

ADVOCACY



Advocating for Children's Rights



Child Helpline International

www.childhelplineinternational.org

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Acronyms

ACERWC	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ANC	African National Congress (the ruling party in South Africa)
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
CEDAW	Convention to End All Forms of Violence against Women
CHI	Child Helpline International
CRIN	Child Rights Information Network
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
GC	General Comments as issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPO	Non-profit organisation
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review



Foreword

Advocacy: Advocating for Children's Rights is intended as a resource for Child Helpline International. It aims to inform the reader on how to incorporate advocacy strategies at their child helplines, taking into account the various steps needed in assessing what type of advocacy effort is best for an identified goal.

Advocacy: Advocating for Children's Rights takes the reader through the cycle of advocacy: from the most basic definition, including mapping out the needs in the community, to deciding what advocacy strategy is best. It also provides examples from child helplines around the world, and includes tips for use by child helplines to fulfil their organisational objectives.

Advocacy: Advocating for Children's Rights has been produced in response to the needs as requested by member helplines through various CHI tools, such as the PSP checklist and at regional and international consultations. The information contained herein, reflecting the advocacy efforts of various child helplines, was gathered in early 2009 through multi-language questionnaires.

While *Advocacy: Advocating for Children's Rights* does not contain an exhaustive description of the advocacy methods practiced by child helplines, it does provide the reader with the key tools to aid in carrying out advocacy strategies. We hope *Advocacy: Advocating for Children's Rights* will inspire and motivate the network into continuing to improve their services for the benefit of children around the world.

The Child Helpline International Secretariat



Introduction

People often think that advocacy is only about changing law and policy, and many do not understand that advocacy takes place on all levels, from the grassroots to law-making. At its most basic level, advocacy can be defined as working for change, and there are a number of factors which place child helplines in a key position to change things for children and advocate for their rights.

Firstly, child helplines all around the world offer a range of services to vulnerable children. While the range of services differ from country to country and even within countries, most have in common a confidential system that allows children themselves to tell adults what is happening to them. Hence, child helplines have unique access to the direct experiences of children. This imposes a special responsibility on child helplines to ensure that those with the power to make a positive difference in the lives of children hear what children have to say.

Secondly, child helplines respond to children's needs by providing services themselves or referrals to whatever services exist in their countries. Therefore they know, often better than many other people, where systems and services are failing children, and they have a key role to play in advocating for the provision of better and more appropriate services for children.

Finally, many child helplines carry out painstaking work in communities to protect children from harm, abuse and maltreatment. Their work includes raising awareness and providing training in a wide range of relevant areas, through tracking the responses of the criminal justice system and the counselling children. They often understand the importance of working together to protect children. Their experience of the gap between policy and reality gives them special insight into what children need.

Civil society has a role in influencing policy and public opinion. We have an obligation to the communities we work with to advocate with and for them. Failure to do so is to jeopardise the credibility of our organisations.

Advocacy: Advocating for Children's Rights is targeted at the staff and volunteer members of child helplines. It seeks to clarify what advocacy is and to provide guidelines on preparing for and undertaking advocacy.

Advocacy cannot and should not be undertaken from a personal perspective. While passion and commitment are essential ingredients of effective advocacy, proposals on situations that need to change must be grounded in a stance derived from the reality of children's experiences, and supported by facts or scientific information. The backing of one's own organisation, a clear understanding of and commitment to children's rights, and the support of colleagues working in the field should also be key considerations.

The need to identify and advocate around issues from a position of broad support cannot be stressed enough. For example, when Childline Iraq was advocating for setting up their child helpline in 2007, their work commenced with several meetings with key stake-holders such as UNICEF. This provided the child helpline with a base for advocacy which was grounded in addressing a need identified by a relatively large number of concerned entities within the government and civil society¹.

What is advocacy?

Many people are put off advocacy because they think that it is about politics. There is a tendency to see 'politics' as belonging to those who govern and not to those who are governed.

¹ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Childline Iraq (Kurdistan Region), May 2009.

However everything is in some way political. In its most basic definition, politics is the process by which groups of people make decisions. The term is generally applied to behaviour within governments, but politics has been observed in all human group interactions, including in families and communities, and in corporate, academic and religious institutions². The decisions that are made will influence how resources are allocated, how conflict and dissension will be dealt with, and how the lives of those affected by the decisions will play out. Those who work with and for children need to bring what they know about the needs of children into the process of decision-making within families, within communities, and within society at large.

Advocacy is the influencing of outcomes (including public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions) that directly affect people's lives³. Therefore, advocacy can be seen as speaking out on issues of concern in order to exert some influence on behalf of ideas or persons. Based on this definition, Cohen states that 'ideologues of all persuasions advocate'⁴ to bring a change in people's lives. Because they know what challenges children face, child helplines have a key role to play in bringing change into children's lives and advocating for children.

Here is an amusing and useful way to understand what 'advocacy' means⁵: Advocacy is a set of well-planned activities that try to change something that you feel is wrong or unfair, to improve the lives of children. The work you do:

- Aims for specific changes
 - Different methods can be used (meetings, writing letters, campaigning, lobbying)
 - Voice – you are giving this to those you are advocating with and for
 - Other individuals – you have to work with others to make a difference
 - Communication – at all levels
 - Art of advocacy – learning from others and refining your skills
 - Change – the change you want to see
 - You and me – anyone can be an advocate
-

Advocacy is the active support and recommendation of something, and can take place at any level within society. In short, advocacy is a process whereby you try to bring about change⁶. There are several different types of advocacy, namely:

- **Social mobilisation** or campaigning involves the transfer of knowledge and information and targets the public at large. It is aimed at educating and changing attitudes and behaviour, as well as creating awareness and consciousness about a perceived social problem.
- **Lobbying** targets decision makers and is intended to result in policy and legislative change.
- **Litigation** is the process of taking an entity (for example, the government) to court in order to ensure that a right is realised.
- **Law reform** is the process of changing law and policy so that they protect rights and advance their realisation. The development and processing of the Children's Act⁷ of 2005 as amended in 2007 is a good example of reforming and improving law to ensure the realisation of rights.
- **Behaviour and attitude** reforms are both a kind of advocacy and the result of an advocacy process.

All these kinds of advocacy are characterised by action directed at change within the environment. They also seek to facilitate structural change; put a problem on the agenda, and find a solution to the problem. This includes building support for the proposed solution.

