

# Advocacy Position Paper



Photo: Anna Kari

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**Save the Children**  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Save the Children Denmark has undertaken a two-year Advocacy Review project, from 2003 to 2005, in order to further develop the advocacy capacity among staff and partners. As part of the project, two key documents have been elaborated:

- **Advocacy Position paper:** this document elaborates on Save the Children Denmark's conceptual understanding of advocacy and defines key characteristics of child rights advocacy.
- **Advocacy Guideline:** this document delves deeper into the actual planning of child rights advocacy and follows a planning cycle from idea to monitoring and evaluation. It builds on examples from the program.

The two documents complement one another and are meant to be of inspiration to staff and partners when planning, implementing and monitoring an advocacy activity. They are not blueprints; rather, they help stimulate innovative thinking and action.

This paper represents Save the Children Denmark's understanding of advocacy at this point in time and will be revised as more experience is gained. Any comments regarding the document are welcome. Please contact Birgit Lundbak, Advocacy Coordinator in Save the Children Denmark [bl@redbarnet.dk](mailto:bl@redbarnet.dk).

## 2. BACKGROUND

Save the Children Denmark gives high priority to advocacy in both development and humanitarian assistance as a means for positive change for children. We want to bring about sustainable change that improves the lives of children

“Projects” alone are not going to solve structural problems. They can be “islands of happiness” but reach few children and may have limited sustainability. Sustainable change needs structural and political changes including greater accountability.

Save the Children Denmark sees itself as part of a wider movement for social change for children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the evidence and experience from programme provides *legitimacy* and *credibility* to involve in advocacy. The simultaneous access to children, partners and decision makers provides opportunities for successful advocacy leading to structural changes.

This document states Save the Children Denmark's position and understanding of advocacy and is written to support staff to involve in advocacy independently or with partners and to build advocacy capacity. It is based on the child rights programming approach. The position paper can be used for both development and emergency work.

The paper is inspirational in nature bearing in mind that Save the Children Denmark-staff work in different contexts, with different partners and networks and in close cooperation with Alliance partners.

This position paper is supplemented by a **guideline** for advocacy planning which explains the advocacy planning cycle.

### **3. WHY SHOULD SAVE THE CHILDREN DO ADVOCACY?**

Save the Children was born as an advocacy organization. The founder Eglantyne Jebb, advocated for support to children in Central Europe who were starving due to blockades following The First World War.

She drafted the Geneva declaration (adopted in 1924) which 65 years later had developed in to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, the UNCRC, adopted in 1989, which is now the most important advocacy tool for child rights advocates.

The CRC convention, our long history in fighting for children's rights and the evidence and experience from programmes in more than 100 countries provide *legitimacy* and *credibility* to involve in advocacy.

Save the Children Denmark advocacy is evidence based and builds on the experience from programmes.

### **4. THE CRC FRAMEWORK**

The UNCRC provides NGOs with a legal and moral foundation for advocacy.

With the introduction of the CRC, children have become holders of rights (claim holders) and obligations/duties have been placed on the States (duty bearers) that have the formal responsibility for fulfillment of children's rights. The Convention gives space for civil society actors to monitor implementation of the convention and thereby legitimacy for advocacy.

NGOs are therefore both stakeholders and duty bearers in making the CRC a reality.

Advocacy is about influencing duty bearers and Save the Children Denmark defines duty bearers in a broad sense as all those actors who can influence the fulfillment of children's rights and thereby either facilitate or obstruct good changes for children.

The Child Rights Programming (CRP) approach guides the operationalisation of the CRC through the child rights analysis. This analysis will identify violations of children's rights, and thereby areas for advocacy.

Advocacy activities will be informed by the core values of the CRC: Children's best interest, survival and development, non-discrimination, participation and accountability.

### **CRP is the tool for advocacy**

Advocacy is a key component in CRP. It is about holding duty bearers to account and enabling rights holders to claim their rights.

CRP is based on a child rights analysis which identifies the root causes of child rights violations and the duty bearers who have the responsibility to change the situation.

This child rights analysis should include the legislative, policy and practice environment. It is the starting point for designing your programme consisting of: Direct Services, Capacity building and Advocacy

## **5. THE CONCEPT OF ADVOCACY**

Advocacy is used for a range of activities spanning from narrow policy work to processes of social change and transformation. The scope of advocacy stretches from informal chats with civil servants in corridors to full scale public campaigns.

