



CHILD ADVOCATES SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO STAND UP FOR THEIR RIGHTS!

**A paper for adult facilitators
of children and youth organizations**



Plan

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1. INTRODUCTION

What are these guidelines for?

This paper discusses the role of children advocating for their rights and in their own best interest. It aims to encourage adults to consider and better understand children and youth as political beings with the capacity and will to influence decision-making and action that influences their lives. Thus, it hopes to motivate children and adults to work together in child rights advocacy in order to ensure that advocacy initiatives are conducted in the child's best interest: respecting and fulfilling children's rights for protection, participation, development and survival.

Who should read this paper?

This paper is designed for all those who work with children and youth groups and support them in the development of their capacities and as advocates for their own rights and in their best interest. Its primary audiences are:

- **adult facilitators of children and youth organizations** who want to learn more about children as advocates and who would like to understand how to become better partners, supporters and protectors of children and youth organizations and their advocacy efforts
- **NGOs and CSOs** interested in understanding the implications of entering into partnerships with children and youth organizations and supporting them with their advocacy efforts
- **children and youth organizations** who are interested in learning more about advocacy and would like to get practical guidance and ideas about how to organize their own advocacy efforts and make their voices heard more widely

2. WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

In principle, the term advocacy refers to activities defending or supporting a cause or idea. There are many different definitions of advocacy which emerged over time, however, ranging from a narrow vision of advocacy as "initiatives that aim at influencing policy and political agenda" to a more inclusive one that sees advocacy as "a means to empower poor people to advocate for their rights and interests themselves". While definitions differ, there are some key elements involved in advocacy:

The interest of children in advocacy and their success will largely depend on how they relate to an issue and their prospect of succeeding with it. Children can be easily discouraged, especially if adults' opinions on their capacity to take decisions or to act in their own interest does not concur with their own.

What is involved in child centred advocacy?

- asking why? Until you get to the root of the problem
- enabling children to access power and ensuring power of adults and other children is used in their best interest
- education of children and youth as well as adults - those with more and less power
- seeking justice for those who are oppressed or treated unfairly - children or adults
- bringing change for children, through changing their personal situation and through changing systems, structures and policies
- being a voice for child rights and helping children to find their own voice

Adapted from: Tearfund Roots Resources (2002) :
Advocacy Toolkit - Understanding Advocacy

A broader definition of advocacy, which includes the direct sphere of influence of children - family, friends and school - rather than the national political level, is therefore more useful when working with young citizens.

For the purpose of this short paper, our definition of advocacy is child centred: "child centred advocacy" refers to coordinated efforts to change ideas, values, practices and policies that perpetuate inequality, prejudice, and exclusion of children. It strengthens children's capacities to negotiate in their best interest, to take decisions, and to organize in accountable, equitable organizations.

Any child or children and youth group aiming at carrying out advocacy should reflect upon what the term "advocacy" means to them and develop a clear concept of it before they start. Be conscious that the word advocacy does not translate into every language. This is why it is even more important that children fully shape and discover the meaning of the word for themselves.

3. WHY SHOULD CHILDREN PARTICIPATE IN ADVOCACY?

Children contribute on a daily basis to their own lives and development. Even at a young age, many children are already responsible for contributing to or earning the family income or for taking care of siblings or the elderly. Children have their own distinctive views of what is good or bad for them. It seems to be only natural that children should therefore also participate in or lead advocacy efforts for their own rights.

However, there are many obstacles in the way of children who want to engage in advocacy, many of which are related to **the perceptions of adults**: there might be strong cultural barriers that hinder children from participating freely or to even voicing their opinions. Because children are generally not allowed to vote (except in those countries where the right to vote is given before the age of 18 years) or to be elected, many adults don't consider children political beings. Advocacy, however, is a political act. The risks that advocacy can create for children is another important element that influences adults' perception of children as advocates.

Children themselves might have a biased view of themselves as advocates: they might consider advocacy "politics" and "politics as boring and uninteresting" as a 2004 UK - based email survey of youth found out. Others might not be interested in advocacy, if they fear that their initiatives will not have the desired impact and their feelings of powerlessness block their desire to engage. In addition, especially in countries with oppressive regimes, there might be those who (mostly rightly) fear the consequences of speaking up for their rights and challenging prevailing power relations.

Finally, and despite the fact that children use their resourcefulness to modify adult imposed boundaries to render them more acceptable and that they contribute to social and economic strength of the family¹, there are simply not many opportunities for children to engage in advocacy as adults often show a lack of awareness or interest in talking to children and youth about certain topics or in supporting activities that might challenge their own power.

The Convention of the Rights of the Child constitutes a clear framework for children as advocates. It balances the concept of a child as the owner of rights whose evolving capacities must be respected with the concept of the State's obligation to provide special protection². Children's rights are, like human rights, indivisible, interdependent, universal and inalienable - however, for the purpose of understanding children's potential role as advocates it is useful to have a special look at Children's Civil Rights and Freedoms.

Children's civil rights and freedoms:

- children's rights for name and nationality (Art. 7) - ensuring that children can acquire citizenship and the opportunity later on to fully exercise civic rights
- freedom of expression (Art. 13) - ensuring that children can freely express their opinions and seek, receive and share information and ideas
- freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Art. 14) - looking at the child's rights to have their own thoughts, opinions and views, as well as a religion and to manifest religious beliefs
- freedom of association and peaceful assembly (Art. 15) - ensuring that children can meet in public, create and join associations, and that children's associations are informed about the role that they play in promoting children's rights
- protection of privacy (Art. 16) - ensuring that there is no arbitrary or unlawful interference with the child's privacy, family, home or correspondence or any attack on his or her honour or reputation
- the right for access to appropriate information (Art. 17) - making sure that children have access from a diversity of national and international sources to information in a language they understand
- the right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment - protecting children from punishment or mistreatment on account of their thoughts, conscience, religion, social status, etc

It is also important to understand the **four general principles of the Convention of the Rights of the child**:

- **respect for the views of the child (Art. 12)** - urging state parties to ensure that there are measures to ensure that children can express their views in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities in family and school life, juvenile justice, etc., as well as to ensure that the views of children are included in legal provisions, policy and judicial decisions.
- **the child's best interest (Art. 3)** - ensuring that in all actions concerning children their best interest is a primary consideration; that children are adequately protected in actions taken by them or by adults in their favour and that adults working for the care or protection of children are competent, especially in the areas of safety and health.

1 - Save the Children/Unicef: Innocenti Insight: The Evolving Capacities of the Child (2005)

2 - UNICEF (1998): Implementation Handbook for the Convention of the Rights of the Child

- **non-Discrimination (Art. 2)** - demanding that no child is discriminated against due to his or her race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status of the child, his/her parents or guardians
- **the right to life, survival and development** - ensuring that children survive, protecting them from any form of violence, abuse or neglect and that they grow up in an environment that ensures their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, psychological and social development and prepares them for an individual life in a free society.