² Wikipedia, accessed at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics> on 17th October 2008

³ Cohen, D., R. de la Vega, G. Watson. 2001. *Advocacy for Social Justice. A Global Action and Reflection Guide*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press Inc. This book is often cited in papers, other texts and discussions on advocacy, for example at http://books.google.co.za/books?id=VwOH8CGdn8gC&pg=PA8&lpg=PA8&dq=Cohen,+D,+R,+de+la+Vega,+G.+Watson&source=bl&ots=PDot_vbsAU&sig=1-koffiXi-NJgW5y7Of8KihZdEE&hl=en&ei=tLRRSvKJKYqwMM2t1fUP&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6 and at http://nwucil.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=45&Itemid=54

⁴ Cohen et al, *ibid*.

⁵ The Policy Project. 2003. *Advocacy*, book 5 in the series *The Other Side of the Mountain*. Department of Health, South Africa.

⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷ Number 38 of 2005 and 41 of 2007



Preparing for advocacy

There are several broad steps involved in advocacy, but it is important to remember that advocacy is a **process**.

1.1 Step 1: Identifying the issue

When identifying the issue on which you are going to advocate, it is better to identify which part of a broader issue you are going to focus on. For our purposes, it is also important to identify issues that are relevant for children and their protection. A good way of making decisions about what to advocate for is to look at the situation from a child rights perspective.

Opportunities for advocacy:

As all countries in the world (except for Somalia and the United States of America) have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the rights that are protected by the CRC are as good a place to start as any.

For example, advocacy undertaken by Smorgon Information Centre on Children and HRE (the Child Helpline in Belarus) undertook advocacy aimed at 'teaching, promoting and protecting children's rights at school and in society'⁸. Activities include an annual drawing competition among primary schools, and an annual essay competition among secondary schools. This is a good example of an advocacy campaign. Similarly, Borns Vilkar – one of two child helplines in Denmark – has made 'implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child' a priority in the last two years⁹.

Child helplines have unique access to an invaluable source of information from children themselves about the challenges facing them. This can and should inform the nature of the advocacy work that child helplines undertake. Advocating for

children is also best done with an agreed objective in partnerships with other civil society organisations working in the same field. Their experience of trying to assist children should feed into the decisions about what to advocate for and can shape what other organisations and even governments do.

A note on 'civil society':

'Civil society' is defined and understood in various ways. Wikipedia, for example, defines it as *'the totality of voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society as opposed to the force-backed structures of a state (regardless of that state's political system) and commercial institutions of the market'*¹⁰. A very comprehensive definition is provided by the Centre for Civil Society, based within the Department of Social Policy at the London School of Economics: *Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the State, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between State, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups'*¹¹.

International opportunities:

In response to the mandatory Periodic Reports from each country which has ratified the UNCRC, it is often helpful if the

⁸ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Smorgon Information Centre on Children and HRE (Belarus), March 2009.

⁹ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Borns Vilkar (Denmark), April 2009.

¹⁰ Accessed at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_society on 6th July 2009.

¹¹ Centre for Civil Society website. Accessed at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/introduction.htm> on 6th July 2009.

issue on which one is advocating links to issues related to the Concluding Observations made by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). (For more about the UNCRC and the work of the CRC, please see the section on international and regional instruments below).

National opportunities:

Issues for advocacy often arise when a country is reviewing its legislation or policy. This often provides opportunities for civil society to organise and ensure that it participates in the process of making or amending laws and policies. A good example of a high level of involvement in advocating for law reform is provided by the experience of the Childline South Africa. Because South Africa had ratified both the CRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), it was obliged to ensure that the provisions of the treaties were reflected in domestic law. This provided an ideal opportunity for civil society organisations to make submissions about changes to the sections of the Children's Act to better ensure the protection of children. Childline South Africa was very involved in this process, and the final Act reflects quite a lot of their input¹². The input from Childline South Africa was based directly on their experience of failures within the child protection system in South Africa¹³.

Similarly, Kenya is currently reviewing its Children's Act, and Childline Kenya is a key member of the coalition of children's organisations engaging with the review process¹⁴.

Child Helpline International

Child Helpline International, as the global coordinating structure for child helplines, has identified some key areas of advocacy. These too are a useful source of inspiration for the focus of your advocacy. They include:

- Improving the child protection system by advocating for toll-free, 3-4 digit, easy-to-remember telephone numbers at the national, regional and international levels;
- Speaking at conferences around the world on children's issues and child helplines as key tools towards child protection on a global scale;
- Increasing the recognition of children's voices by collecting data on the reasons why children call child helplines around the world, and documenting this information in CHI's annual publication, *Connecting to Children*;

- Participating in UN processes by regularly submitting recommendations to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; and
- Working with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU).

Thus, in identifying which issues to advocate on, one should consider the following:

- What are children saying about what is challenging them, i.e. what are children telling you via your helplines?
- Based on your direct experiences, what are the issues being identified by civil society as requiring attention, i.e. what is happening in the networks of which you are part?
- What is happening around the protection of the rights of children in your country at this time?

Many members of Child Helpline International who participated in the survey related to the development of this Guide identified the fact that the helpline number needed to be well known across all sectors of their society. Consejo de los Derechos de Ninas, Ninos y Adolescentes in Argentina, for example, went on from this identification of the problem to develop an action plan (see Step 4 below). The action plan included a wide-spread awareness campaign on child rights, and child participation in the design of their new logo¹⁵.

1.2 Step 2: Mapping the environment and understanding the problem

Before you begin advocacy work, you need to find out as much as you can about the issue on which you wish to advocate. This will help you understand the challenges you are taking on, and provide you with the facts and information you will need to make your arguments. A critical component of the knowledge and information that you need is an understanding of the way in which the issue is viewed, both in the public arena and by decision makers.

Be clear about the issue:

For an advocacy process to be successful, clarity is needed on what the feeling in the country or community is about the issue, and who one needs to convince. For example, when the

¹² There are nine child helplines in South Africa – one in each of the nine provinces. Childline South Africa is the national coordinating structure of the nine provincial child helplines. The submissions made to the Children's Act by some of the nine child helplines can be accessed at http://www.ci.org.za/site/includes/content/PolicyLawReform/projects/sub_prov_parliament.html

¹³ Van Niekerk, J, National Coordinator of Childline South Africa, personal communication.

¹⁴ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Childline, Kenya, May 2009.

¹⁵ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Child Helpline Argentina, March 2009.

Working Group on Positive Discipline¹⁶ was advocating for the prohibition of corporal punishment in the home during the passage of the Children's Act in 2007 in South Africa, its failure to identify a strong political champion for the issue was a significant contributor to the fact that it did not succeed in having the ban included in the legislation. Although significant support from within the ruling party (in this case, the African National Congress [ANC]) was evident, there was not in the end sufficient support from a powerful-enough figure to get the prohibition into legislation¹⁷.