Many different terms are used in relation to advocacy e.g. lobby, meetings, policy development, awareness raising, empowerment, social mobilization, campaigning, media work etc.

The confusion is an expression of different understandings and approaches to advocacy.

- Some NGOs favor a narrow and technical approach aiming at concrete and measurable policy changes requiring mostly lobby-work. It targets the technical level of institutions and attempts to influence specific policies, programmes and projects. It involves targets which are more open to dialogue but requires a high level of technical knowledge based on practical experience if the views of the NGO are to be taken seriously. Advocacy in this form is likely to take place behind closed doors and is cooperative.
- Some NGOs involve in global processes targeting global institutions focusing on some of the global issues like poverty, debt, trade and environment. This approach requires a huge base of support to be effective. It often uses a confrontational approach.
- Some NGOs work at local level for transformation of societies where marginalized groups are empowered to claim and uphold their rights. This is long term work based on participatory methods.

There is therefore no generally agreed definition of advocacy. Different organizations use different definitions and terms based on their organizational goals and identity.

## 6. DEFINITION AND OBJECTIVE FOR ADVOCACY

### **Save the Children Denmark defines advocacy as:**

“A set of strategically planned activities directed at producing concrete changes in the policies, practices or structures affecting children by targeting duty bearers at different levels”.

### **Save the Children Denmark’s objective for Advocacy is to:**

“Create lasting structural changes on local, national and global level to the benefit of children and the fulfillment of their rights according to the UNCRC.”

This means that Save the Children Denmark works for concrete changes in the short term and for wider structural changes in the longer term.

Save the Children Denmark understands advocacy as a *generic term* which encompasses a number of different advocacy techniques and activities. They can be used to identify an advocacy case, prioritize and plan, build wider support and work for concrete policy change.

## 7. LEVELS OF ADVOCACY

Save the Children Denmark engages in advocacy at two interlinked levels.

1. Supporting civil society organizations in advocacy initiatives es.
2. Engaging – when relevant – directly in advocacy nationally or internationally

### **Supporting civil society in advocacy initiatives:**

Save the Children Denmark works with a number of partners (NGOs and CBOs), who in turn work with community actors and children. Save the Children Denmark will support partners in developing competence in advocacy both to engage directly in advocacy and to empower community actors (children, parents and community groups) to speak up for change and create space for public action. Save the Children Denmark will also support partners in strategic planning, experience sharing, access to documentation, networks or international fora. Advocacy by partners takes place at local, national level and in some cases international level.

### **Engaging – when relevant – directly in advocacy nationally or internationally**

Save the Children Denmark will advocate in programme countries, in Denmark and internationally on a number of strategic issues, where the organization has specific knowledge, competence or access to policy fora. Advocacy messages based on strong documentation from the field is important for successful advocacy at this level so there is an important and mutually reinforcing link between partner’s and Save the Children Denmark’s advocacy. Information, documentation and experiences must be continually shared.

Being an international NGO and member of the Save the Children Alliance, Save the Children Denmark is able to link initiatives at the local level in the programme countries to advocacy

initiatives at national and international level addressing some of the global and overall causes for the local violations of children's rights.

Successful linkages can produce maximum impact but requires strong cooperation and coordination to allow voices from the field to be heard at international level.

## 8. CHARACTERISTICS OF ADVOCACY

The following characteristics further clarify the concept of advocacy:

**Advocacy is a positive action offering credible alternatives:** An advocacy action is not only against something but must also offer positive alternatives. Clear messages based on clear and achievable objectives are the basis for successful advocacy.

**Advocacy is not an end in itself but a means:**

Advocacy activities are sometimes seen as an end in itself. However advocacy is a means to reach an end: good change for children. It is therefore not enough to get an issue "on the agenda". It is important to follow it through.

**Advocacy is a process:**

Advocacy is never a one-off event. It is a long term and dynamic process involving a number of linked processes aiming at concrete goals in the short term and wider goals in the long term.

**Advocacy is about policy and change for children:**

Advocacy is directed at duty bearers and other groups with power to influence the situation for children. The goal is institutional change. Duty bearers can be found at all levels in society i.e. from a rural school committee to the UN. The goal of advocacy will always be a concrete positive change at the relevant policy level.