Clearly, it is the children's right to participate in and carry out advocacy. But there are other reasons why children should be supported with their advocacy efforts:

- children have a good understanding of their own situation. Their advocacy efforts can ensure that legal framework and policies respond to their needs and rights
- participation in advocacy is an excellent preparation for a future full citizenship; it prepares the adults of tomorrow with a sense of justice, social responsibility and leadership competences
- it helps children to live up to their full potential and develop essential life skills - problem analysis, decision-making, negotiation and communication, working in groups
- it increases children's self-confidence and adult respect for children's capacities

It should not be necessary to say that this can only be achieved if advocacy with children is well planned, the risks for children are well assessed and managed and adult supporters work with them in a facilitative, rather than manipulative manner.

What needs to be done to advocate with children?

Important activities for advocating with children are:

- capacity building - to make sure that children and youth can advocate for themselves and that adults supporting them know how best to do this; support children to organize in equitable and accountable organizations
- networking - working with others: children, youth, adults, both individual as well as their organizations
- research - finding out as much as possible about the issue and the reasons involved
- understanding risks - to make sure that child advocates are protected and can protect themselves

Some things to know before starting advocacy with children:

- understanding the difference between child participation and child advocacy
- understanding children as young citizens with evolving capacities
- understanding what children need to be able to conduct advocacy
- knowing the Convention of the Rights of the Child and its implementing mechanisms
- knowing other relevant conventions as well as having a solid understanding of local legal framework

4. CHILD PARTICIPATION - CHILD ADVOCACY

Not all child participation is child advocacy, even though every well managed child participation will increase children's capacity to stand up for their rights, that is to understand the social, political and cultural factors that shape their lives, to analyse them and to propose solutions to their problems. While the definition of Child Centred Advocacy used in this paper will be of general help to draw the line between child participation and child-led advocacy, it is important to highlight the characteristics of child-led advocacy more clearly:

Child-led advocacy are efforts:

- in which children have a clear understanding and have shaped their own definition of advocacy
- in which children have analysed the political dimension of their problems (political in its wider sense as informal and formal politics)
- in which children have analysed existing power relations and understood their own power position in its different dimensions
- in which children discuss and shape their own understanding of democracy, citizenship, social justice and rights and duties
- which have clear advocacy objectives and a child-led plan how to address these
- which help children to organize in equitable organizations to address social injustice and exclusion

This is a lot to ask, especially in the initial stages where children - and often their adult facilitators too - get familiar with the process of advocacy. The above elements should thus be considered rather an objective and ideal to work towards.

5. YOUNG CITIZENS - EVOLVING CAPACITIES

The young do not simply absorb adult ideas but are social agents in their own right
CCF (2003): Children and Poverty - Shaping a Response to Poverty

There is a widespread tendency to assume that adults are competent and, conversely, that children are lacking in competence. This overall assumption frequently blinds adults to the realities of what children are capable of understanding and achieving.

Save the Children/Unicef (2005): The Evolving Capacities of the Child

Childhood is a very diverse phase of life. **Children are in a process of continuous development** and - with the right support - have the opportunity to develop to their full potential, that is having acquired the necessary competence to fully participate in family and society, take decisions and take part in decision-making processes that concern their well being. However, the support that children receive varies largely depending on their family and community environment, the emotional, social, cultural, economic and political factors that shape these, as well as their personal agency³. Children's development is not a linear process and former theories about it being a biological, universal process with universal goals have lately been challenged by theories attributing greater importance to the cultural factors influencing it. Today child development theory does no longer see adulthood as establishing the norms for children's development level. Instead, it is understood that physical and social settings such as family and the way children's daily lives are organized as well as traditional and child-rearing practices including attitude to play, training and discipline largely influence the way that children develop. Finally, parents' beliefs and personal goals for their children's development play an important part too⁴. Adult facilitators of child participatory and especially advocacy processes should be well aware of these factors and question their own attitudes and conception of childhood when working with children.

Still, **age** is another important factor to consider when working with children. It is important though to understand the limits of age categorisation⁵: a 5-year-old growing up in rural Africa will generally be equipped with a completely different set of skills and knowledge than a 5-year-old in Europe or North America. Children's personal experiences influence their capacities to make informed choices and like adults, children will demonstrate different levels of competence in different contexts. Children's communication skills for example differ when interacting with peers or with adults such as teachers or whether they are at home or at school. Understanding the concept of children's evolving capacities is essential for everybody who wants to truly engage in advocacy activities involving or led by children.

Clearly, however, it will be much more difficult to engage very young and young children in advocacy work as many of the capacities essential for carrying out advocacy are still under-developed: problem analysis, self-awareness, conflict resolution, communication, etc. While it is important to ensure that the views of younger children are also included when advocating for them, care needs to be taken to ensure that children participating and carrying out advocacy have developed the necessary skills or are able to master them during the advocacy process or campaign.

Perceptions of childhood differ largely from society to society. In some societies (mostly in the south) it is expected that children develop a strong sense of responsibility and obligation towards family and community. Through fulfilling their duties children develop into adults and become accepted members of society⁶. In others, mostly northern, personal autonomy, competitiveness and self-sufficiency are valued qualities in children, and families and public education systems aim to prepare children for autonomous adulthood. These social expectations influence children as well as adults and impact their ability and willingness to engage in advocacy and to act as change agents.

Children are not a homogenous group, but adults often forget this, especially when they are together in groups or at school level. School and other uniforms (such as scouts) make it easy to believe that all the children in a group are the same. However, there are social injustices among children and many children suffer from social and economic differences and the discrimination associated with them. Special attention needs to be given to gender discrimination which might limit girls' opportunities and ability to take part and organize advocacy. Social power is one of the most prominent forces of difference within childhood⁷, leaving many children marked for life.

The process of transferring the exercise of rights to children involves recognition of their emerging autonomy. The concept of autonomy is fundamental to and highly valued within democratic traditions, and enshrined in those civil and political rights that protect individual liberties by the State.

3 - Much can be learnt from gender advocacy approaches for this purpose
 4 - Save the Children/Unicef: Innocenti insight: the evolving capacities of the child
 5 - Please see appendix 1: Children's ages and implications for advocacy

6 and 7 - Christian Children's Fund (2003): Children and Poverty - Shaping a Response to Poverty

6. CAPACITY BUILDING OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

6.1. Education for citizenship and democracy

The teaching of citizenship and democracy is so important both for schools and the life of the nation that there should be a statutory requirement on schools to ensure that it is part of the entitlement of all pupils.

The Final Report of the UK Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in School (1998).

Ideally, there should be a continuum of education that prepares children for citizenship: from early education at family level that provides children with the concepts of justice and fairness at family level, and the experience to participate in an equitable manner in family life, to civic education in schools where pupils are active participants in school governance. But the reality of most children's lives is far from this ideal, especially in the south, and more so in countries with challenged democracies. Parents who have experienced oppression are less likely to educate their children in a participatory manner or to allow them to freely voice their opinion, especially if there are cultural values that expect children not to be heard. Education systems often mirror the governing political system and do not invite children to participate in school governance. On the contrary, for many children, school is a place where they experience oppression, degradation and violence. Even where the teaching of citizenship and democracy have made it into the school curriculum, the content remains abstract and is not supported by the concrete experience needed to build children's political consciousness⁸.