Thus, it is critically important to be clear about how the issue is viewed, both at the level of political decision-making and among people on the ground, and the arguments that will be used to oppose it.

Research and evidence:

Thoroughly researching the issue is also very important as, to be successful, it is also important that advocates are in possession of all the relevant facts. This will ensure that you are able to explain the issue to the people that you need to convince, and it will give you the confidence to respond to the resistance you will encounter. Therefore, you should find statistics, facts and information to support your arguments. Kids Helpline in Australia, for example, stated that an important element of their advocacy strategy was 'providing data and information directly from services about the real time issues that are affecting children and young people'¹⁸.

Kék Vonal, the child helpline in Hungary, advocated successfully for the availability of the helpline number from all telephone networks and the expansion of their service to a 24-hour-a-day one. They researched the issue very thoroughly, and linked their advocacy to long-term government child protection objectives. They achieved their objectives, including being linked to the harmonised European helpline number¹⁹.

It is important to note the sources of your information so that they can be verified if necessary. Personal stories and case histories are helpful in getting the people that you are trying to convince to identify with the issue (while, of course, protecting the identity of individual children). Child helplines again enjoy a unique advantage here in that they have unparalleled access to

what children themselves feel about an issue. Thus, in advocating for something to the 'powers that be' they can speak from the position of communicating what children themselves have experienced and related.

1.3 Step 3: Mapping the strategy

There are several elements in mapping the strategy: developing aim and objectives, identifying the audience, developing the message, and identifying the necessary resources and their availability. The experience of the Ugandan Child Helpline is a good illustration of the importance of mapping the strategy.

Developing aim and objectives:

Before starting your advocacy, you need clarity on the aim and objectives of your advocacy. To establish what your **aim** is, you can ask yourself what you are trying to achieve overall. You can then decide about the **objectives** of your advocacy by asking yourselves what specific things you want to achieve.

The overall **aim** of the advocacy of the Ugandan Child Helpline was to:

- promote the Child Helpline as an effective referral system targeting government and non-government child actors; and
- obtain an easy-to-remember number for the Helpline, preferably one with only 3 digits.

Their specific **objectives** were to:

- have the easy-to-remember number in place;
- make children and the general public aware of the Helpline; and
- establish a functional referral system in the districts, comprised of government and non-government actors.

The first use of the term SMART as a way of developing objectives is unknown, but Peter Drucker, in his 1954 seminal work, *The Practice of Management*, outlined a system that was very similar to SMART objectives while discussing objective-based management.

¹⁶ <http://www.rapcan.org.za/home/>, click on Working Group on Positive Discipline

¹⁷ Bower, C. 2008. Evaluation of advocacy towards the prohibition of parental corporal punishment. Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN). Unpublished, available from info@rapcan.org.za.

¹⁸ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Kids Helpline Australia, March 2009

¹⁹ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Kék Vonal Hungary, March 2009

The Ugandan objectives fulfil the criteria of being SMART:

Specific	Exactly what do you want to change?
Measureable	How will you know that you have achieved your aim?
Action-oriented	Are you able to actually do whatever it is you are planning?
Realistic	Consider your financial and human resources and time.
Time-bound	Set a time limit and then assess what you have achieved.

After the conclusion of these advocacy activities, these objectives were fulfilled²⁰:

- there was usage of the child helpline facility, indicating heightened awareness;
- the referral system had been set up in 30 districts; and
- a 5-digit number had been granted, although this still needs to be officially gazetted and approved by the Ugandan Communications Commission.

Identifying the audience:

Now you need to decide who you are going to focus your activities on – who are you going to target? You need answers to questions like:

Who has the power to make the changes you would like to see?
Who can help you achieve the changes, and your advocacy aim?
Who will make the decisions about this issue?

Questions to help with identifying the target

- Who do we want to target – is this an organisation, a government department, a group or an individual?
- How will we make contact?
- What influence does the person or group have?
- What do we know about how they feel about this issue?
- What do we want them to do?
- What can we do to influence them?

The answers to these questions can include decision-makers, people who are respected in communities or in the country, political and community leaders, and members of the public at large and in communities. Sometimes, the direct targets that you would like to reach are not accessible to you; in this case, you can work with people who can influence them, that is, you can work with indirect targets.

The Stop It Now Child Helpline, one of two in the United States of America, has shown the benefits of clearly indentifying the targets for advocacy²¹. They were able, through a Board member, to gain access to a professional lobbyist based in Washington DC; this has strengthened their ability to impact on policy and influenced the funding criteria of their Federal Government to include support for child sexual abuse prevention and response.

The child helpline in Thailand was able to successfully advocate for an improved understanding of and practice around child protection by targeting a wide range of government and civil society role-players, resulting in new protocols for child protection being developed by the National Child Protection Committee²².

Developing the message:

One of the challenges of advocacy is that the issues are often complex and it is difficult to explain everything that you are trying to do and keep your audience 'with' you. Also, you may be targeting more than one audience with any specific body of advocacy work. A clear message is needed, which encapsulates what you want to achieve, why and how you will do something, and what you need from your audience. You need your message to inspire support for your issue.

Remember that decision makers are usually busy people with little time to read or listen to long arguments, no matter how powerfully they may be. In addition, you can never predict when and where you might 'bump into' or have an unforeseen meeting with a decision maker, where you have limited time to make an impression or wet their appetite. Therefore, it is important to deliver a message that is clear and succinct.

The message will also be different depending on the audience. For decision makers, the message should:

- Be short and powerful.
- Be respectful and make clear that their support is important.
- Provide information about who else supports what you are trying to do.
- Provide information, if it exists, of success in other countries or sectors.
- Show the benefits for the beneficiary group or the country.
- Provide guidance on the kinds of actions they should take.

²⁰ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Ugandan Child Helpline, March 2009

²¹ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Stop It Now, USA, March 2009

²² Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Childline Thailand, March 2009

For the general public, the message should:

- Be clear – use plain language.
- Give basic statistics and information about the issue.
- Draw on local examples that people can identify with.
- Provide information on the benefits to the community.

An example of a good message is what has become known as the key finding from the UN Secretary General's Global Study on Violence against Children²³; undertaken by Prof. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, the findings were released in October 2006 and the major finding was that 'no violence against children is justifiable and all violence against children is preventable'.

When Fonoinfancia, the child helpline in Chile commenced its ongoing advocacy on the rights of the youngest children – those in nursery schools and infant care situations – it linked its message to the focus by UNICEF on early childhood development which was in place at the time. This has resulted in the production of materials that will reach 75,000 children and families and 10,000 government employees²⁴.

