



Advocacy

– on how to promote the rights of target groups

1. WHY ADVOCACY MATTERS

When people work to secure their rights, doing so by means of advocacy achieves more durable improvements in their living conditions. When advocacy is conducted as part of development and humanitarian work, the focus is not just on bringing direct help to a limited target group whose rights are under threat, but also on fostering lasting solutions founded on economic, social and cultural rights.

CISU's strategy and guidelines for applications to its funds, as well as Danida's "The World 2030: Denmark's strategy for development cooperation and humanitarian action" and "Policy for Danish support to civil society", all stress the importance of development and humanitarian work taking a rights-based approach with a clear emphasis on advocacy. A strong, independent and diverse civil society plays a crucial role in securing people's rights.

These rights emanate from a variety of sources. For example, they can be the universal human rights passed by the United Nations in 1948 to protect people against state oppression, including the right to organise, express oneself, enjoy freedom of religion and act out one's sexuality. Rights can also be enshrined in ratified international conventions, e.g. on gender, children, disability, climate and minorities. Furthermore, rights may spring from national policies, such as access to education, or from local policies such as access to vital medicine at the nearest health clinic. Other forms of rights concern being allowed to take part in democratic consultation and decision-making processes at the national and local level. The right to access information is also highlighted in the UN Sustainable Development Goal 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies based on the rule of law and human rights. A special form of rights has been formulated in terms of standards and principles for humanitarian work.

Advocacy can also lead to adherence to the leave no one behind principle by speaking on behalf of particularly vulnerable groups, thus contributing to achieving

compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals not just for some, but for everyone.

2. WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

The purpose of advocacy is to bring about change by influencing the authorities or those in power in favour of securing people's economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights.

Advocacy is a process of systematically seeking to exert influence on how political, economic, cultural and social decisions are taken and implemented. It targets decision-makers and citizens in order to affect distribution of resources within political, economic and social systems and institutions. It represents an attempt to improve people's living conditions. Advocacy can be targeted at formal decision-makers such as legislators, but also at, for instance, public entities and well-known persons, traditional leaders, business owners and others who exercise authority. Advocacy may take place at all levels: locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Advocacy takes a rights-based approach. This means that its core values consist of human rights, adhering to the principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination and transparency. Advocacy means working to promote people's rights.

An important part of working with a rights-based approach is that the point of departure for advocacy must always be the target group, i.e. the persons that the case is about and their rights. Accordingly, an or-



Rights-based advocacy builds upon two fundamental concepts:

Rights holder: Persons who have rights to be taken into account and to be fulfilled.

Duty bearer: Persons or entities responsible for fulfilling people's rights.

organisation conducting advocacy must have sufficient support from and knowledge about the target group to be able to carry out advocacy together with , or on behalf of the group.

3. ADVOCACY IN PRACTICE

Advocacy usually starts off by analysing the rights of the target group (rights holders) as the basis for assessing the political context in order to identify the persons (duty bearers) and decision-making processes to be influenced. This is done by developing a strategy, choosing the methods most suitable for implementing the advocacy activities, which are then monitored and evaluated to substantiate an assessment of whether the target groups' rights have been met. This is shown in the figure below.

Just as there is a diverse landscape of civil society organisations, there will also be a wide variety of possible approaches to advocacy. In general, however, the following should be kept in mind:

- o Advocacy interventions are based on direct or indirect participation and inputs from the target groups affected by the conditions sought to be changed.
- o Advocacy interventions pursue particular goals, which means the strategy is designed and delimited in view of the intended change and beneficiaries. This re-

quires analyses and thorough knowledge of the target group and responsible decision-makers. In this regard, it is also important to take steps to delimit the institutions and decision-makers to be addressed by the advocacy.

- o Advocacy is a social process that may challenge vested interests, generating resistance and conflict. This makes it important to be ready to run risks and to acknowledge that the outcome of advocacy cannot always be predicted. Such risks must be considered in the intervention strategy.

- o In some contexts, advocacy springs from being invited to certain processes, such as hearings. On other occasions, it is necessary to demand to be listened to, e.g. by means of campaigning.

Many of CISU's member organisations have local partners who work in close contact with target groups or directly represent poor and vulnerable population groups. This makes it important to insist that advocacy is not confined to conducting international or national campaigns and directly influencing legislation. Advocacy is also about helping to shape political and social processes at the local level.