The Final Report of the UK advisory group on education for citizenship and teaching of democracy in School asks that "The statutory order setting up the entitlement should declare citizenship teaching to be: the knowledge, skills and values relevant to the nature and practices of participative democracy; the duties, responsibilities, rights and development of pupils into citizens; and the value to individuals, schools and society of involvement in the local and wider community ... both national and local, and an awareness of world affairs and global issues, and of the economic realities of adult life."

Clearly, schools need to go beyond teaching the basics of existing political systems. They need to create space for children to:

- understand their rights and responsibilities
- understand issues such as discrimination and power imbalances
- experience democracy
- become makers and shapers of their education institution
- develop the skills necessary to stand up for their rights

6.2. Life skills training

Effective advocacy requires a wide range of skills, whether carried out by children or adults:

Self-awareness: to make you understand your own position of power, so that you are aware of the way you interact with others and understand the social, cultural and political factors that influence your opinions

Problem analysis: ensuring that you get to the root of the problem and understand the factors contributing to the problem and their consequences

decision-making: gain the confidence to make a choice based on the analysis of information available and the potential consequences your choice might have

Communication: will ensure that you are able to formulate your issue and communicate it effectively. Communication skills also include the art of asking questions and explaining difficult issues to others. Especially in cultures which discourage children to speak up in front of adults, supporting children to express themselves can challenge existing power relations.

Negotiation: is an essential act in advocacy. Having a position, tact and confidence is key for anyone negotiating. Negotiation is about how to present your point, how to bargain and how to best deal with your negotiation partner.

Conflict resolution: Requires the ability to find out what the conflict is really all about and to step aside from a fixed position to discuss the real issue. It requires the ability to solve problems, to compromise, to fix rules for decisions, and sometimes not to resist but to co-exist.

8 - A new weave of people,power,politics (Lisa VeneKlasen, Valerie Miller: "Political consciousness")1. How the political and economic system functions, 2. A sense of history and current events, 3. A lens for analysing why and how imbalances of power operate, 4. Concern about how these things destroy human potential and dignity, 5. A sense of rights, responsibilities, and solidarity with excluded groups"

Strategic thinking: is essential for planning advocacy. It is the ability to fix a clear objective and to identify the actions necessary that will lead us to reaching the objectives.

Teamwork: no advocacy effort can be won alone. Children need to learn how to work in a team, know their team's objectives, the skills and capacities of each team member, the rules for the functioning of the team as well as how to deal with problems at team level.

Leadership: happens in relation to others. Children need to learn how to assume and share responsibilities in advocacy action. There are many options to assume leadership and keeping up day-to-day business to organize activities is as important as presenting and communicating in public or taking decisions.

Self-protection: understanding one's own level of autonomy, gain experiences which broaden horizon and knowledge and increase confidence and capacity to make good choices; understanding risks and planning for adequate ways to manage it

Most of these essential life skills (communication, problem analysis, conflict resolution, and negotiation) are acquired at a fairly young age and developed throughout life. From about eight (8) years on, a child starts to master language for example and supporting children in these efforts is an efficient way to contribute to their personal empowerment.

An efficient methodology for strengthening children's life skills is "**Child-to-Child**", which guides children in six steps to:

1. Identify the problem
2. Research and better understand the factors contributing to it
3. Discuss the problem

4. Develop an action plan to address it
5. Implement the action plan
6. Evaluate it and do it better

Child-to-Child can also be used to develop and implement full advocacy plans with children.

In poor countries, education at family and school level often fails to sufficiently build and develop essential life skills in children, as with political consciousness.

Where schools fail, children's and youth groups and organizations can play an important role by providing young citizens with opportunities to acquire the basic knowledge and skills to engage in and carry out advocacy.

6.3. Children and youth groups

Throughout the world children unite in groups or organizations, many of which are adult initiated and run. Others have been created and are led by children. Most of them, however, have been created for a specific purpose. In the best cases, they serve the best interest of children, in the worst, they pursue an adult agenda.

The benefits for young people of belonging to an organization can be enormous and very varied as they provide them with:

- a place where they can develop their skills, talents and potential, as well as learn many new things
- a space where they can pursue their own interests, recreational activities and agenda
- the opportunity to associate with other children and exchange experiences and ideas with their peers, particularly those from different backgrounds
- an opportunity to meet and get to know other young people or children from different areas and groups, for example social class, religion, ethnicity, gender, disabled and non-disabled
- a means of increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem, while learning to live in groups with democratic principles
- an organized structure yet one which they can build and create as they would like to

Club activities can also be effective in convincing adults of the children's abilities and right to form groups in response to their interests, needs and skills. However, it is very important that the club serves the interests of the young people and not those of the adults setting it up.

Plan Togo (Grazyna Bonati) (2005): "Setting up and running clubs with children and youth"

It is important that children's and youth organizations have a reason to exist and objectives if they want to engage in advocacy. Naturally, children's advocacy efforts should develop from these objectives. Discussing child rights with children forming a group/organization can be a powerful tool to help them identify or strengthen existing objectives. An approach supporting already existing organizations of children and youth should be preferred over trying to initiate groups for the purpose of advocacy.

To engage in common advocacy efforts, it is important that children have gathered a certain level of trust in each other and experience in working together. Group dynamics “norming, storming, performing” should be understood and considered when supporting groups in their advocacy initiatives.

Discussing children’s (and adults’) responsibilities at the same time can help them to understand the concept of “rights-owners” and “duty bearers” better and empower them to take action for their own rights. At the same time it is important to address common adult concerns about “spoiling children” by only emphasising their rights, and making them disobedient and disrespectful.

For the purpose of carrying out advocacy with children and youth groups, it is also important that such groups have clear rules guiding their functioning and an organizational structure that has been put in place respecting principles of democratic decision-making. It is important to introduce children to those principles and that decision-making at group level follows them.

Many of the steps necessary in advocacy planning with adults also apply to children and children’s organizations:

- looking inward: identifying ourselves and our interests, understanding our own organization, our forces and weaknesses, knowing where we are going and understanding how we look to others?
- understanding the advocacy environment: mapping the political landscape and knowing who can support us and who might oppose us
- identifying and defining problems: making sure we understand what the real issue is, asking why until we come to the roots of the problem
- analysing problems and selecting priority issues to make sure that we understand all the contributing factors and their consequences and that we have narrowed the issue down to a manageable problem that we are able to address as a group and with which we stand a chance of succeeding.
- developing advocacy strategies to make sure we have a clear objective, know which way to influence decision-makers and create more space for our participation in society.

