

Child Rights Advocacy

Operational guideline

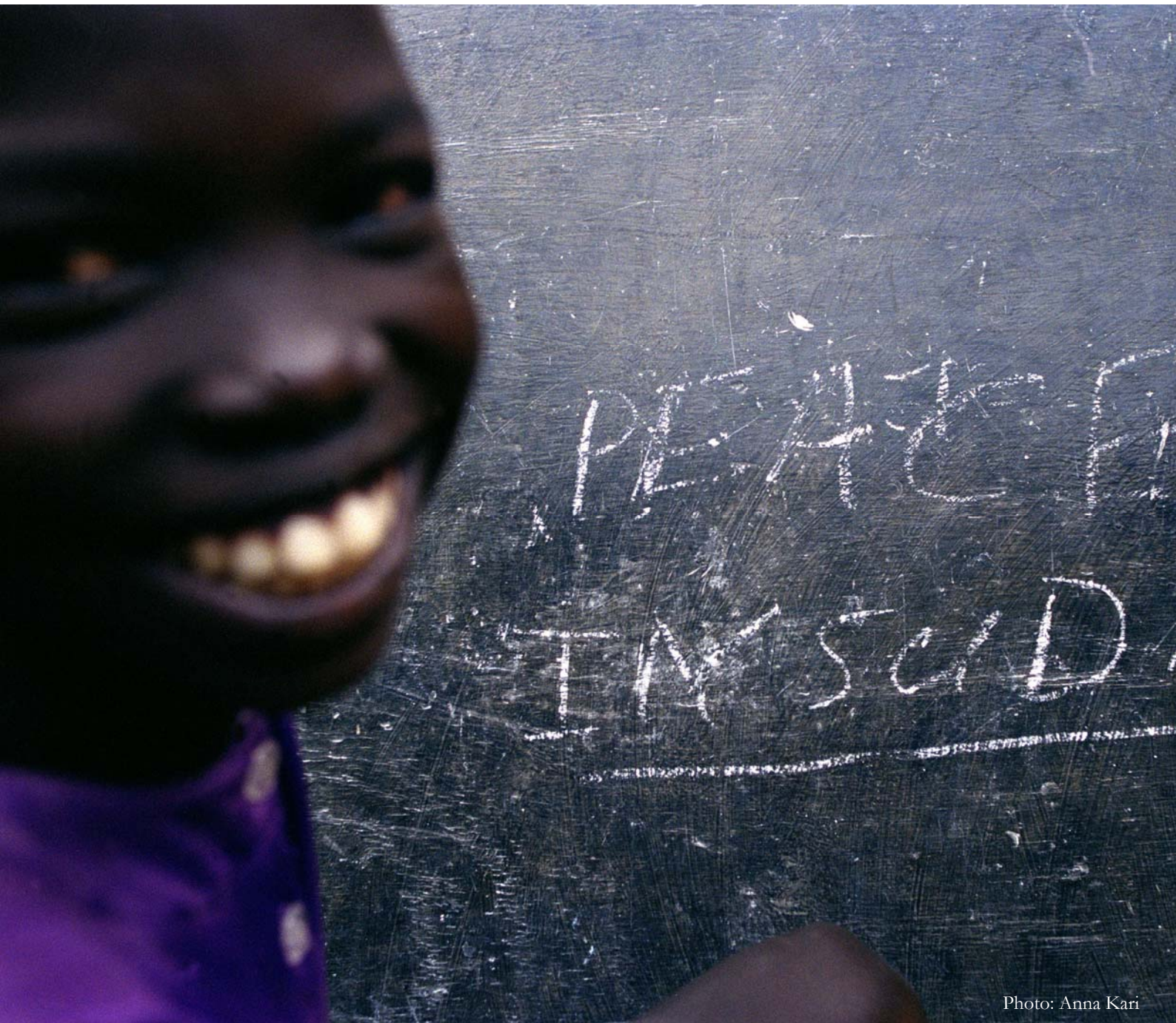


Photo: Anna Kari

By Save the Children Denmark
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Save the Children
Denmark

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

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.

The guideline has been deliberately kept short to provide an easy, succinct overview. There are plenty of other manuals with a more thorough description of various advocacy techniques and tools (see the literature list below).

The document has three parts: Part 1 is a brief elaboration of child rights advocacy; Part 2 elaborates on the advocacy planning cycle; Part 3 examines a number of the organizational implications of advocacy.

The guideline 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.

And remember: there is value in getting started. There is no better teacher than experience!

2. Child Rights Advocacy

Advocacy is sometimes presented as something completely new; however, Save the Children was actually born as an advocacy organization.

Eglantyne Jebb, the founder of Save the Children, advocated for support to children in Central Europe who were suffering the effects of the First World War. Based on these experiences, she drafted the Geneva Declaration (adopted in 1924), which some 65 years later had developed into

the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UNCRC, adopted in 1989, which is now the most important advocacy tool for child rights advocates.

The CRC as both foundation and tool

The UNCRC provides CR-advocates with formal legitimacy to become involved in advocacy. The Convention has a monitoring mechanism and the CRC committee in Geneva invites “competent bodies” to provide advice regarding the implementation of the Convention (according to article 45). This term includes NGOs, and the committee welcomes reports from child-focused organizations about the implementation of the CRC.

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

The UNCRC also provides NGOs with a language and an approach to advocacy through child rights programming (CRP). CRP is based on a child rights analysis identifying the root causes of child rights violations and the duty bearers who have the responsibility to change the situation.

The child rights analysis is the ideal starting point for identifying key issues for programs and advocacy. The analysis must be based on the principles of the CRC, i.e. the best interest of the child, survival and development, and the participation of children.

Many NGOs have centered their advocacy around the Convention, using it both as a framework and a tool.

The drafting of alternative reports to the committee is an important opportunity for coalitions of child rights organizations to advocate and the concluding recommendations from the committee represent important follow-up opportunity.