Identifying resources:

Although it is a fallacy that advocacy work requires significant financial resources, it always needs *other resources*. These include human and financial resources, skill and expertise, infrastructure (computers, internet access, telephones etc.) and information. One way of keeping costs down is to work with other organisations, sharing resources and communicating with the most useful people. One example is the advocacy campaign undertaken by the Working Group on Positive Discipline (of which Childline South Africa is a member) mentioned in Step 2 above. Access to a relatively small amount of funding and the fact that one organisation acted as a Secretariat to the group played a significant role in its success²⁵.

1.4 Step 4: Finding the 'hooks'

The final stage of your preparation for advocacy includes building support for your issue, creating an action plan and (very importantly) preparing for resistance. As it is often true that child rights are poorly understood, you can expect resistance to your efforts to put them on the agenda, at all levels, from community to law makers.

Building support:

The more people and organisations that support your aim and position, the likelier it is that your advocacy will succeed. From your activities in relation to Step 2 (mapping the environment), you will have identified who is 'on your side'. In building support, you need to involve those people and groups. You can do this by consulting with them, hosting workshops and other information-sharing opportunities, and working together with them in your advocacy.

In building support, it is important that you work initially with individuals and groups who already share at least some of your view and agree that the issue you are dealing with is important. For instance, when the Working Group on Positive Discipline was advocating in South Africa for the prohibition of parental corporal punishment, they found that it was more useful to begin by convincing organisations which had already begun thinking about this issue than those who were vehemently opposed.²⁶ Therefore you should seek out these groups in the initial stages of your advocacy. Later, the group was able to concentrate on bringing those who disagree into agreement with them – which is much easier if you speak as a larger group than if you do so individually.

Partnerships are important in advocacy as they facilitate sharing experience and resources, make the workload more manageable, and expand the base of contacts and support. This was certainly the experience of Child Helpline Albania in advocating for the protection of children's rights – they worked with other non-profit organisations (NPOs) as well as with government structures to achieve their goals.²⁷ In particular, they worked with the Child Board and the Youth Board, and with Parliamentarians and a range of sister NPOs. Similarly, ChildLine Trinidad & Tobago worked in collaboration with a range of stake holders, including:

- International and national agencies, such as UNICEF, UNAIDS and IOM;
- Various government ministries, including Community Development and Gender Affairs, Social Development, Education and the police;
- Other stakeholders in the non-profit sector committed to child welfare and protection.
- Decision makers in the private sector to coordinate partnership and funding of project proposals, e.g. IT technology and support²⁸.

²³ Pinheiro, P.S. 2006. World Report on Violence against Children. United Nations.

²⁴ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Fonoinfancia Chile, March 2009.

²⁵ Bower, op cit.

²⁶ Bower, ibid.

²⁷ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Child Helpline, Albania, April 2009.

²⁸ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by ChildLine Trinidad & Tobago, March 2009.

The experience of Corpolatin, Colombia, illustrates very clearly the importance of partnerships. In their promotion of their helpline number, they focused also on advocating for support agreements with a range of government and private sector institutions – and this was not limited to financial support, but also to the resource and infrastructure requirements. Thus they were able to successfully bring on board advertising agencies, service delivery, technological skills and government departments²⁹.

Creating an action plan:

An action plan will set out the activities you need to undertake to achieve your objectives. It will also identify the targets of the activities, the required resources, who is responsible for which activities, and the time lines within which you are working.

Action plans should be seen as dynamic structures and should change when circumstances change. They are important because they help you to be organised, to plan and to remain focussed.

In Jordan, for instance, when the Jordan River Foundation was advocating for policies, programmes and human resources to enhance child protection, their planning involved³⁰:

- Drawing in the main partners in the field to collaboratively address the issues. These include the National Council for Family Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development.
- Presenting actual cases to these partners to illustrate the problems being experienced by children in ‘the system’.
- Analysing the gaps in the system and drawing these to the attention of the responsible parties.
- Arranging and holding meetings with decision makers.

Similarly, What’s Up, one of three child helplines in New Zealand, in mapping their strategy for advocacy, undertook the following key steps³¹:

- Lobbying ministerial officials.
- Approaching businesses for sponsorship support.
- Membership of and contribution to lobbying coalitions.
- Publication of information sheets.
- Media releases and interviews.
- Membership of and contribution to inter-sector service groups working for children’s health and welfare.
- Conference presentations.
- Presentations to community service organisations.

Preparing for resistance:

When you advocate for something, you are advocating for change. Change often creates resistance because it may be seen as threatening or expensive, it may mean more work, and it usually means that people have to change their views. In your mapping of the environment, you should have identified who opposes your view and why. Your activities when you were mapping the environment should have involved researching the issue and accessing statistics, facts and information to support your arguments. Now is the time to make sure that you have all these facts at your fingertips, and you can use them strategically to respond to resistance.

In summary – the four steps in preparing for advocacy are:

- Identify the issue.
- Map the environment – understanding the problem.
- Map the strategy – what do you want to achieve; who do you need to convince; what will you tell them; what will you need?
- Find the hooks – build support, create an action plan, prepare for resistance.

²⁹ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Corpolatin, Colombia, March 2009.

³⁰ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire Jordan River Foundation, Jordan, March 2009.

³¹ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by What’s Up New Zealand, March 2009.



Advocating

Now you are ready to begin your advocacy. This is not to say that you have not been advocating all along – all the steps you have gone through involve advocating to a greater or lesser degree, particularly when you are informing yourself and your alliance partners and building support. Now, however, you are commencing a process which is more focused on achieving your aim and objective as you implement your advocacy plan.

Advocacy is often a long process, and your aim may not be reached in the short term. However, your objectives will probably be achieved in a relatively short period. If nothing else, achieving your objectives will go a significant way towards accomplishing the ultimate change that you wish to see.

Strategising, lobbying and campaigning are specific activities used in the advocacy process. The plan which you implement will involve one or more of these, as well as using the media. We will now turn our attention to these activities.

2.1 Strategising

When you start advocating, you have a broad goal in mind – for example, you might want to work towards entrenching children's rights to protection from abuse and neglect. Your aim will contribute to this broad goal. Your strategy will tell you how you will achieve this. When strategising, it is important that you do not try to do everything at once – you should attempt something that is manageable and achievable. Remember that you can change the world by changing one thing at a time! The issue that is selected should contribute to achieving your broader advocacy goal. In other words, you should prioritise and select one clear aim with a few practical and easy-to-implement objectives - this is more likely to succeed than taking on everything about an issue.