7. CHILDREN AS RESEARCHERS

Knowing as much as you can about an issue is the key for any advocacy effort. It not only provides a clear picture to help shaping an advocacy strategy, but also strengthens confidence and increases power. Lack of information creates anxiety and invites criticism. Research with children can include a wide range of activities - from participatory assessments and consultations up to formal research, including desktop studies, interviews and child-managed focus group discussions.

Research with children

- broadens their horizons
- strengthens their power position
- develops their life skills (communication, problem analysis and solving)
- opens opportunities for children to meet and discuss with adults

There are a series of tools and activities designed for engaging children in research, introducing them here would, however, go beyond the scope of these guidelines. Defining your research methodology will largely depend on the children you work with and the environment you work in. For any research carried out with children you should:

- make sure that children participate in the design of the research activities as well as research tools used (such as questionnaires)
- make sure that adults are informed about their activities
- make sure that they have adult backup and support in case they encounter difficulties
- make sure that children are aware of ethics related to research (such as confidentiality of personal data)
- make sure they have adult support for accessing and analysing data
- make sure that they are protected from information that might be damaging to them
- make sure its fun

8. NETWORKS

The impact of children's advocacy efforts will significantly increase with their ability to link with others - children and adults - and to create networks and alliances to promote their advocacy agenda. There have been many efforts to mobilise children at international, even global level, such as The Global Movement for Children, the UN consultation on violence against children, etc. The impact of those adult-initiated networking and consultation programs on children remains yet to be fully understood. They provide great opportunities for children to meet up and discuss their issues. However, the extent to which they have helped establish functioning networks of children and youth organizations and built capacities of children and youth organizations is open to question. Networks initiated and managed by children themselves should be encouraged as they follow children's own rhythm and mode of working and tend to be more sustainable. However, many children and youth groups do not have the opportunity to link up with others. They function in remote areas with lack of exposure to the outside world, lack of modern telecommunication, including internet, which might facilitate exchange, and are sometimes not easily accessible at all. Adults can play an important role here in helping children's groups meet up with others:

- inform children about the existence of other clubs and existing children and youth networks at national and international level
- introduce children to modern communication technology and help them communicate with peers
- support children to organize exchange visits
- support children's groups to communicate and meet on a regular basis

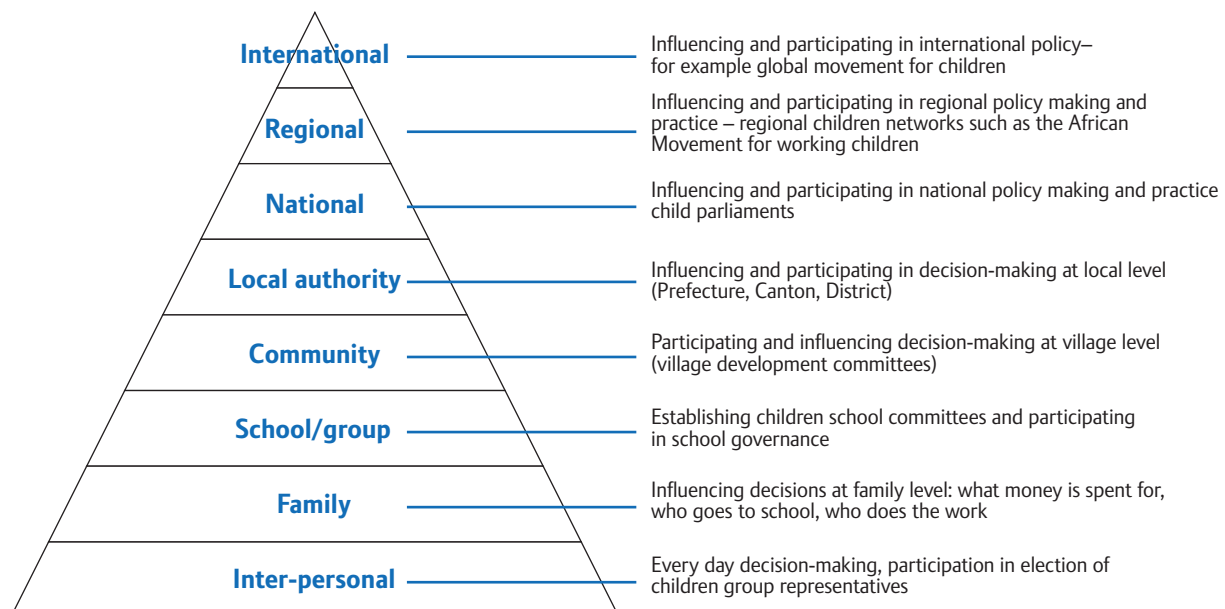
The success of children's networks will largely depend on their ability to meet on a regular basis and the capacity building measures taken to help them to organize and facilitate meetings and work together.

9. CHILDREN AND THE POLITICAL ARENA

It is particularly risky to involve children in political campaigns ... children are a readily available "army" of concern that can be easily seduced into involvement in a movement which is really not "their own"... Ideally, children's involvement in a political campaign will emerge quite naturally out of their own research

UNICEF, Roger Hart (1997): Children's Participation

The thought of children being involved in politics is not an evident one (see chapter 1), especially if one's own definition of politics refers to issues such as legislatures, national assemblies, political parties, governments, international agencies, public policy and resources. It becomes more evident though, as our understanding of politics broadens. While children's influence on formal politics is more limited, their impact on informal politics - family, school, community, neighbourhood, organizations and civil society - can be substantial:



The level of children's influence can significantly increase with the qualified support they get from adults as well as their ability to build alliances and partnerships with other - adult and children - organizations. It is useful for children starting advocacy to concentrate their efforts on the spheres of their direct influence. As they gain practice, confidence, constituency and partners they can expand their advocacy targets.

Children aiming at engaging in the formal political arena should be supported to identify at what levels they can participate. Discussing children's protection rights and the reasons for them will help them to make them aware of risks and limitations for getting involved in formal politics. Knowing which other - adult organizations - there are to engage in the political arena for and with them will be essential.

Children should ALWAYS be helped to fully understand the implications of their advocacy efforts, and to analyse potential risks involved, which tend to increase when entering the formal realms of politics.

10. CHILD PROTECTION

Children are political, economic, ecological, socio-cultural and spiritual (religious) beings. There are several arenas where children do and can participate that satisfy one or several aspects of their personhood ... at present, adults are in total control. We reserve the right to advocate, intervene and decide on behalf of children ... This absolute control also gives us the opportunity to abuse children. Children should have the right and ability to resist this. It is only then that adults will be accountable for their actions.

Kavita Ratna, Concerned for Working Children, India - 2nd ECPAT International Assembly

During any advocacy efforts with children, it is essential to make sure that there are adequate measures in place to protect children from abuse and unintentional harm. Child abuse means sexual abuse or other physical or mental harm deliberately caused to a child. Child abuse occurs when a child experiences harm, usually as the result of failure on the part of the parent or carer to ensure a reasonable standard of care and protection. It is important to note that abuse can also occur amongst children.