The concluding observations of the committee can constitute an unparalleled tool for NGOs to stimulate discussion at the national level, to exert pressure on the government to follow up ... and to lobby for changes in legislation and practice.¹

The NGO-group in the CRC in Geneva supports local NGOs in this work and has developed manuals on reporting and networking for children’s rights (see literature list below).

3. Advocacy for the Convention

The following methods and strategies are found in the guide on Networking for NGOs:²

- Conduct comparative studies on relevant national legislation in relation to their compliance with the CRC. Identify the legal changes necessary and develop concrete proposals for change.

¹ A guide for Non-Governmental Organizations Reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

² Networking for Children’s Rights – a guide for NGOs – NGO group for the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

- Monitor the extent to which existing legislation is implemented. In some countries, the legal framework is strong but not adequately implemented. The analysis ought to include reasons for this failure.
- Examine the national budget to see how much is allocated to programs affecting children's lives.³

Child-focused agencies could advocate for:

- The dis-aggregation of budgets at the national, regional and local levels in order to ascertain the proportion of public expenditures on children.
- The creation of government ministries with responsibility for promoting the rights of children.
- The establishment of intergovernmental structures at all levels to ensure the coherence and consistency in legal frameworks and the development of services for children.
- The completion of child impact analyses at all levels in order to ascertain the impact of existing and proposed legislation.
- The establishment of independent commissioners and an ombudsman institution for children.
- The production of an annual report to parliament on children.

Strategies for promoting the implementation of the Convention include:

- Mobilizing support for change (building alliances, using the media and addressing key professional groups).
- Lobbying governments directly (suggesting legislative reform, holding meetings and conferences, forming groups of child-friendly parliamentarians etc.).
- Promoting the implementation of the CRC among institutions providing services to children (producing guides, collecting best practices etc.).
- Promoting opportunities for children and young people to contribute to advocacy for change (promoting children's involvement in democratic processes, organizations for children etc.).

³ Several organizations have experience with budget analysis. See for example www.idasa.org.za and www.internationalbudget.org

4. Challenges in CR-advocacy

The challenges facing child rights advocacy since the adoption of the UNCRC can be summarized as follows:

General sympathy but lack of action: there is general sympathy for support to children, and advocacy is regarded as non-political and non-threatening; however, children are almost always forgotten in the end. Children remain largely invisible in policies, strategies, documents, programs etc. Policy documents on children are often poorly followed up. Children's issues are normally handled by poorly funded ministries.

Strongest interest in extreme violations: it is relatively easy to capture the interest in terms of donor funding when it comes to extreme violations such as child soldiering and trafficking but more difficult to secure committed political action. Some child rights violations are embarrassing for the host government (e.g. recruitment of child soldiers and trafficking), so they may be clouded in secrecy and difficult to document.

Lack of knowledge and appreciation: few people know about children's rights, and advocacy for children therefore often requires an "educational element". There is a need to build a constituency of support for children's issues.

Few child-focused actors: there is no established child rights movement – as is the case when it comes to women's issues and environmental concerns etc., so getting children's issues on the agenda requires hard work. Many countries have formed child rights coalitions (see a list of national networks on www.crin.org/NGOGroup for CRC), but many are relatively weak.

Working with children in advocacy: there are a number of challenges, since children are the most powerless segment in society. In most cases, child rights actors will be speaking for children. This can potentially undermine their credibility: are we really expressing their concerns? When supporting children to speak for themselves, there are issues related to ethics, manipulation, risk etc.

5. Conceptual Elaboration of Advocacy

Advocacy is a strategic means for speaking out for children. Many NGO-staff undertake advocacy every day in their work by speaking up for children – whenever the opportunity arises. The important thing is to move beyond these ad hoc opportunities to a strategic and well planned approach.

Advocacy is both about changing specific policies affecting children and changing the way decision-making happens into a more inclusive and democratic process in which children's voices are included.

Many child-focused NGOs find it difficult to distinguish between advocacy and e.g. awareness-raising and information activities. The important thing is to understand that advocacy always

seeks to change institutional policies, practices or structures. Advocacy may include awareness-raising – but it does not stop there.

Advocacy should not be undertaken in isolation or as an add-on; rather, it must but must be integrated in the wider program of practical support to children, capacity building and research – all leading towards the same objectives.

Characteristics of Advocacy:

Advocacy is a positive action offering credible alternatives: an advocacy action is not only against something; it must also offer positive alternatives.

Advocacy is about policy and change for children: advocacy is directed at groups with the power to influence the situation for children. The goal is institutional change. Children’s issues must be framed in political language.

Clear positions and clear and measurable goals are the basis for successful advocacy: while this sounds simple, it can be the difficult part.

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

Advocacy is not an end unto itself: advocacy is a means to reach an end: improvements for children. Getting an issue “on the agenda” is not enough. It is important to follow it through.

Advocacy starts in the field: voices and priorities from the target group inform advocacy. It is based on evidence from the programs.

Advocacy has risks: advocacy takes place in the public policy arena – where many actors compete over power and space.

PART 2: ADVOCACY PLANNING

5. Advocacy planning and implementation – general issues

Advocacy must be planned and managed just as thoroughly as other programs and an advocacy project will normally undergo the same stages as a project e.g.:

Identification of problems and issues, preparatory work e.g. research and analysis of the chosen advocacy issue, the development of objectives and sub-objectives, developing strategies and activities, the elaboration of project documents and the implementation of plans, incl. monitoring and evaluation.

Many of the well known program-planning tools can be used in advocacy e.g. problem analysis, stakeholder analysis, SWOT etc.