Tips for successful lobbying

- Be prepared with statistics and facts.
- Provide information about the group that is taking on the issue.
- Provide reasons and evidence of how the changes you want to see have been implemented successfully elsewhere.
- Learn as much as you can about the person you are lobbying – what is their background and what are they interested in? Shape your arguments around this knowledge.
- Keep communication clear and succinct – what would you like done, why do you want this, and what do you want them to do.
- Build relationships with these people – invite them to meetings, provide them with information, and make sure they know who you are.
- Practice making your arguments with members of your alliance.
- Follow up and ask for feedback.

When strategising for advocacy, the timing of your work is very important. This was the experience of the Save the Children Alliance, when they were advocating for the reduction of the number of children in institutional care in Bulgaria. At that time, Bulgaria was acceding to the European Union, and the Alliance was concerned about the large numbers of children in institutional care. By timing its advocacy with regard to this issue with the European Union, the Alliance was able to ensure that the rights of these children were put onto the national agenda, resulting in a significant decrease in the number of such institutions over a relatively short space of time; between 2004 and 2007, 17% of them were closed down³².

³² Information accessed at <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=15877&flag=report,07/07/2009>.

2.2 Lobbying

The part of the advocacy process which is intended to change law and policy involves lobbying – communicating your message to decision makers to convince them of your case and gain their support for it. It can take the form of a letter, a submission to law and policy makers, or meeting with decision makers. To lobby successfully, you must identify these influential people and give them a reason to feel as passionate about the issue as you do.

To do this successfully, you have to do your homework!

Items that you should consider when writing a letter for advocacy letter can be found in Annex 1.

2.3 Campaigning

A campaign is a series of activities aimed at the public at large, intended to change attitudes and behaviour. On their own, campaigns seldom achieve the results you would like to see, and it is usually necessary to campaign as part of your advocacy strategy.

Campaigns need to capture the imagination of the public – they should make people think about what you are saying and why, and what you want to achieve. This means that campaign messages must be clear and accessible. Long drawn-out campaigns become stale, so they need to be evaluated often and decisions made about how to go forward. The ‘human touch’ can be useful in a campaign – although using real people and case histories can be dangerous for children, making them even more vulnerable, so this must be avoided. However, it is possible to use composite stories that do not identify real children, but which people can relate to.

2.4 Using the media

The media can be very helpful – or very damaging. It can ensure that you reach a much wider audience, and pressure can be put on decision makers to respond. However, it is often unpredictable as you usually do not have any control about what is the final product that goes out through the media. Nevertheless, the ability to write good press releases and cope with television and radio interviews can enhance your advocacy considerably. Sometimes newspapers will also accept opinion editorials (often called an ‘op ed’).

Issuing a press release:

This can be a very good way of drawing attention to and publicising your issue. Journalists are more likely to respond positively to covering a story if they have received a press release about it. Once the press release has been prepared, it should be sent to selected journalists and press associations by fax or e-mail. Once a press release has been received, the journalist will decide whether or not to cover the story. Clear contact information should be given as the journalist will want to contact someone if the story is covered.

A good press release will:

- Have a simple and interesting headline to get the journalists’ attention.
- Tell the reader in the first couple of sentences what the most important facts of the story are – who is involved, what is happening.
- Give more detailed information about these facts in the body of the press release.
- Give a short summary of the facts, with references.
- Provide contact details for further information.
- Be a maximum of one A4 page in length.

Direct quotes where appropriate can be very powerful – but make sure you get the permission of the person you want to quote. The press release should use short sentences (around 20 words), have short paragraphs (three or four sentences in each), and use accessible language. It should be presented on the letter head of the issuing organisation and include the date of the press release. Annex 2 shows an example of a press release.

Interviews:

Media interviews are a wonderful opportunity to reach a lot of people, raise awareness about an issue and build support. They can take different forms – radio, television, and print (newspapers and magazines). Journalists may suddenly contact you by telephoning for a quote or brief interview, but on other occasions, you will have some forewarning and time to prepare.

During the interview, try to stay calm and relaxed. Keep your answers short and use plain language. Don’t get side-tracked by the interviewer – you can say something like “I agree that is an interesting issue, but the main point is”. Repeat your key message and make sure that you make the points you want to make – repetition is an important part of communicating your key message. If you are asked something you do not know the answer to, it is better to tell the interviewer where they can find the information than to pretend that you know. Try not to fiddle and shift around in your seat, and maintain eye contact with the interviewer.

Preparing for an interview

- Get information about the **logistics** of the interview beforehand – where is it, when is it, how long will it be, and is anyone else being interviewed at the same time?
- Get information about the **format** of the interview – will it be live or pre-recorded, and will people be able to phone in and contribute or ask questions?
- Get information about the **content** – define the issues clearly and find out who the target audience is. Check whether the interviewer is supportive or will be challenging you. You can ask for a list of questions ahead of time, but this is not always possible.
- Prepare relevant background material ahead of time – facts, figures, a case-history. Check that your information is accurate and up-to-date.
- Think about the main message you want to convey, and a few key points to explain it. Do not try to say everything about the issue in one interview.
- Prepare a few catchy sentences (sound bites) that summarise your message.

Writing an ‘op ed’

An ‘op-ed’ is an **opinion editorial**, usually published in a newspaper or journal. Essentially, a good ‘op-ed’ piece will follow the guidelines given for a press release. However, the body of the piece will most likely be longer than a press release. It is a good idea to find out how long a piece should be so that it is considered by the newspaper in which you would like your piece to appear. It is important to provide reliable and current statistics and information, and the sources of your facts. It is not usual to give contact details, but brief information about where the writer comes from is usually given. Send your piece to the editors of the weekend newspapers as these usually have more space for opinion rather than ‘news’.

2.5 Using UN and regional instruments

Both the United Nations and the African Union have child rights instruments which can be used by child helplines to identify issues on which to advocate, linked to the issues that children themselves are raising. As previously stated, child helplines have incomparable access to the things which are troubling and challenging children. These issues can be linked to the rights codified in child rights instruments themselves, raising them with decision makers in the country. They can also be raised in the process of reporting on these instruments to the relevant United Nations and African Union

Committees, or in responding to the concerns outlined by the relevant committees in their responses to Country Reports (see below for an explanation of these vehicles for advocacy).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the most ratified human rights instrument in human history, having been ratified by 191 of the 193 UN member-States. Only Somalia and the United States of America have not ratified it. The full text of the CRC can be found at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

Once a country ratifies the CRC, it is under obligation to domesticate it (i.e. develop national law which reflects its principles and provisions). This is monitored by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Further information on the CRC can be found on the website of the CRC at www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm. Information about the status of ratifications of the UNCRC is available at http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en

In addition, countries which have ratified the UNCRC are expected to report to the CRC at regular intervals about progress towards the realisation of child rights in their country. An Initial Report is due two years after ratification and Periodic Reports every five years thereafter. The CRC has provided guidelines on writing Country Reports – these are slightly different for Initial and Periodic Country Reports. The Guidelines are available at [www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CRC.C.5.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CRC.C.5.En?Opendocument) (Initial Reports), and [www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CRC.C.58.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CRC.C.58.En?Opendocument) (Periodic Reports).