It is essential that children and youth organizations have their own child protection policies and agreed standards to prevent, report and act upon child abuse.

Advocating with children can create a variety of risks of further abuse by a facilitator or group member. It can:

- lead children away from (hopefully) safe family boundaries through attending residential events and meetings
- create friction at family/school level that increases children's vulnerability to violence
- expose children to various forms of bullying and aggressions from those opposing their advocacy efforts
- expose them to spiritual abuse
- reveal personal information and data on children, making them vulnerable to abuse, or expose them in a way disrespecting their dignity
- in the worst case, even put children's lives at risk

Especially when challenging social beliefs or demanding group rights, advocacy efforts can create a backlash and be dangerous for children (even more so if they come from minority or otherwise socially excluded groups, such as street children). It might be worthwhile to consider starting with less controversial topics at the beginning, helping children to gain experience and confidence to tackle more difficult themes as they go along.

It is essential that adults support children in carrying out a detailed risk analysis. Children might not be in a position to understand all the potential consequences of their advocacy efforts (and neither might be adults). Special attention has to be given when working with teenagers: though their capacities to analyse issues and consequences are better developed than those of younger children, they might tend to take more daring and riskier decisions.

The Convention of the Rights of the Child should serve as the basis for all child protection efforts when working with children as advocates. It is good to bear in mind, however, that the best way to protect children is to empower them to protect themselves. Advocacy initiatives with children can make an important contribution to their self-protection.

11. ADVOCACY ACTION WITH CHILDREN

Advocacy action with children includes a wide range of activities.

Planning advocacy: planning advocacy with children should be based on information well researched by children. Participatory methods such as Child-to-Child, VIPP and others should be used for planning exercises and care should be given to make sure that illiterate children can fully contribute.

You will plan your advocacy actions according to:

- the issue/advocacy topic: what do we want to advocate for/against? Be as concrete as possible. Formulate the problem. Narrow the issue down to something you feel in power to influence
- the target audience: identify who you need to win over - who you can win over, who you might convince and who will probably rest an opponent?
- the risks involved: be clear about potential dangers involved with your advocacy efforts: what is their likelihood and what will be their impact on you and your allies?
- the resources available (people, budget, time, etc): be clear about who will do what, who will be working to support you, how much time you and your partners have available (children have a charged agenda!) and how much it will cost. Identify how you can mobilise additional resources.

Advocacy action: advocacy action with children can include a wide range of activities, some of which are listed below. For sure, the children you work with will identify additional ones. Though children often take their interventions very seriously, make sure that the activities are fun to maintain children's energy and motivation:

- Invitations to VIPs - Inviting decision-makers or VIPs who can support your advocacy efforts to your project activities can be a powerful tool to win them on your side. There is nothing more efficient than a successful model of children changing their world to convince adults of children's capacities and to build adult constituency
- Encounters/meetings with politicians and decision-makers - Meetings with politicians should be based on well researched information and a genuine topic or issue to discuss with the politicians in question. They should never be based on the desire to get media attention. In democratically challenged countries, encounters with politicians can bear many risks for children. Experienced politicians can easily turn such encounters to their advantage, turning the children into mere decorations in front of the running camera for their own agendas.
- Letters - A good way for children to formulate their issue and address decision-makers to whom they probably won't have access. Children have, however, also to understand that they might not receive a response. Getting important adults to co-sign or organizing a petition with many signatures can increase the chance for a response.
- Children's hearings - Children's hearings are opportunities for children's groups or panels to question decision-makers or other adults in public. They need to be set up with a specific objective and require a lot of preparations. Adult and child panel members need to be well identified and children might want to prepare their questions and be well equipped with information to detect false information in adult responses, especially if complex issues are being discussed. Alternatively, hearings could allow for spontaneous questions also from audience side. Child panel members should also know how to deal with aggression (including their own). Another critical decision is who will chair the hearing.
- Proclamations and lobbying papers - These are papers in which children discuss their advocacy issue and proposed solutions in greater detail. Good research and a participatory process involving children and adults are the best base for a good quality paper. Adult support might be necessary for skillful writing up. Lobbying papers should be handed over directly to the person/institution concerned. Those events are good media opportunities.
- Children conferences - Allow children from different or similar backgrounds to meet and discuss their issues. Attention should be given to who will represent the group at such a meeting. Conferences with children need a lot of planning, an action packed agenda, good documentation and a clear action plan for follow up to be successful. They provide a good opportunity to get media attention.

- Adult/child conferences - Children’s participation in adult conferences can have a strong impact if well prepared and the child participants are able to “defend themselves” in an adult environment. Otherwise, these can easily just turn into another occasion of tokenism or children just being used for decorative purposes.
- Community events - International days like the International Day of the Child, the African Day of the Child, World Water Day, etc. can be good opportunities to make a strong statement and involve other community members in your issue. Public debates, speeches, theatre, song and dance, surveys and children’s hearings and much more can be used. They require much planning to have the impact desired. Make sure that you have informed and if necessary obtained approval from adults (such as community leaders, mayors, etc.) and have adult support at your side.
- Exhibits - Exhibits with children’s drawings, poems, photos can be a powerful tool to sensitise adults (and children) on your advocacy topic.

ADVOCACY WITH CHILDREN STEP BY STEP

The following provides some practical steps to lead children’s groups through identifying and organizing their advocacy plans. They should be carried out in a participatory manner. It is clearly a long process, which should be broken down according to the children’s interest, age, abilities, the time available, etc. Sessions should never be longer than two hours at a time, and should be interspersed with games, songs, jokes and chats, but in no case should the children be pushed to continue when they are too tired. The following activities are suggestions for the various steps.

1. **Choose the general objective** for your activities (for example improving girls' education).
2. **Arrive at a group vision.** Try to reach a common understanding of the ideal situation that you would like to reach (for example by visualising and drawing a girl-friendly school).
3. **Analyse the present situation** to identify the causes and consequences, and changes that the children would like to see (for example using the ‘Problem Tree’ and ‘The School of my Dreams’).
4. **Choose one specific objective** (based on the ‘problem tree’ and ‘the school of my dreams’) on which to work first, and formulate this objective in terms of changes that the children would like to see (for example separate latrines for boys and girls, less discrimination against girls). This will involve producing a list of problems, prioritising and choosing one to work on, then formulating it in terms of an objective.
5. **Identify those who can help us obtain these changes.** Identify the decision-makers, and those who can influence their decisions, in each case. Whose responsibility is it? Is it their duty? Is there a law that obliges them to do it? If not, is there a good reason why they should do it? Do you have anything to offer at the ‘negotiation table’ which might be of interest for the person you wish to influence?
6. **Complete the table below.** Make a list of the people and institutions responsible and those who can help, as in the table below. Indicate for each one what precisely you want to convince them of, their position on your issue (for, neutral or against), whether or not they should be contacted, how to convince them of your cause and the order in which it is best to contact them.