However, advocacy also has a number of specific characteristics:

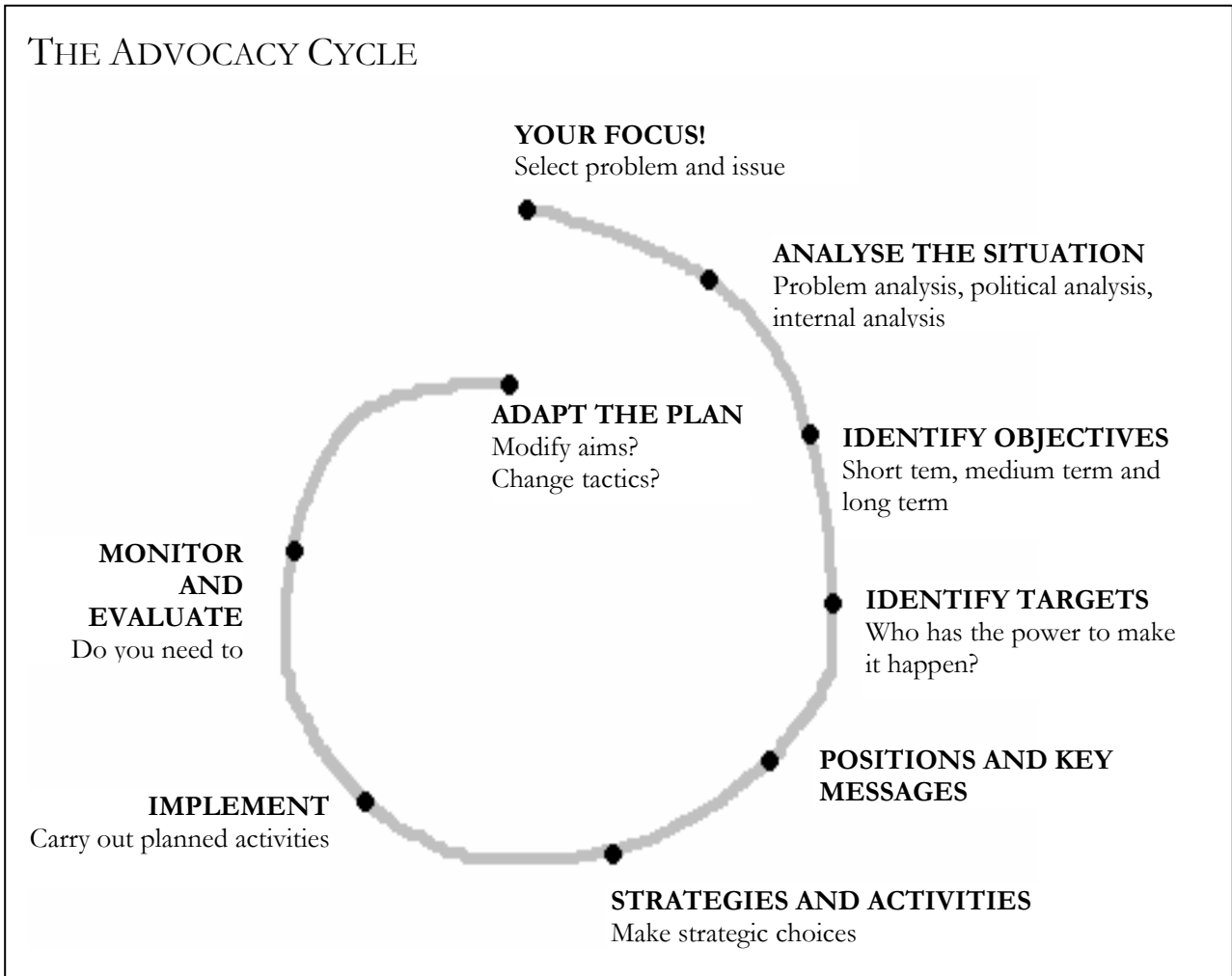
Flexibility: advocacy takes place in the public sphere, where many actors and forces are at play. Iterative planning and flexibility are required in order to profit from new opportunities and to incorporate lessons learned.

Working on different levels: while projects are mostly carried out within a specific location, advocacy often requires work at different levels. This calls for linkages and coordination.

In the following, advocacy planning is described as a 10-point plan consisting of:

1. Selecting the problem and issue
2. Problem analysis
3. Political analysis
4. Internal analysis
5. Objectives
6. Targets
7. Positions and key messages
8. Strategies and activities
9. Implementation plan
10. Monitoring and evaluation

The plan should not be understood as a linear process, but rather as an iterative process with constant reviews and re-planning based on new information and opportunities.



The Importance of Participation in Advocacy Planning and Implementation:

One key issue to consider in the early stages is the involvement of children in your advocacy activity:

- Will children and partners serve as informants or will they be involved in problem identification and planning?
- Will you empower children to advocate on their own, or will you advocate on behalf of them. Or a combination of both?

This decision affects the scope of your advocacy. Some actors use a narrow approach aiming at concrete changes, which mostly require policy and lobby-work.

Others work for the broader transformation of societies, where marginalized groups are empowered to claim and uphold their rights.

6. Your Focus: Select Problem and Issue

Child rights organizations often identify advocacy problems in the course of their program work. As the Fictitious example below demonstrates, however, there are always plenty of problems you can advocate around.

There is a need to narrow the focus on a specific problem.

Example: Everychild

A local child-rights based NGO – called Everychild – is engaged in work in a poverty-stricken, rapidly growing slum area on the outskirts of the capital of an African country. The organization has identified numerous child rights problems in the community.

- Only half of the children are in school – and many of them drop out.
- Among the children attending school, the majority are boys (70 percent).
- The quality and relevance of the education is poor.
- Schools are overcrowded and have poor facilities.
- Many children – whether attending school or not – work long hours in unsafe jobs.
- Many children live and work on the streets. Some of them have been orphaned by AIDS. They are the first to drop out of school and are subsequently harassed by the police.
- Some girls are involved in prostitution as a survival strategy.