The CRC reviews Initial and Periodic Country Reports when they become due, and issues a set of Concluding Observations. These provide a very useful starting point for child rights-focused advocacy. Civil society organisations such as child helplines with concerns about the situation of children in their country advocate for the issues raised as recommendations by the CRC in the Concluding Observations.

The Country Report and the Concluding Observations can be found as follows: go to the web page of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, CRC section (www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm), and choose ‘Sessions’ under ‘The Committee and its work’ on the left; then choose the session in which your country was reviewed, and then your country and the language in which you want to open the documents. This link will also provide you with information on the list of issues which the CRC wished to raise with individual countries.

The CRC also issues General Comments in which it interprets the provisions in the UNCRC. Thus far, it has issued 12 such General Comments as follows:

GC no.	Subject	Date
1	The aims of education	2002
2	The role of independent human rights institutions	2003
3	HIV and the rights of the child	2003
4	Adolescent health	2003
5	General measures on implementation for the CRC	2005
6	Treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside of their country of origin	2005
7	Implementing rights in early childhood	2006
8	The right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment	2006
9	The rights of children with disabilities	2006
10	Children's rights in juvenile justice	2007
11	Indigenous children and their rights under the Convention	2009
12	The right of the child to be heard	2009

The CRC expects that countries, in their Periodic Reports, will reference the General Comments and use these as the basis for more in-depth reporting on the status of children in their countries. Indeed, the General Comments provide specific information for Periodic Reports in relation to specific articles in the UNCRC. General Comments can be found on line at www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm.

Civil society engagement with the UNCRC and the CRC

The CRC does not rely only on Periodic Reports from governments to assess progress towards the realisation of child rights in a country. They also look at reports submitted by civil society – these are known variously as ‘Alternate’, ‘Supplementary’ or ‘Shadow’ Reports, but are perhaps best described simply as ‘Civil Society Reports’. They are due soon after the Periodic Reports submitted by countries, and are expected to reference the Periodic Report. The CRC acknowledges that Periodic Reports provide governments with an opportunity to enumerate their successes with regard to child rights, and usually

emphasise the development of law and policy. Reports from civil society can assist the CRC to gain a better understanding of what is happening on the ground, and with regard to the implementation of those laws and policies.

It is of concern that a large number of countries have not submitted reports which were due, and civil society can play a key role in motivating their governments to submit these. NGOs and other civil society groupings are encouraged to submit Civil Society Reports, and guidelines on doing so can be found on the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) website. CRIN is in general a very useful website for child rights advocates – it can be found at www.crin.org. CRIN defines itself as empowering the global child rights community through the exchange of information and the promotion of children's rights; it has over 2,000 member organisations, with links to over 16,000 sources of information and resources. The guideline can be found at www.crin.org/resources/find_NGO.asp?projID=9&sec=NGO&pagetitle=Guide+to+Reporting, and is available in a number of languages, including English, French and Spanish. Also useful are previous Civil Society Reports, submitted when earlier Periodic Reports were due. These can also be found on the CRIN website, by going to the home page, and selecting the name of the country you are interested in from the block headed ‘Information by Country’. This will also provide you with relevant information about activities and developments with regard to children's rights in the country of interest.

Using the UNCRC is a very useful advocacy tool. Although the CRC cannot force countries to implement appropriate legislation, or even to report to it in a timely manner, its Concluding Observations can draw attention to issues of concern and failure to address them can cause embarrassment for a government. Perhaps the greatest benefit of work with the UNCRC can be raising awareness and improving an understanding of child rights in countries. This is especially powerful when these issues and the violations of the rights of children are linked to the real experiences of children – an arena in which child helplines have rich and incomparable information.

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Forty-three of the 53 member states of the African Union have ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). The full text of the Charter can be found on the website of the African Union at www.africa-union.org/official_documents/Treaties_%20Conventions_%20Protocols/A.%20C.%2000N%20THE%20RIGHT%20AND%20WELF%20OF%20CHILD.pdf.

³³ Note that with regard to an individual complaints mechanism within the UNCRC, there are strong moves at the moment to develop an optional protocol to the UNCRC to provide for just such a mechanism.

The ACRWC is very similar to the UNCRC, and is actually stronger in a couple of important respects: it includes an individual complaints mechanism³³; it is stronger on the definition of a child (defining children as human beings under the age of 18 without reference to an earlier age of majority in some countries, as the UNCRC does); it declares the best interests of the child to be the (rather than a) paramount concern in all matters affecting the child; and it perceives the child in its family and community, rather than as an individual.

Civil society engagement with the ACRWC and the ACERWC

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) is the African Union counterpart of the CRC. Its website and information about its activities can be found at www.africa-union.org/child/home.htm. Once a country has ratified the Charter, it should submit an Initial Country Report in two years and thereafter, Periodic Reports at three-year intervals. The ACERWC also suggests that reports on the Charter, while not simply repeating the Periodic Report to the CRC, can be based on reports to the UNCRC.

The ACERWC is not as developed as the CRC, but is making progress in this regard. A manual on civil society engagement has been published recently – called *Advancing Children's Rights - A Guide for Civil Society Organisations on how to engage with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*³⁴.

The Council of Europe and child rights

The main human rights treaty of the Council of Europe (CoE), the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1943), deals with civil and political rights, but makes no mention of children's rights. The first provision for children added to this Convention was in Article 5 of Protocol No. 7, which was adopted in 1984.

The other major human rights treaty of the Council of Europe is the European Social Charter which sets out economic and social rights. The provisions relating to children's rights refer mainly to their right to protection in the workplace and from economic and social vulnerability.

The CoE has also adopted a number of specific treaties on children's rights which may be invoked to challenge breaches of these rights:

- European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights (1996) - this refers mainly to family proceedings.
- European Convention on the Legal Status of Children born out of Wedlock.
- European Convention on the Adoption of Children.
- European Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions concerning Custody of Children and on Restoration of Custody of Children.
- European Convention on Nationality.
- European Convention on the Repatriation of Minors.