Advocacy encompasses a wide range of activities, from enabling a rural community organisation to join a local development committee, thus giving community members a say in setting priorities, to testing a different



teaching method that gives schoolchildren greater self-esteem and awareness of their own opportunities to gain influence.

Another area of intervention for advocacy is to help ensure that existing conventions, laws and decisions are implemented and enforced, whether locally, regionally or nationally. Advocacy can also seek to draw attention, for instance, to prevent stigmatisation of vulnerable groups. Another possible target of advocacy is the private sector, for instance extractive industries. In this regard, advocacy differs from CSR activities, which tend to come about through invitation from businesses to help refine and implement CRS policies.

In practice, advocacy will often be carried out at three levels, which fall along a continuum as illustrated in the Development Triangle (www.cisu.dk/værktøj-metoder/cisu-temapapirer):

- o Empowerment and awareness-raising as part of capacity building of organisations and groups of people with a view to promoting their active participation in advocacy.
- o Development of strategic deliveries to boost the chances of advocacy leading to change.
- o Actual advocacy that targets structures, institutions and authorities.

Some fundamental preconditions for enabling advocacy is that the partners:

- o Focus on securing a space for partners to work with rights without being persecuted by the powers that be.
- o Have clear knowledge about the rights of the target group based on an understanding of how these rights have been formulated at the international, national and local level.
- o Know which duty bearers, in terms of persons and institutions, are responsible for fulfilling these rights, and what decision-making processes affect the fulfilment of the target group's rights.
- o Have a clear understanding of how advocacy can be used to influence these duty bearers and decision-making processes both to arrive at decisions that favour the target group's rights and to ensure that these decisions are implemented on the ground.
- o Have legitimacy in the eyes of the target group to be able to conduct advocacy together with and in favour of the target group.
- o Have sufficient competence and capacity to conduct

actual strategic advocacy.

4. WITH THIS THEMATIC PAPER ON ADVOCACY, CISU WISHES TO PROMOTE

Danish civil society organisations and their partners using advocacy as an approach to achieving lasting change that affects the structural causes of poverty. In this manner, cooperation benefits more people than individual interventions are capable of doing. CISU also wishes to promote:

- o Partners' advocacy endeavours being based on the target group's rights by empowering poor and vulnerable people to champion their own cause vis-à-vis duty bearers, thus influencing their own and other people's living conditions for the better.
- o Acknowledgement of the value of advocacy at the local and immediate level, making target groups and duty bearers see such interventions as legitimate.
- o Partners being open to cooperating with others, e.g. by means of networking, in order to boost interventions.
- o Partners working systematically and strategically with advocacy as a process that requires time and focus.

5. HOW ORGANISATIONS CAN USE CISU

Funds: Danish organisations can apply to CISU's funds to obtain support for working with advocacy together with their partners.

Capacity services: member organisations may turn to CISU for advice on how to work with advocacy. They may also attend CISU's courses or suggest subjects to be addressed by CISU.

organisationer kan ansøge CISUs puljer om støtte til at arbejde med fortalervirksomhed i samarbejde med partnere.

6. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW AND DO MORE

Read more about advocacy and find good tools to develop advocacy objectives and strategies here: <http://www.cisu-dk/værktøj-metoder/fortalervirksomhed>.

CISU has two fundamental recommendations for efforts to develop advocacy:

- Make sure that there is agreement on the rights that you intend to have fulfilled and that you know which duty bearers and decision-makers are to be influenced by means of advocacy.
- Make sure that the Danish organisation and its local partners have sufficient capacity to conduct advocacy within the chosen field.

CISU'S THEMATIC PAPERS

CISU draws up thematic papers setting out our view of how our member organisations may understand, interpret and apply various key concepts in civil society cooperation.

The thematic papers are based on our practice and experience of member organisations' international work, our advisory services and courses, as well as our administration of funds open for applications.

The thematic papers are approved by CISU's Board. They are not carved in stone, but will be revised at appropriate intervals in view of experience gained. Moreover, new position papers will be drawn up on other issues.

See the latest version and other position papers at: www.cisu.dk/værktøj-metoder/cisus-temapapirer.



CISU – Civil Society in Development
Klosterport 4x, 3rd floor, DK-8000 Aarhus C, Denmark
Telephone: +45 86120342, open weekdays 10 am to 3 pm.