The NGO has worked with service delivery – supporting education and services for street children, incl. prostitutes; however, they feel this work is a drop in the ocean and that there is need to rethink their work.

They want to engage in advocacy. Where should they start?

The array of interrelated problems makes selecting a specific problem difficult – and there is a natural tendency for program workers to attempt to cover as much as possible.

In prioritizing and selecting problems and issues, the following framework can be applied:

Problem Area	Comment
Relevance to your organization’s mission and strategies	
Relevance to your program work	
Is documentation and research available?	
Do you have a clear position and a positive alternative?	
Is there a chance for success?	
Relative importance for the children	
Assessment of sensitivity and risk factors	
Possibility of strategic alliances	
Strategic opportunities	
Do you have adequate resources and staff?	

7. Situation analysis

Having identified the problem, you must analyze it in greater detail. The nature and scope of the problem will determine how comprehensive your analysis needs to be. In the following three types of analysis that are useful for all advocacy cases are presented: problem and issue analysis, political analysis and internal analysis:

7.1 Problem and Issue analysis

A problem analysis serves to identify the causes and effects of your problem. For advocates, a problem is a negative situation affecting a specific group of children e.g. lack of education and health, poor social services, stigma and discrimination etc.

Each problem is made up of a variety of different issues which you must analyze in terms of cause and effect.

Example: poor education is a problem for children in many places throughout the world; however, the specific issues can differ e.g. access to schools, lack of teachers, tuition fees, poor quality etc.

The problem and issue analysis will help you acquire more in-depth knowledge of the problem and will assist the identification of the specific issues of the problem where your advocacy can effect actual change i.e. where you are able to suggest a realistic, achievable solution. A “good” advocacy issue is focused enough to be linked to a clear policy solution.

Problem analysis should ideally be conducted as a team effort involving staff, partners and children in order to ensure that all aspects of the problem are uncovered. A joint analysis will also establish broader ownership and consensus around the activity.

The analysis can be conducted in the form of a problem tree examining causes and effect.

7.2. Political analysis incl. power analysis

A critical element in advocacy is a thorough understanding of the political realities surrounding your advocacy issue. Policy making transpires in a dynamic web of interacting forces. It is important to identify the various factors that may affect policy decisions within your activity area as accurately as possible in order to enable the development of appropriate strategies. The analysis must include both the legislative, policy and practice environments.

Key elements of policy analysis:

Policy issues: policy issues may include the absence of policy, an inadequate policy or the improper enforcement of policy. It can also include societal norms and values affecting children (e.g. access to education for girls).

Key actors: who is the duty bearer? Who else has influence on the matter? Identify key actors and institutions that make decisions about policies, e.g. politicians, administrators, school committees, religious leaders etc. Identify those who can influence the policy makers.

The policy environment: how is your issue perceived by the power holders? Is it a priority or a neglected area? Is there a wide and public discussion on the subject or is it clouded in social taboos? Understand formal and informal policy-making processes and the social and political contexts.

Identify options for policy change and entry points: this will require the analysis of the political system (formal and informal) the policy-making process and its internal power dynamics. Are there any upcoming opportunities, such as key events, strategic alliances etc.?

Budget analysis: budgets are the most powerful policy produced by governments; budgets reveal the true priorities. Budget analysis can challenge corruption and imbalances. Many NGOs are presently developing their skills regarding policy and budget analysis.

Advocacy and Power

Defining and analyzing power is an integral part of advocacy. Poor analysis of power can lead to missed opportunities, poor strategic choices and risks. Power is dynamic and ever-changing. Many actors are constantly competing for power and space. You must analyze your own power base and stand up for it.

Political power does not always operate in visible ways.

Visible Power: i.e. the formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions and procedures, e.g. elections, laws and budgets.

Hidden power: certain powerful people control the agenda. These dynamics exclude less powerful groups.

Invisible power: this level of power shapes values and norms, and thereby also people’s beliefs and attitudes. Such power perpetuates patterns of domination and inferiority. This level is the most difficult to deal with on the grounds that social values are sensitive and personal.

The three different powers usually operate simultaneously. Different strategies are required for tackling the respective forms of power.

Example: Early marriage in rural Ethiopia

Power	Situation
Formal, visible Power	Legislation is in place – but not enforced due to inadequate capacity among social authorities.
Hidden Power	Social affairs have low priority in the power hierarchy in government.
Invisible Power	Social norms and expectations force parents to follow the tradition.

7.3. Internal analysis

This analysis examines your own organization in relation to the chosen problem and issue. This analysis is important on the grounds that advocacy is a political action that can cause both external and internal conflicts.

Important questions to ask are:

Do you have a position on this problem?

Do you have the capacity, experience, credibility etc. to become involved in the activity?

Do you have sufficient research/documentation to make your case?

Do you understand the policy environment you are working within?

What are your own potential weaknesses?

Do you have the adequate resources in terms of staff and financing?

What are the risk factors – and possible fall-back strategies?

8. Change Objectives

Having established a clear image of the problem, the issue you want to focus on, the political realities and your own situation, it is time to proceed to the setting of objectives. However, while it can be easy to spot the problem, it can be much more difficult to identify realistic and attainable solutions.

An advocacy action is not only against something. Advocacy is a positive action that must offer credible alternatives. Clear and achievable objectives are the basis for successful advocacy.

Child rights advocacy has often suffered from broad and unfocused objectives such as:

- Stopping child labor
- Making children's rights a reality for all children

Such objectives are long-term goals and excessively broad and unmanageable for an advocacy activity. They must be broken into smaller, realistic parts – while continuing to contribute to the broader goal.

It is a good idea to develop short-term (e.g. 2 years), medium-term (5 years) and long-term goals (10 years). While your action plan will focus on the short term, your medium- and long-term objectives will help you evaluate your progress and re-strategize as necessary.

When developing objectives, you ought to assess them in relation to the following criteria:

Is the objective:

- Specific, focused and narrow? Is it precise or subject to interpretation?