The European Court of Human Rights monitors the compliance of States Parties to the European Convention on Human Rights, while the European Committee of Social Rights monitors compliance with the European Social Charter.

Civil society engagement with the UNCRC and the Council of Europe

The CoE views non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as a driving force in the social and cultural life of the community, a shield for basic rights and freedoms, and a vital counterweight to state activity. They make an essential contribution to the realisation and development of democratic societies, in particular through the promotion of public awareness and the participatory involvement of citizens.

For more information on the Council of Europe, please see the CRIN website at <http://www.crin.org/RM/coe.asp>.

2.6 Ethical and meaningful child participation

The notion of child participation is rooted in both the CRC (Article 12) and the African Charter (Article 4). In the latter case, participation of children in matters that affect them is confined to judicial processes which will affect children. However, it must be remembered that the Charter affirms in its Preamble its adherence to the UNCRC and when the UNCRC provides for greater protection of children's rights, it supercedes the African Charter.

Therefore, the participation of children in matters which affect them is seen as one of the four cornerstone rights of children (along with the right to survival and development, the right to protection, and that decisions should be taken in the best interests of the child). The guidelines on reporting to the CRC (for both governments and civil society) are clear about the

³⁴ Sheahan, F. 2009. Save the Children Sweden. A Guide for Civil Society Organisations on how to engage with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. It can be accessed at <http://www.crin.org/docs/AdvancingCSOguide.pdf>

importance of involving children in the reporting process, and indeed in any other matter which affects them. You cannot, therefore, advocate for the rights of children without children themselves.

Child participation is sometimes poorly understood and is often overlooked or not implemented because it is seen as difficult, and time and resource-consuming. The issue of the meaningful and ethical involvement of children is the subject of numerous guides in its own right, and beyond the scope of this Guide to Advocacy. However, when you 'get it right', the voices of children can enormously enhance the effectiveness of your work. And, of course, they have the right to be involved.

Two very good examples of involving children and young people were (i) the nine Regional Consultations which formed part of the Global Study on Violence against Children³⁵ in which children played a key role, and (ii) the involvement of a group of children in the development of the Children's Act in South Africa³⁶.

The Save the Children Alliance has developed a significant body of useful work on involving children and ensuring that their participation is meaningful and ethical – this can be found at www.savethechildren.net/alliance/resources/publications.html.

Another good example of ethical and meaningful child participation is the experience of the Kenyan NGO CRC Group (of which Childline Kenya is a member), in the preparation of the Alternate Report to the UNCRC. The contributions of children to the information-gathering process and their active and equal participation in the meeting with the CRC are seen as good practice benchmarks in ensuring that the voices of children are heard.³⁷

2.7 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are key activities to establish how successful your advocacy has been. Yet many of us are intimidated by the idea, and think that it is difficult to do. However, if you remember to keep it simple, you will not find

it nearly as hard as you thought it would be. To monitor and evaluate your progress and what you have achieved, you simply have to go back to your action plan and ask yourselves the questions in the box.

Questions to ask ourselves to monitor and evaluate our advocacy activities

- Did we achieve what we set out to do?
- What worked well?
- What did not work so well?
- What lessons have we learned – what should we do differently in the future?
- How has our advocacy activity benefited children?

Although the term 'monitoring and evaluation' tends to be used together as if it is only one activity, in fact monitoring and evaluation are two distinct sets of organisational activities, related but not identical. This is what Civicus has to say about monitoring and evaluation³⁸:

Monitoring is concerned with evaluating how you are doing against the plans you made during the planning phase of your work. It is the systematic collection and analysis of information as a project progresses. It is aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of a project. It helps to keep the work on track, and can let management know when things are going wrong. It enables you to determine whether the resources you have available are sufficient and are being well used, whether the capacity you have is sufficient and appropriate, and whether you are doing what you planned to do.

Evaluation is the comparison of actual project impacts against the agreed strategic plans. It looks at what you set out to do, at what you have accomplished, and how you accomplished it.

³⁵ Information about the Global Study can be found on the CRIN website and at www.violencestudy.org/r25.

³⁶ Information about children's participation in the development of the Children's Act can be found at www.ci.org.za/site/site_search_frameset.asp?mode=allwords&search=Dikwankwetla&submit=Search+

³⁷ Mbugua, Jane. 2009. The Kenya NGO CRC Committee. Unpublished presentation delivered at the Regional Conference on Law and Policy Development to Protect Children from Violence, Nairobi, June 2009.

³⁸ CIVICUS is an international alliance of members and partners at the local, national, regional and international levels, and includes civil society networks and organisations; trade unions; faith-based networks; professional associations; NGO capacity development organisations; philanthropic foundations and other funding bodies; businesses; and social responsibility programmes. An excellent monitoring and evaluation toolkit can be found at <http://www.civicus.org/new/media/Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation.pdf>.

2.8 Roles and leadership (including keeping track of activities at different levels)

As has already been said, advocacy is best undertaken in partnership with other civil society organisations – almost all the CHI members who participated in the process of developing this Guide have confirmed this.

It is usually useful for the work to be divided up amongst those who are participating in the advocacy. This, however, creates the need for some level of organisation and co-ordination. A good system involves either a lead organisation or a small secretariat of two or three lead organisations. The roles and responsibilities of this grouping appear in the box alongside.

Roles and leadership

- Facilitate joint strategising and planning
- Convene meetings to discuss activities and strategies
- Facilitate the gathering of information and research
- Keep track of minutes from meetings
- Keep members of the network informed about the activities of other members
- Ensure that members of the network are aware of when their colleagues need support

2.9 Leveraging budgets

Not all child helplines are initiated and managed by civil society organisations, and most work closely with governments, often delivering services to children on behalf of or in partnership with government. An important part of advocating for children in this situation includes accessing funds from government for the work of the child helpline. A number of child helplines have successfully advocated for financial and / or logistical support from their governments.

Fonoinfancia in Chile, for instance, became integrated into the government's System for Integrated Care in Early Childhood, which facilitated the continuation of the service³⁹. Bantay Bata in Philippines was able to obtain funding from local government to pay for training of stake holders on child protection⁴⁰. hildLine Trinidad and Tobago is in regular liaison with

government ministers and senior public servants regarding funding for their work⁴¹, and 2nd Floor, New Jersey, obtained funding from their state government to fund the development of promotional materials⁴².