Name of person or institution	What we need to convince them of/to do	Their position (for, against or neutral)	Whether or not to contact them (Yes/No)	Methods to convince them to support us	Order in which to approach them

Make sure that you have not forgotten anybody who can help your cause.

7. **Learn as much as you can about your issue:** causes, results/consequences, advantages of adopting the policy you propose, etc.
8. **Learn as much as you can about those you wish to convince.** Their position on this issue, their aims and objectives, their interests, etc.

9. **Decide on your strategy.** How will you convince your target person or group to support you? Learn as much as you can about them, and the arguments they might use against you.

10. **Plan your strategy:** Who will do what? With whom? When? Where? What do we need?

The change we hope for	Action to be taken	How?	By whom?	Target?	When?	Where?	With whom?	Resources needed

11. **Child protection.** What risks do our actions involve? Assess these carefully and ensure that both you and the children are safe at all times.

12. **Prepare well for all meetings, discussions and other events*.** Rehearse everything well until the children know what they have to say and how to present their arguments.

12. CHILDREN AND THE MEDIA

Efficient communication is key to the success of advocacy efforts. Advocacy strategies in most cases include working with the media to ensure that messages reach a broad audience. For children, it is even more difficult than for adults to get access to mass media because:

- their resources are more limited and they cannot afford to pay for space in the media
- they have less mastery over words than adults
- they might not be perceived as adequate interview partners or clients by the media
- their stories might not appear immediately newsworthy

Adult support to enable children to get access to the media can be very effective. Useful activities to do so and to create longer lasting links between the children and media are:

- establishing contact with and working with journalists specialised on child rights
- establishing contact with and working with child and youth journalists and magazines
- researching the legal framework for policy hooks to increase children's access: in many countries, the media are obliged to reserve some broadcasting time for children's issues
- create opportunities for journalists to work with children (for example hire them for training on communication)
- provide journalists with training on ethics for reporting on children's issues
- research opportunities such as international competitions for journalists dealing with children's issues
- research websites publishing children's issues
- make sure you know NGOs and institutions who might be able to facilitate access to and contact with the media

It is important that you are aware of ethical guidelines on reporting for children (such as published by the International Federation of Journalists) and the role of media in monitoring child rights.

Many of the issues for which children might want to advocate will involve targeting people in their immediate environment: parents, teachers, community leaders. To reach them, children will not necessarily need to use mass media. Theatre, student magazines, podium discussions, school exhibits, songs and even dance might be quite adequate if not more efficient.

* For more practical guidance on how to support children in their advocacy planning and action, see Plan Togo's Youth Group Curriculum: Advocacy (contact togo.co@plan-international.org)

Checklist for children and youth groups

Are we ready to advocate?

- Do we have a clear group objective?
- Do we ourselves work in a clear and fair way in our group?
- Do we have a common understanding of what we mean by "advocacy" (and what we understand by "politics", "democracy", "justice")?
- Do we know our rights and responsibilities (and local legal framework and policy)?
- Do we know enough about the problem that we would like to advocate for?
- Do we have a clear plan what to do about it?
- Do we have adult permission where necessary?
- Do we know who can support us with our efforts?
- Do we know how to make sure that children at group level are protected and safe during the planned activities?
- Do we know how we will monitor our work and measure success?

13. MONITORING IMPACT

It is important that you discuss with the children how you and they will monitor and evaluate their advocacy efforts and the results achieved. Children need to set clear objectives and define indicators (or signs) of success and how they will verify them. It is important that children do not only look at the impact on others (“the teachers no longer beat us”), but also on themselves. Increased skills, better team spirit, broader exposure to the outside world and an increased support base amongst other children (and adults) are indicators of success and should not be forgotten. The indicators identified should be simple and not require (much) outside experience to verify - children themselves should be in a position to find out where they are and how much progress they have made.

Children should build in monitoring and evaluation activities in their advocacy plans.

The Child Centred Advocacy Impact chart in Appendix 2 provides you with ideas of possible advocacy achievements.

14. ADULT FACILITATION - ADULT ADVOCACY

14.1. Adult facilitation

The biggest obstacles in working with children are the perception and prejudice of adults
Save the Children, “Street Children, Working Children”

The golden rule for working with children is never to do anything for children they can do themselves

Anyone facilitating advocacy efforts with children and youth organizations should be conscious of his or her own personality and the way he or she interacts with children. Prejudices against children and poor habits in dealing with them stand in the way of many an adult interacting with children. The challenge for adult facilitators will be to assess what level of autonomy for children is consistent with adequate levels of protection. Reflecting on childhood and visualising our own childhood experiences can be a powerful means to help us reconnect with children and understand their realities better. It is essential that facilitators see their relationship with the children as one of a facilitator and not as one of a teacher or parent. Any facilitator should have a notion of the specific support that children need in their different phases of development and according to their evolving capacities. Facilitators should be equipped with simple but adequate tools of facilitating work with children.

The role of adults in encouraging children to organize advocacy efforts is an important one and can be considered under four main sections:

1. Establishing a good working relationship with the children.
2. Helping them learn and develop their potential.
3. Building their self-confidence and self-esteem.
4. Encouraging them to develop a responsible attitude towards others and a sense of community.

Very importantly, however, adults facilitating advocacy efforts of children need to have a good understanding of the processes and issues involved in advocacy themselves; this includes a good understanding of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and other relevant Human Rights conventions as well as the functioning of the Human Rights system at national and international level. Advocacy experts rarely come with the expertise necessary to facilitate work with children; a good idea is, therefore, to associate resource people skilled in advocacy to strengthen the capacity of adult facilitators in advocacy techniques to ensure the transfer of competences and mutual learning.

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APPENDIX 1:

CHILDREN'S AGES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVOCACY

Approx. age range	Needs and deeds	Involvement in advocacy initiatives	Risks and limitations
0-1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love • Security • Physical contact • Bonding • Soiling • Crying irritability 	none	
1-5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval • Attention • Safe boundaries/support • Opportunities to explore • Independence • Temper tantrums • Disobedience - test boundaries • Fears of dark, animals 	<p>Very limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparatory work with children to understand concepts such as “just/unjust”, “fair/unfair”, later on introduction on how to work together in groups • Consulting with children 	Not recommended to involve this age group actively into advocacy action
6-10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastery • Recognition • Perseverance • Competition • Fighting with friends and siblings • Appearance • Instant gratification 	<p>Limited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory research with children • Consulting with children • Helping children to understand “just/unjust”, “fair/unfair”, support children to organize in groups • Teaching democratic decision-making in class/group • Teaching child rights • From about 8 years on - communication training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careful consideration necessary whether this age group should/could be involved; careful assessment of children’s capacities necessary • Parental resistance • Manipulation through adults • Children more easily discouraged as impact of advocacy might not be immediately visible
11 - 12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastery • Recognition • Appearance 	<p>Possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory research and development of action plans to contribute to change • Education for democracy and citizenship • Teaching child rights • Work with children’s groups • Life skills training: communication, conflict resolution, problem analysis • Advocacy action at school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manipulation through adults • Parental resistance • Easily discouraged as impact of advocacy might not be immediately visible • Lack of capacity or opportunity to follow things through • Children’s charged agenda • Ability to fully understand consequences of action
13-18 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More freedom • Direction of future life • Finding own values compared to parents’ values • Rebellion/rejection of parental values • Defiance • Idealism/new ideas • Experimentation (drugs, crime) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help adolescents finding own values through discussing human rights and justice • Education for citizenship and democracy • Capacity building to children and youth organizations • Development of advocacy plans at school, community, regional level, participation in international advocacy initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manipulation through adults • Youth more orientated towards peers as role models than adults • Parental resistance • Conflict with parents/family as own values and opinions evolve • Peer pressure • Children’s charged agenda • Ability to fully understand consequences of action • Risky behaviour