**Clear and measurable goals:**

An advocacy campaign must have clear, concrete and measurable goals. Some goals are too broad for advocacy e.g. "Fulfillment of children's rights" or "Stop the use of child labor". Such broad goals have to be broken down into manageable pieces.

**From practice to policy to practice:**

SCD-advocacy is based on experiences from the field. This provides evidence to work for changes in local and national legislation and international conventions. When new policies are made, advocacy is again required to support enforcement so they are implemented at local level where children live.

**Advocacy starts from the field:** It is voices from the field that informs advocacy and advocacy messages must be developed by field staff. The policy processes differ between countries and regions. Therefore advocacy must be planned in the relevant context.



## 9. SAVE THE CHILDREN DENMARK AND ADVOCACY

Save the Children Denmark works with three mutually supporting intervention approaches: capacity development, service delivery and advocacy to facilitate good change for children. The three approaches in combination make advocacy effective:

### Intervention areas:

*Capacity development* of civil society organizations to engage in advocacy ensures that:

- Advocacy is rooted in the local context.
- Builds competent partners and possibilities for joint work at many levels.
- Secures linkages between programme experience and policy work.

*Service Delivery* provides Save the Children Denmark and partners:

- Voices and documentation for advocacy.
- Examples of good practices which can be advocated.
- Enables children, families and communities to speak for change

*Advocacy* based on capacity development and service delivery ensures

- Strong evidence base
- Opportunities for advocacy at several levels
- Joint learning in advocacy

**An example:** SC-organizations in Ethiopia have **advocated** for better access to education for children. Through **service delivery**, they have demonstrated a new education model as an example of good practice. The advocacy effort has led government to approve the model i.e. **policy change**. Through **capacity support** to NGO-partners, communities and local government, SC has supported implementation of change.

## 10. PRIORITIES IN ADVOCACY

Save the Children Denmark will advocate around a limited number of issues on the global level. Selection of these issues will be based on the following consideration:

- Links to programmes: There must be strong evidence.
- Possibilities for Alliance cooperation
- Chances for success
- Capacity and Resources.

Advocacy is primarily undertaken by the programme staff with the relevant technical or geographical expertise supported by the advocacy programme manager.

## 11. WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Working with partners in advocacy has a number of benefits. It can be an empowering and learning experience, it builds local movements and it increases sustainability of efforts. Advocacy with partners lends legitimacy and credibility to an advocacy campaign.

Partners have in many cases been mostly involved in actual services for children. They need capacity building to involve in advocacy. You may need different partners with different competencies in advocacy.

Partners should be involved in advocacy from the start of a campaign and it is important to think carefully about possible implications of advocacy for your partners to avoid risks.

## 12. ORGANIZING AND COORDINATING ADVOCACY

Advocacy has some specific organizational requirements reflecting the particular nature of advocacy: Advocacy is *long term*, it requires *joint and simultaneous action* with several actors at different levels and it is dependent on *continuous generation of evidence* i.e. research or documentation.

It requires both individual, organizational and relational competencies and good coordination mechanisms both horizontally and vertically so information can flow between local, national and international level. It requires relational competencies for involving in networks and alliances. It requires structures for knowledge management.

Coordination mechanisms must reflect the fact that Save the Children Denmark is increasingly working along agreed Alliance-principles and through consolidated country offices.

## 13. BUILDING COMPETENCE IN ADVOCACY

Building competence in advocacy is a long term process which goes beyond training and skills building. It is not only about techniques and tools but about how organizations understand and organize themselves around advocacy. Moving from a focus on programmes and service delivery towards a more political role requires a reorientation in strategies, structures and staff competencies.

The first step is to clarify definitions and concepts related to advocacy and build understanding of the potential scope of advocacy. This includes clarifying how it links to the other intervention approaches and based on this, develop advocacy strategies.

## 14. POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS OF ADVOCACY:

Many organizations are getting involved in advocacy. It is important to assess both benefits and risks.

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Risks</b>
<p>Greater Impact of your work</p> <p>Moving from addressing symptoms to challenging causes.</p> <p>New relationships</p> <p>Becoming a visible social actor</p> <p>Improved legitimacy</p>	<p>Diversion of scarce resources</p> <p>Difficult to explain to your supporters.</p> <p>Creation of internal elite of advocates.</p> <p>Criticism of being political</p> <p>Can leave partners and target group in a risky situation.</p>