- Is it achievable and attainable within your timeframe and within your resources?
- Can you mobilize support and form alliances for this objective?

Selecting the problem and developing objectives represents **the most challenging part** of the advocacy process. But a well-defined problem and clear and articulated objectives are fundamental elements in a focused advocacy campaign.

9. Targets for Advocacy

Identifying the right target for advocacy is of key importance.

Duty bearers are the targets for advocacy because they represent institutionalized power and the authority to make positive changes for children. The target is the person possessing the power to respond to your demand and move the political process in relation to your issue.

The state is the primary duty bearer according to the CRC, and there is a hierarchy of state duty bearers from the national to local levels, including the political and administrative system. Government is probably the most common target for child rights advocacy work, but “government” is too broad a concept to work around – and must be broken down into specific entities.

Many other groups in society are duty bearers, sometimes referred to as secondary duty bearers. They are international bodies, donors, private businesses, NGOs, community organizations etc. They are found at different levels in society, from the global to the local.

Duty bearers can be formal organizations (e.g. local councils, school committees) and informal institutions (e.g. religious leaders, community based groups).

Advocacy concerning policies and implementation will normally be targeted against governmental bodies and administrative bodies, whereas advocacy targeting practices that are harmful for children (e.g. circumcision, early marriage etc.) will often be directed at informal leaders (e.g. religious leaders, school committees). Individual parents are normally not targets for advocacy – but groups of parents, e.g. a school committee, can be a target.

Advocacy is not *normally* targeted at individuals, since the goal is institutional improvements for children. However, individuals can play a positive role in facilitating such change, i.e. as so-called “influentials”. There can also be exceptional cases, such as a campaign to end circumcision. As part of this, individual practitioners could be approached and persuaded to bring the practice to an end, thereby serving as a role model. Such efforts will always be supplemented with activities targeting broader groups.

There is a need to identify all of the relevant stakeholders through a mapping process identifying not only the stakeholders but also the links, power dynamics and relationships between them.

Some of the terms used in target analysis are:

Targets	The key individuals who are in a position to bring about the change you want.
Stakeholders	Everybody who can affect or will be affected by the proposed activity.
Influentials	Those with some influence over your target – and can use this influence for or against your case.

All of the above can be further broken down into the following:

Supporters	Those in favor of your issue; you must plan how to get the best out of this support.
Opponents	It is important to understand the background for their opposition in order to convince them or at least “neutralize” them.
Neutral	Sometimes it is better to invest your time and energy in the neutrals – and win them to your side – rather than working on the opponents.

10. Positions and Key Messages

It is a good idea to develop a 1-2 page position paper presenting all of the relevant aspects of the issue based on your knowledge of the problem, the issue you have decided to focus on, your objectives and the targets.

The document ought to include the background, statement of the problem, documentation, examples and the action, e.g. the positive solutions you desire.

You can circulate this document among partners and colleagues for inputs and sign off. The position paper can serve as the background document for a number of presentations during the advocacy action, such as:

- Speeches or talking points
- Press releases
- Interviews
- Advertisements

Clear positions are the basis for effective advocacy. This may sound simple but can in practice be difficult – especially when working in networks. Partners may agree on the problem and objective – but disagree on how to reach to solutions.

Example: SC-partners in Uganda – sexual abuse

In Uganda, SC has been supporting three partners in a joint program working with child abuse issues, incl. sexual abuse. The sexual abuse of minors by adults is a serious problem in Uganda – and a controversial law has made sex with children a capital offence.

However, this law has had a number of unintended consequences, one of which being that a number of teenage boys have been jailed for engaging in consensual sex with their girl friends. The partners agree about the problem but have not been able to reach agreement on the right policy solution.

Messages:

Concise and consistent messages are critical for advocacy. Child rights advocates should always be able to summarize and present their advocacy messages in 3-4 sharp sentences.

The one-minute message:

Some agencies use the term “the one-minute message”, hinting at a situation where you have very limited time to present your case (e.g. in chance meetings, in the elevator, in tv-spots etc.).

The one-minute message consists of: statement + evidence + example + action desired

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

Developing a 1-minute message is a good (and enjoyable) test, which you can e.g. test together with your colleagues and partners.

11. Strategic choices and activity planning

You must make a number of overall strategic choices before proceeding to the design of your campaign. Some of them are listed below:

Framework for strategic choices:

1. How will you involve children and partners?
2. What level will you be working on: local, regional, national or global?
3. If you work on more than one level – how will you make linkages?
4. What will be your approach: aggressive or co-operative?
5. Will you work alone – or in networks? Can you build strategic alliances?
6. Consider various scenarios and risks – and possible fall back strategies

Different advocacy actions require different strategies. If you are up against strong political resistance, you may use a confrontational and public approach. Where you have some level of political support, you may use a more cooperative and discreet approach.

Activity Planning

Having made the strategic choices, the next step is to define the activities. The right combination of activities with the right frequency and timing is important. In the following, a framework of six categories of activities is mentioned to assist you in making your advocacy plan.

Framework for activity choices

- Preparatory activities
- Empower your target group
- Build wider support for your case
- Build strategic support for your case
- Getting your issue on the agenda
- Follow up

In the following, each of the six activity areas is presented in greater detail. Whatever activity you choose, it is important to ensure that they all work towards your change objective – and are not seen in isolation.

11.1 Preparatory Activities

This is where you lay the ground for your advocacy work. Preparatory activities will often consist of:

- Research, analysis, documentation: to build a strong case based on solid data.
- Working with children: to get qualitative information on how problems are experienced by children and parents through focus group discussions, interviews, participatory exercises etc.
- Pilot projects: examples of good practice can be powerful advocacy tools.
- Capacity support to partners: to develop advocacy skills.