Like any schematic overview, this chart has limitations and should be seen together with other theories on child development, which take a more social perspective. Anyone facilitating advocacy with children should be conscious of the development level of the individual children he/she works with, as well as of socio-cultural, economic and political factors that shape their lives and their capacity to act as advocates.

Finally, the ultimate factor is obviously children’s own interest in advocacy.

Adapted from “Helping Sexually Abused Children”, Family Support Trust, Harare (Zimbabwe).

APPENDIX 2: CHARTING ADVOCACY IMPACT : A CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH

ARENA	IMPACT
1. STATE/GOVERNMENT SECTOR	Support, change, and/or implement a law, public policy, constitution, regulation, program, practice, decision-making process, budget, behaviour, enforcement, access, official, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive • Agencies/Ministries • Legislative/Parliament • Military/Police • Courts • Other • Provincial government • Local government • International bodies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN • IMF • World Bank • Multilateral Development Banks 	<p>Impacts, for example, that defend and advance human and child rights, foster more gender equity, sustainable development and promote greater voice and power of children and youth in access to justice, protection and public decision-making as well as their consideration as a social group with evolving capacities; impacts that foster child protection and child and family friendliness at level of local, provincial, national government/institutional level as well as at level of international bodies</p>
2. PRIVATE SECTOR	Support or change a policy, program, practices, behaviour etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local/national/multinational • Other 	<p>See impacts under State/Government sector</p>
3. CIVIL SOCIETY	Strengthen and expand organized children and youth’s capacity, organization, accountability, clout, and power; expand members’ skills, self-confidence and awareness, capacities, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs; and increase overall social capital, reciprocity, trust and tolerance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs • Membership Organizations • Community-Based Organizations • Alliances/Coalitions/Networks • Social Movements 	<p>Impacts that fortify children and youth groups, organizations, social movements and alliances working to advance the rights and living conditions of children and their allies; impacts that enhance collaboration and exchange between adult and children organizations and develop (adult) civil society capacity to support children and youth; impacts that enhance the participation of children in decision-making at institutional level</p>
4. CULTURE (Political/Social)	Increase democratic space, expand participation and political legitimacy of children and youth groups in civil society and accountability/transparency of public institutions and media; transform social institutions, norms, customs and values that lead to intolerance, subordination, exclusion and powerlessness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political • Social 	<p>Impacts that enhance socio-cultural and political dimensions in ways that promote the voice, political awareness and participation of children and youth including the most marginalised in decision-making at family and school level and encourage behaviours and values of protection, cooperation, collaboration, trust, inclusion, reciprocity and equity; impacts that enhance the image of children and youth in the media and create space for children and youth in the media</p>
5. INDIVIDUAL - Child	Expand capacities, attitudes, beliefs and awareness of self as protagonist/citizen with rights and responsibilities to participate in change; improve concrete living conditions and opportunities for protection, health, education and decent livelihood
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living Conditions/Opportunities • Attitudes/awareness • Personal relationships, etc. 	<p>Impacts that improve the lives and expand essential life skills of children including the most marginalized ones (problem analysis and solution, conflict resolution, negotiation, communication), their consciousness, self-awareness, resilience, confidence, solidarity, and awareness of rights and responsibilities and their vision of children and marginalized children and their allies; impacts that challenge discrimination /subordination of children in personal, family relations and at school/institutional level and increase their self-protection</p>

APPENDIX 3:

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF JOURNALISTS: GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES ON REPORTING ON ISSUES INVOLVING CHILDREN

All journalists and media professionals have the duty to maintain highest ethical and professional standards and promote within the industry the widest possible dissemination of information about the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its implication for the exercise of independent journalism.

Media organizations should regard the violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, their education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitation as important questions for public investigation and public debate. Children have the absolute right for privacy, the only exceptions being those explicitly set out in these guidelines.

Journalistic activity which touches the lives and welfare of children should always be carried out with appreciation of the vulnerable situation of children.

Journalists and media organizations shall strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in reporting children's affairs and, in particular, they shall:

- Strive for standards of excellence in terms of accuracy and sensitivity when reporting on issues involving children;
- Avoid programming and publication of images which intrude upon the media space of children with information which is damaging to them;
- Avoid the use of stereotypes and sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children;
- Consider carefully the consequences of any material concerning children and shall minimize harm to children;
- Guard against visually or otherwise identifying children unless it is demonstrably in the public interest;
- Give children, where possible, the right to access the media to express their own opinions and without inducement of any kind;
- Ensure independent verification of information provided by children and take special care to ensure that verification takes place without putting child informants at risk;
- Avoid the use of sexualised images of children;
- Use fair, open and straightforward methods for obtaining pictures and, where possible, obtain them with the knowledge and consent of children or a responsible adult, guardian or carer;
- Verify the credentials of any organization purporting to speak for or represent the interest of children;
- Not make any payment to children for material involving the welfare of children or to parents or guardians of children unless it is demonstrably in the interest of the child.

Journalists should put to critical examination the reports submitted and the claims made by governments on implementation of the UNCRC in their respective countries. Media should not consider and report the conditions of children only as events, but should continuously report the process likely to lead or leading to the occurrence of these events.

Adopted by IFJ in Seoul, 2001

APPENDIX 4: USEFUL DEFINITIONS - A SHORT ADVOCACY ALPHABET

Advocacy - the multiple definitions for advocacy include:

- 1) The process of representing a cause. In Plan's case, a concerted course of action, using information strategically, to change legal frameworks, policies or behaviours of decision-makers to improve the lives of disadvantaged children.
- 2) Giving voice to a cause; active verbal support for a cause or position.
- 3) Giving marginalised people a voice; support for people who are likely to be disregarded or who have difficulty in gaining attention, to ensure that their opinion is listened to and their needs recognized.
- 4) Advocacy is about bringing positive changes to all levels of society through the identification of issues, taking of a position, mobilisation of resources, organization of structures and mechanisms and implementation of strategies.
- 5) Supporting and enabling people to better negotiate on their own behalf, for basic needs and rights.
- 6) Advocacy is a continuous process which leads to positive change in attitudes, behaviour, relationship within family, workplace, and community, and state and society.

