002): Development and advocacy, Oxfam

This is a compilation of a series of articles discussing aspects and experiences of advocacy. The book addresses the issue of legitimacy, among others, including whether organisations in the North can represent organisations in the South.

**Esbensen, Mads Christian** (2007): Public affairs – Lobbyisme i praksis [Public Affairs – lobbying in practice], Informations Forlag

This is a book in Danish about public affairs and how Danish businesses seek to influence the political decision-making process in Denmark. It describes the various stakeholders involved in lobbying, presents the tools used,

and examines a series of cases of corporate lobbying.

**Kirkemann Boesen, Jacob and Tomas Martin** (2007): Applying a Rights-Based Approach, Danish Institute for Human Rights

This publication describes the principles behind the rights-based approach to development work. It presents practical directions on how to go about this approach: context analysis, programme design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Available online at: [www.humanrights.dk](http://www.humanrights.dk)

**Rasmussen, Finn and Bettina Ringsing** (eds.), available in Danish as well as Spanish: Vælt dagsordenen – kampagnen som politisk murbrækker, Informations Forlag (2002), and A tomarse la agenda – la campaña como herramienta política [Seizing the agenda – campaigning as a political tool] Plural Editores/IBIS 2003

This is the first book in Danish – also translated into Spanish – about advocacy in the context of development. It describes and discusses advocacy on the basis of a series of cases and viewpoints. The focus is primarily on campaigns seen from a global perspective.

**Save the Children** (2006): Toolkits. A practical guide to planning, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment

The manual contains two chapters, describing planning and evaluation of advocacy, respectively. There are suggestions for indicators to measure the progress of advocacy.

**The secretariat of the African decade of persons with disabilities** (2006): Advocacy and lobby.

This is a short description of key elements in advocacy and lobbying, including advice on how to plan communications.

**VeneKlasen, Lisa and Valerie Miller** (2007): A new weave of power, people and politics. The action guide for advocacy and citizen participation, Practical Action Publishing

This is a very extensive and didactically structured manual, which addresses all essential elements of advocacy. It discusses politics, democracy and power. It presents a series of planning and analytical tools, while making a thorough presentation of instruments in advocacy.

**Washington Office for Latin America** (2002): Construyendo una estrategia de medios para la incidencia política [Building a media strategy for advocacy], only available in Spanish

This is a manual describing how to train civil-society organisations in media work. It reflects on the media's role in the formation of public opinion, and presents elements of the development of a media strategy in advocacy. Only available in Spanish. Can be obtained online at: [www.wola.org](http://www.wola.org) (under 'Publications and Resources').

**Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA) and Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA)** (2005): Manual for facilitators of advocacy training sessions

The manual presents concepts and methods to train civil-society organisation in advocacy. It builds on six years' experience of training and monitoring of advocacy in Central America. Also available in Spanish. The publication can be obtained online at [www.wola.org](http://www.wola.org) (under 'Publications and Resources').

### Other resources

#### Thematic Forum

Thematic Forum is a network linking a wide range of Danish organisations involved in development work. It seeks to strengthen and expand the competencies of Danish NGOs in advocacy, organisational capacity-building, and monitoring and evaluation. The intention is to improve the organisations' interventions in the fight against poverty, and to support civil societies in the South.

Thematic Forum has several working groups focusing on advocacy. They regularly carry out seminars and other activities aimed at developing the member organisations' advocacy efforts.

Contact: [www.tematiskforum.dk](http://www.tematiskforum.dk)

#### Project Advice and Training Centre – Platform for Danish CSOs (Projektrådgivningen)

This is an association of more than 220 small and medium-sized Danish NGOs, all of which are engaged in development work, either as their central mission or as part of their activities. The centre offers advisory services and courses aimed at strengthening the member organisations' development work. Among its activities are courses in advocacy.

Contact: [www.prngo.dk](http://www.prngo.dk)

1. "Strategy for Danish support to Civil Society in Developing Countries", December 2008
2. Page 5
3. The following is based on Jacob Kirkemann Boesen and Tomas Martin (2007): Applying a Rights-Based Approach, Danish Institute for Human Rights
4. This refers particularly to the UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994 and the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.
5. Save the Children (2006): Toolkits. A practical guide to planning, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment, page 181.
6. Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller (2007): A New Weave of Power, People & Politics. The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation, Practical Action Publishing, page 125.

7. VeneKlasen and Miller (2007), page 110.
8. David Cohen et al (2002): Advocacy for social justice, Kumarian Press, p. 217-222.
9. The choice of these three areas in particular is based on an analysis of cases in David Cohen et al (2002): Advocacy for social justice, Kumarian Press. This paper shows that advocacy can often be categorised within those areas.
10. Children's rights terminology distinguishes between "child work" and "child labour". By definition, only the latter is always harmful to the child's development.
11. In Bangladesh, Save the Children Denmark has shared an office and country programme with Save the Children Sweden since 2003.
12. This section is based on, among other sources, "Development of a media strategy for political advocacy" published by the Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA), 2002.
13. VeneKlasen and Miller (2007), page 278-288.





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