11.2 Empower children to become involved in advocacy

Children can be strong advocates and they often make a deep impression when addressing a target or an audience. Involving children and their parents can be a learning and empowering process (see more about children and advocacy under section 16).

11.3 Build wider support for your case

If your issue is little known or culturally sensitive, you may want to build wider support for your case. This can be in the form of media activities, public meetings, demonstrations and events, advertisements and awareness-raising activities in the relevant forums.

Using “ambassadors” (musicians, sports people etc.) can be a very useful strategy. You may also want to work with other civil society groups to ensure that they support your case.

11.4 Build strategic support for your case

To move your case forward, you must secure strategic support. This can be through the sensitization of key stakeholders e.g. civil servants who are key to your policy issue, establishing and maintaining contacts with “child friendly” politicians (see example below), building coalitions with like-minded organizations, nurturing contacts with media-people sympathetic to your case etc.

Parliamentary forum for children:

Save the Children Uganda has facilitated the formation of a network of parliamentarians who have displayed interest in children’s issues. SC arranges regular meetings with the group, where they are kept updated on key concerns for children so that the parliamentarians can push for these issues in their work.

11.5 Getting your Issue on the Agenda

There are a number of techniques for getting your issue on the agenda. Personal cases always come out strong in the media. You can mark events such as “Day of the African Child” or create your own events where you present new research, hold a conference, offer a child rights prize or award etc.

It is important to profit from external opportunities such as elections, high level conferences, existing media interest in an issue etc.

Letter writing, public advertisements, court cases etc. are other public techniques for getting your issue on the agenda that could be followed by quiet lobby work.

The important thing is to use different techniques, as shown by the following example:

Example from Senegal:

Incidents of domestic violence, rape and incest were widespread in Senegal, but a “culture of silence” kept these issues out of the public domain.

A local NGO, *Aprofes*, played a pioneering role in putting the issue on the public agenda. The organization used different strategies:

- They used high-profile court cases following rape and murder to get their issue on the agenda and mobilize public outrage, i.e. building wider support.
- They collected evidence and documentation to support their case.
- They made alliances with national level NGOs and coalitions to secure technical knowledge and wider support.
- They carefully nurtured alliances with religious, economic and political leaders.

This work sparked a national debate and ultimately led to the formation of a national network to work on gender violence. This coalition later secured the passage of a law criminalizing violence against women.

11.6 Follow up

This is often the most important aspect of your advocacy plan: the long and steady follow up to ensure that your case moves forward – or does not slip backwards. Many advocacy drives take several years.

This ought to happen through regular contacts with key stakeholders, e.g. letters, meetings, media work etc. It is important to celebrate even small successes as you go in order to keep up the spirit.

12. Develop Project Document and Implementation Plan

All of the above elements ought to be put together and condensed in a project document consisting of:

Background, problem analysis, changed objectives, sub-objectives or outputs focusing on specific aspects of the work, targets, key messages, strategic choices and activities.

The project document ought to have an implementation plan that is your tool for detailed planning. It should show all of the activities according to sub-objectives or outputs and include the following elements:

- Timeline
- Person responsible
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Management

The latter point is important on the grounds that advocacy proceeds in an uncontrollable environment. This calls for strong leadership, clear lines of authority and possibilities for quick decision making.

13. Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring of advocacy is essential for management, accountability and learning.

There are many similarities between the monitoring of advocacy and other program activities:

You can use many of the same techniques. If the objectives are clear and specific, monitoring becomes easier. Good knowledge about the issue aids the development of good indicators.

However there are also a number of differences:

Advocacy is often very long term and success may be the result of actions of many actors. It takes place in a dynamic and rapidly changing environment. You must examine both the impact and process, i.e.:

Impact: what has changed as a result of our work in terms of policy change and implementation?

Processes: what processes led to this change? Improved attitudes, better understanding of CRC, children empowered, increased space for civil society to act?

A Model for Change:

The monitoring of advocacy requires you to be clear on factors promoting change for children. Many organizations have developed their own “change models”.

Example:

Build Awareness – empower children and partners to speak – increased debate – policy change – better living conditions for children.

The purpose of the model is to make explicit what steps (process) are necessary to promote change.

Monitoring Frameworks:

Save the Children Denmark uses the following child rights monitoring framework⁴ in programs.

1. Changes in policies and practices affecting the rights of children and young people.
2. Changes in equity and the discrimination of children and young people.
3. Changes in societal values and attitudes towards children, incl. their participation.
4. Changes in civil society and communities’ capacity to support children’s rights.

⁴ The Model is adapted from the so-called GIM-framework, developed by SC-UK.

These change dimensions can be used as inspiration when developing your monitoring framework. It must be based on the relevant context and adapted to your case.

Example:

Dimension	Impact e.g. changes in the lives of children and young people	Process e.g. which processes led to this change
1. Changes in policies and practices affecting the rights of children and young people		
2. Changes in equity and the discrimination of children and young people		
3. Changes in societal values and attitudes towards children, incl. their participation.		
4. Changes in civil society and the capacity of communities to fight for and support children's rights.		

NB: The first three dimensions reflect the different types of power: visible power, hidden power and invisible power.

The Advocacy Action and Impact Chart

You may also find inspiration in the following model:⁵

Arena	Impact	Process
1. State and government sector		
2. Private sector		
3. Civil society		
4. Political space and culture		
5. Individual		

A Log of Activities:

An advocacy activity will typically consist of a range of different activities – big and small – e.g. meetings, lobby, media work, telephone discussions etc.

A simple but effective means of monitoring is to maintain a log that is continually updated by everyone involved in the activity.

The log can be expanded by collecting quotes from key people, important documents, sequences of events, stories, cases etc. The log can easily be shared with colleagues.

Lisa Veneklasen with Valerie Miller: A new weave of power, people and politics, the action guide for advocacy and citizen participation.