Age - a person's age is the number of chronological years he or she has lived. Age is a common source of discrimination that affects women and girls and men and boys differently.

Agency - the state of exerting power, as an individual or serving as an official and authorized delegate or agent.

Child abuse - child abuse means sexual abuse or other physical or mental harm deliberately caused to a child. Child abuse occurs when a child experiences harm, usually as the result of failure on the part of the parent or carer to ensure a reasonable standard of care and protection

Civil society - individuals and groups, organized or unorganized, who interact in the social, political and economic domains and who are regulated by formal and informal rules and laws. Civil society offers a dynamic, multilayered wealth of perspectives and values, seeking expression in the public sphere.

"The Arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market where people associate to advance common interest" (CIVICUS)

Constituency - a group of people or a community who have a common concern and whose interests are advanced by organizing and engaging in advocacy to solve the problem

Convention - a specific type of international law; an agreement among countries to obey the same law. The ratification of a convention by a country signifies the country's agreement to obey the law and take necessary measures to regulate issues involved in it at country level.

Disability - refers to a physical or mental condition that makes a person different from what is considered normal. Societies are often abusive to people with disabilities.

Empowerment

- 1) Process(es) that alter(s) power distribution and relations between actors in favour of those with less power. Increasing people's ability to bring about change, whether this is modest or far-reaching in its impact, based on the conviction that people can solve their problems through their own individual and collective efforts rather than relying on what other people do for them. Through the process of empowerment, individuals and groups recognize and pursue their legitimate rights and roles in decision-making that affects their lives (for example rights to local natural resources).
- 2) The expansion of people's capacities and choices; the ability to exercise choice and the opportunity to participate in, or endorse, decision-making that affects their lives.

Democracy - form of government in which supreme power is held by the people and exercised directly or through elected representatives. Democracy comes in many forms. However, today the concept generally implies majority rule, minority and individual rights, equality of opportunity, equality under the law, and civil rights and liberties.

Discrimination - differentiation (in treatment) between people on the grounds of gender, age, race, class, or other factors. It can operate institutionally in the public sphere (racial discrimination in apartheid systems) or at a less visible level through culture, social beliefs, and ideology which can be measured by relative levels of education, political representation, percentages living in poverty, etc.

Ethnicity - refers to a common consciousness about shared origins, traditions, social beliefs, and practices. Ethnicity is a more precise term than race.

Family - is defined by a set of relationships created by birth, lineage, marriage, common law partnership and other social commitments. The family is generally the most important provider of children's well-being and stability and a space that shapes their social attitudes, values and beliefs.

Human Rights - are enshrined in the 1948 approved Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which defines people's interdependent, indivisible and inalienable rights. The declaration, together with two covenants - the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights form the Bill of Human Rights.

Gender - refers to the social descriptions, roles and responsibilities attached to women and men. Whereas sex is a biological fact and unchanging, gender is a culturally derived, learned behaviour that varies over time and is influenced by other socio-economic factors. Common gender stereotypes include: men are strong/women are weak, men are breadwinners/women are nurturers, men are rational/women emotional, men are more intelligent than women, men can only make certain decisions which women must obey.

Politics - formal politics refer to legislatures, national assemblies, political parties, governments, international agencies, and public policy and resources. **Informal** politics refer to what happens in civil society, families, communities, neighborhoods, and organizations.

Policy - Refers to an overall framework for action, based on basic philosophy and vision, which governs the way things are done by an organization, institution, association, enterprise, political party, program, project etc.

Power - is an integral dynamic of politics. Power can be defined as the degree of control over material, human, intellectual and financial resources exercised by different sections of society or individuals. Power is dynamic and relational, rather than absolute. It is exercised in the social, economic and political relations between individuals and groups. Understanding power dynamics is essential for effective advocacy.

Protection Rights - The Convention of the Rights of the Child takes into consideration children's needs for special safeguards and care including legal protection before and after birth by reason of their physical and mental immaturity.

Race - refers to people of common origin. In politics, race often refers to skin colour and facial features.

Religion - refers to beliefs and worship of a transcendent or supernatural being(s). Religions usually embody a vision of right and wrong bestowed by the highest moral authority.

Risk - a risk is defined as something that could undermine one's ability to achieve one's objectives or something that diminishes the effectiveness of the organization or an endeavour. It also refers to the possible dangers incurred during a particular activity.

Socio-economic status/class - generally refers to a person's position in society as determined by a combination of factors, such as family background, education and economic means.

Sexual orientation - refers to a person's preference for a sexual partner. Whether an individual is heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual is usually highly politicised. There are different views as to whether sexual orientation is a matter of socialisation or innate behaviour, and whether homosexuality is immoral. Many societies are oppressive toward people who do not follow social norms.

APPENDIX 5: PLAN AND ADVOCACY

Plan's vision is of a world in which all children realize their full potential in societies which respect the rights and dignities of all people. Plan follows an approach of child-centred community development, a rights-based approach in which children, families and communities are considered active and leading participants in their own development. It enhances their capacity and opportunity to work together with others to address structural causes and consequences of child poverty at all levels. Plan is committed to ensuring that children are at the heart of community development and it recognizes that, for children now and in the future, community is not only local but also global.

To make this happen, change needs to happen at many different levels - from the individual up to state policy and legal framework. The principle strategies of citizen-centred advocacy - public education, information and communication activities, research, developing leadership amongst children and adults, community mobilisation, building alliances, working with the media to shape public opinion and lobbying decisions - are important strategies to bring about this change and anchored in Plan's child centred community development approach.

For Plan, the two carrying components creating a continuum for increasing space and improving the quality of people's participation in society and decision-making are Development Education and Advocacy.

Development Education, for Plan, is a process of increasing knowledge and providing opportunities to people to take an active role in addressing the issues of poverty and vulnerability which prevent disadvantaged children in the developing world from realizing their full potential.

Its goals are:

- 1) to increase the knowledge, understanding and motivation of children, families, communities, partners, sponsors and other stakeholders, and the public at large, to work together to actively address issues of child poverty and the ignorance and denial of children's rights;
- 2) to link micro-level development effects on children, families and communities with micro-level policies and to bring the testimony of children and adults into the development process;
- 3) to make it clear that we all have a part to play in alleviating poverty, by showing the links, similarities and differences between the lives of children and adults in Plan's national organization countries and the children, families and communities that Plan works with in the south.

Sponsorship Communications are one of the key vehicles for Development Education in Plan. Development Education encourages personal exchanges, in terms of increased individual understanding and commitment and enhanced willingness to act, to eliminate child poverty.

Advocacy, according to Plan's definition, seeks to fight child poverty through broader, institutional change. Development Education is often the foundation on which advocacy is built. Both Development Education and Advocacy are located on the continuum

Awareness —————> **Commitment** —————> **Action**

Plan's organizational definition for advocacy is "a concerted course of action, using information strategically, to change legal frameworks, policies or behaviours of decision-makers to improve the lives of disadvantaged children".



Plan Togo

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