Example: advocacy in relation to conflict in Northern Uganda:

Activity	Date	Responsible	Comment
Letter sent to Foreign Minister to push for Security Council engagement in the conflict	1.07.04	Bl and NH	If no reply, follow-up letter to be sent by 31.07.04
Reply from FM received. States that: Denmark will work actively for Security Council engagement	1.07.04	BL	This letter must be quoted in all follow-up action with the Ministry
Article in Information (newspaper). LS quoted on the role of Denmark in the Security Council	5.08.04	IS	The article is filed in BLs office

PART 3: ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF ADVOCACY

14. Organizational implications of advocacy

Advocacy is not just another tool in the programming tool box. Involvement in advocacy has numerous implications for the organization at different levels.

At the strategic level:

- It requires a shift from short-term project planning cycles of 2-3 years to long-term strategic thinking.
- It requires the development of a long-term political vision and elaboration of medium-term objectives for change to guide your program and advocacy work across the organization.
- It requires new strategies, relationships, competencies and structures.

At the program level:

- Advocacy based on field experience requires joint planning and the coordination of various intervention approaches (e.g. direct services, capacity building and advocacy) to secure synergy and impact.⁶
- Program data (research, monitoring etc.) must also provide inputs for advocacy.
- Advocacy must be planned and coordinated, both vertically i.e. from the local up to the international level, and across the organization for maximum impact. The SC-Alliance has advocacy offices in New York, Brussels and Geneva.

At the organizational level:

- Advocacy requires joint action in networks, task groups etc. Organizational flexibility and relationship competencies are required.
- Advocacy can lead to risk, meaning that advocacy campaigns require top-level management support.
- Advocacy must have committed staff (i.e. not just the responsibility of everyone), and there must be strong links between advocacy, program and information staff.

⁶ Service delivery provides knowledge about children's lives i.e. evidence and legitimacy for advocacy, capacity building supports partners in engaging in advocacy and advocacy provides new insights into political processes that inform our work in service delivery and capacity support.

15. Credibility for Advocacy

Advocacy may take place on hostile territory and your legitimacy, credibility and accountability may be questioned. These terms are briefly described below:

Legitimacy	The lawfulness of NGOs – which gives them a right to operate and a voice according to their organizational mandate. For child rights NGOs, this legitimacy stems internationally from the CRC convention and nationally from your being in accordance with national legislation.
Credibility	The trust and good reputation that some NGOs command – and which gives weight to their voice.
Accountability	This relates to internal mechanisms by which NGOs provide accountability to stakeholders. This is about keeping your own house in order in terms of democracy, transparency etc.

It is important that NGOs who become involved in advocacy are able to explain why they are legitimate actors.

They must know whom they are representing and how they provide accountability to these groups. Working with partners and target groups in advocacy is important.

NGOs must also regularly evaluate and possibly improve their credibility and accountability as advocates. Sources of credibility and accountability include:

- The level of support from the public (donations, memberships etc)
- Quality performance
- Relationships, knowledge and expertise
- A strong values base and consistency between words and action
- Openness and transparency
- Democratic governance structures
- Responsiveness, i.e. systems for information and feedback, regular consultations with target groups etc.

Advocacy in a politically tense situation

Some NGOs shy away from advocacy in politically tense situations.

Risk reduction strategies include:

- using a cooperative approach and keeping authorities well informed;
- working through networks and coalitions; and
- being “technical” in your approach, i.e. speak about the needs of children rather than the neglect of government.

16. Children and Advocacy

The active participation of girls and boys and their right to be heard and have influence on the decisions affecting them are fundamental Save the Children principles. This also applies to advocacy. It is therefore crucial to involve children in various stages of the advocacy process to secure that:

- Our advocacy is based on real needs felt by children and not perceived needs
- Credibility, because we are truly representing children and being accountable

Girls and boys can raise their voices and bring about positive changes in their own lives, as well as in local and national communities. They can challenge discrimination, inequality, abuse and exploitation. Children can provide powerful testimonies.

However, the role played by children in advocacy raises ethical questions on many levels:

- Have they truly identified the objectives for change that they are pursuing, or are they being used for tokenism or manipulation?
- Advocacy is political action challenging power relations. It entails risks for those involved. Children must be thoroughly informed about – and protected against – the risks of advocacy.

Children's participation in advocacy requires the same solid preparatory work and follow-up as all other types of children's participation. There have been numerous examples of poorly planned and tokenistic involvement of children in the past. There is a particular need to assess the potential risks for children involved in advocacy.

Save the Children has developed the *Practice Standards on Children's Participation* (see literature lists) highlighting seven key areas:

Standard 1: an ethical approach: transparency, honesty and accountability
 Standard 2: children's participation is relevant and voluntary
 Standard 3: a child-friendly, enabling environment
 Standard 4: equal opportunity
 Standard 5: staff are effective and confident
 Standard 6: participation promotes the safety and protection of children
 Standard 7: ensuring follow-up and evaluation

Before involving them, children ought to reflect on what advocacy means and develop a clear definition. 'Advocacy' is not a child-friendly word, and it does not translate easily into every language. It is therefore important that children fully understand the meaning of the word.

Advocacy, however, is hardly new for children. Many children have experience with speaking out, involvement in campaigns and taking action on issues of importance to them. Building on and adding to existing structures, such as children's clubs, child parliaments etc. are good strategies.

Advocacy work with children can assume many forms. They can be broadly grouped under the following two categories:

National or regional activities:

These typically include children's conferences, exhibitions with children's drawings, poems and photos, public events, children's testimonies, meetings with duty bearers, letter writing and children's media activities. Such events can be very powerful. In most cases they are initiated by adults.

Local activities:

There are many examples of children organized in clubs and youth organizations who have successfully conducted advocacy related to problems in their respective communities e.g. early marriage, child abuse, access to schooling etc. Children can be facilitated by adults to develop and implement their own advocacy plan at the local level.

Advocacy by working children

BITA, a child-focused NGO in Bangladesh, facilitated the involvement of a group of street children working in a city marketplace in advocacy. The street children had identified the following problems that affected their work: lack of mobility in the market, distrust from customers, harassment from security guards and their own weak position, because they were not organized.

The positive solution they identified was to have ID cards.

BITA supported the children to interact with the market committee (identified as the duty bearer) and convince them of the benefits of the ID card for children, stall holders and customers. The children were successful in their advocacy – and the ID card has improved their situation.

Children, adults or both?

While there are examples of successful advocacy initiated and led by children, such as the working children's movement, advocacy for and with children usually proceeds in cooperation between children and adults.

Adults play an important role in facilitating children, including securing the space and preparing other adults to listen. When planning advocacy with children, it is a good idea to analyze how children and adults can complement one another optimally. Advocacy *by* children and advocacy *for* children should not be seen as mutually exclusive processes; rather, they reinforce and complement one another.

Planning and implementation:

You can use the actions and techniques described in this document to facilitate advocacy work involving children. There is also a wide body of literature regarding child participation that can guide you.

A recent document is: So you want to consult with children – A toolkit of good practice (see literature list).

This manual published by Save the Children elaborates on the involvement of children in consultations, meetings and delegations. It elaborates on the role of adults to create an enabling environment, ensuring that children are safe and protected and that there is quality follow-up.

17. Working in networks and alliances

Advocacy is about addition. Successful advocacy in major policy issues requires collaboration (and sometimes competition) with others. The diversity that networks, alliances and coalitions bring with them also adds strength to the work. They also broaden and deepen skills, knowledge and expertise.

Child rights advocates must cooperate with other child rights actors as well as together with actors with a broader development agenda to influence their agenda. Working with unlikely partners can occasionally be a successful strategy.

Collaboration assumes many forms and can be formal and informal, temporary or permanent. Many terms are used, such as alliances, coalitions and networks. While such distinctions are fluid, some form of categorization can be helpful.

Style	Characteristics
Networks	Emphasis is mostly on the exchange of information and less on joint work. Networks are often informal or with a limited structure.
Coalitions	Often have a more formalized structure and involve joint work, often among fairly diverse civil society organizations around a single event, issue or campaign. Different organizations divide the tasks in the most appropriate manner.
Alliances	Long-term agreement on common ideals among trusted partners. Strategies and plans may be jointly developed and implemented.

What are the benefits of collaboration?

There are a number of benefits:

Stronger voice, wider scope, broader access to information and learning, comparative advantages, increased credibility, more routes of influence and safety in numbers (spreads risks related to advocacy).

What are the challenges of collaboration?

Many NGOs have a tradition for working independently, and NGO-staff often express frustrations with collaboration. The disadvantages are that it is time consuming; some participants do not contribute evenly to the work; a loss of identity can result; messages can become diluted; response slow; and flexibility less.

Working in networks – how to get the best out of it

First of all, NGOs must carefully decide whether they want to collaborate with others or work alone. Key questions to ask are:

- Is the issue a priority for the organization? Will joining a coalition further assist the agenda of the organization?
- Do the benefits of joining the coalition outweigh the disadvantages?
- What compromises may we need to make?
- Do we have the organizational capacity and resources to commit – or will the coalition drain our resources?

Ground rules:

When a decision to collaborate has been made, there are a number of ground rules that can facilitate it.

Networking works best when participants are clear about what they want – and prepared to invest resources in it.

Positive actions to avoid problems could be to develop a number of basic and simple rules or structures for collaboration that can help manage tensions or differences. These can be expressed in a *Terms of Reference* or a *Memorandum of Understanding*.

Important points to include:

- **Mandate:** decide what the coalition will and will not do.
- **Membership:** who can join?
- **Participation:** how are participants expected to participate? Equally or according to capacity?
- **Leadership:** how and when are leaders chosen?
- **Management:** decide rules for decision making and conflict management. Agree on when members act as a group and when can they act alone. Decide on systems for communication and information sharing. Monitor progress regularly.

Investment in team building represents another useful strategy.

Key principles for cooperation can also be expressed this way:

- Decide what you want do to
- Secure good leadership

- Identify partners
- Agree on core principles
- Formalize the relationship
- Set objectives

Thinking strategically about working with other organizations helps you move from coping with other organizations to using them to your advantage. *Mapping* can help you see the wider picture of actors within your issue.

PART 4: LIST OF RESOURCES

There are a number of books, manuals, guidelines, training opportunities etc. on the market about advocacy. An Internet search can provide many hits. The following resources are materials that I have used and can recommend.

Manuals:

Lisa Veneklasen with Valerie Miller (2002): *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics – The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation*, World Neighbors.

David Cohen, Rosa de la Vega, Gabrielle Watson (2001): *Advocacy for Social Justice, A Global Action and Reflection Guide*, Kumarian Press.

Particularly on Children's rights:

The NGO-Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child: *A Guide for Non-Governmental Organizations Reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child*.

The NGO-Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child *Networking for Children's Rights – a Guide for NGOs – NGO Group*.

Find these and other resources on <http://www.crin.org/NGOGroupforCRC/>

Save the Children, Sweden (2005): *Working for Child Rights from a Budget Perspective. Studies and experiences from a number of countries*.

Save the Children Alliance, 2003: *Practice standards in Children's Participation*

Save the Children Alliance, 2003: *So you want to consult with children? A toolkit of good practice*.

Broader issues related to advocacy and development:

Oxfam, 2001, Deborah Eade (eds): *Development and advocacy. Development in Practice Readers*

Training opportunities:

Intrac, the NGO resource centre in Oxford regularly holds trainings in advocacy. Check the program on this address: <http://www.intrac.org/pages/training.html>

HREA, Human Rights Education Association, conducts regular on-line based advocacy courses. Check the program on this address: <http://www.hrea.org/learn/index.html>