In summary, there are a number of different activities involved in advocacy:

- Strategising
- Lobbying
- Campaigning
- Using the media
- Using UN and Regional child rights instruments
- The participation of children and young people
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Taking on roles and leadership
- Leveraging budgets

2.10 How your target influences your activities

Different activities will come into play depending on who your advocacy is targeting.

At the level of the **family**, where the targets are care-giver(s) and children themselves, the strategies will include raising an issue for discussion, reviewing the messages about the issue, providing support to individual families, building the capacity of community workers, mobilising the community and ensuring that community members are aware of and literate about the issue.

At **community** level, the targets are faith-based organisations, voluntary associations and other community-based organisations, and community leadership. The strategies and activities will include raising an issue for discussion, collecting evidence, assessing what needs to be changed, making evidence-based information available, networking and coordination, capacity-building (including literacy around the issue and awareness-raising), and the participation of children and young people.

Letters to the press or to influential people can be written as a group or as an individual, highlighting the issues, providing

³⁹ Fonoinfancia, op cit.

⁴⁰ Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by Bantay Bata Philippines, March 2009.

⁴¹ Trinidad and Tobago, op cit.

⁴² Responses to Child Helplines International Advocacy Manual Questionnaire by 2nd Floor, United States of America, March 2009.

information and suggesting ways of addressing the issues. Press releases are another way of involving the media, as is ensuring that journalists are familiar with the issues and can write and talk about them with understanding and knowledge. Community mobilisation using demonstrations, marches and public meetings are also helpful techniques for advocacy.

At **district** (or local government) level, schools, clinics, early childhood development programmes, the police, and hospitals and clinics – in other words, the providers of basic services – should be targeted.

Important strategies at this level include raising an issue for discussion, writing submissions and letters to decision-makers, training and capacity-building (including literacy around the issue and awareness-raising), lobbying one-on-one and using the media to raise the issues we are concerned about and inform people about them.

Research is important at this level, as is monitoring implementation of law and policy, and the evaluation of programmes and projects. Networking and coordinating are critical components of success, as is careful planning.

At **provincial** level, the targets are the provincial decision makers, depending on the structure of government in your country. Again, raising an issue for discussion is important, and writing submissions and letters can be used to achieve this. Lobbying one-on-one is useful at this level with the legislative arm of provincial governments, and training and capacity-building is important with the implementing arm. Research, monitoring implementation, evaluation, documenting and reporting are all useful advocacy tools at the provincial level. Networking and coordinating are important at every level of advocacy, including this one.

At **national** level, parliamentarians are targeted, and again the targets should include both the legislative and administrative components of government. Where they exist, Human Rights Commissions, Gender Equality Commissions, the public service and police service should also be targeted.

Strategies and activities related to advocating for the rights of children at this level should ensure that issues are brought up for discussion, and can involve writing submissions and letters, lobbying one-on-one, and using the media to get the message out. Research, monitoring implementation of law and policy and evaluation of programmes and projects are an important component of advocacy at this level also. Networking and coordination at national level is also important.

NGOs form part of the provincial and national levels. Here, training and capacity building are very important to build literacy and raise awareness around the issue. Research and evaluation are good tools at this level, and networking and coordination across sectors is critical. Strategic alignment and careful planning of advocacy activities is often the key to success.

At the **regional** (or continental) level, there are a number of mechanisms which can be used to advocate for the rights of children, depending on what is in place in your region in terms of the protection of child rights. For example, Africans can refer to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), while child rights advocates in other parts of the world can use their regional instruments.

Writing submissions and letters, research on the situation of children, and monitoring and reporting on the implementation of international treaties are important advocacy activities at this level.

Finally, at the **global** level, there are several targets for advocacy including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and the UN Committees that monitor the protection of the rights outlined in the Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention against Torture. In addition, international bodies such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) can also be targeted.

Advocacy at this level is related mainly to the development and submission of Alternate Reports to the Committees that oversee the protection of these rights. These Alternate Reports are based on research, documentation and monitoring.

Conclusion

Advocating for the rights of children is critically important work in a world where child rights are often poorly understood and where children are in general the most vulnerable to the challenges of war, violence, poverty, illness and exploitation, none of which are of their making. It is our duty and responsibility as adults, and a privilege, to act to ensure that the youngest and most vulnerable of human beings are allowed to grow and flourish and reach their full potential. Children are indeed the future, as we so often hear – but that future will be informed and shaped by reality. Child helplines have unrivalled access to information on what children experience as

challenging and difficult. Therefore, they have a special obligation to use their information from children to work towards the realisation of the rights of all children.

Evidence of the vital role played by child helplines globally is provided by the fact that the Global Study on Violence Against Children has as one of its overarching recommendations the following (emphasis added with bold):

I recommend that States should establish safe, well-publicised, confidential and accessible mechanisms for children, their representatives and others to report violence against children. All children, including those in care and justice institutions, should be aware of the existence of mechanisms of complaint. **Mechanisms such as telephone helplines through which children can report violence, speak to a trained counsellor in confidence and ask for support and advice should be established** and the creation of other ways of reporting violence through new technologies should be considered⁴³.

⁴³ Pinheiro, Paulo Sérgio. 2006. World Report on Violence against Children, p19. United Nations, New York.



Annexes

Annex 1 Items to consider when writing advocacy items

In advocacy letters, please be mindful of the following items:

Advocacy letter addressed to politicians or decision makers to change or implement laws

- Be courteous/polite
- In the introduction, state why you are writing the letter and who you are
- Point out achievements already made, be specific, use national data
- Point out laws or proposed law excerpts that pertain to your situation and that you would like to have changed or implemented in a better way
- Propose a new article, adapted text or recommendations to attain what your seeking
- Make your case: use data from the child helpline and partners on violations, case studies, examples from other countries etc.
- Propose to meet in person so that the issue can be discussed face to face/utter the hope that you will be invited for a personal conversation to discuss the issue
- Point out projects of the child helpline and your role in protecting children
- Closing statement and thank you

Advocacy letter to politicians and decisions makers for increased budget for child protection (on a particular topic)

- Be courteous/polite
- In the introduction, state why you are writing the letter and who you are
- Point out achievements already made, be specific, use national data
- Point out projects of the child helpline and your role in protecting children
- What is going wrong? Point to lack of funding. Tie lack of funding to case studies and data on child protection failures.
- Make your case: use data from the child helpline and partners on violations, case studies, examples from other countries etc.

- Make a proposal for how things should be changed and improved
- Propose to meet in person so that the issue can be discussed face to face/utter the hope that you will be invited for a personal conversation to discuss the issue
- Closing statement and thank you

Advocacy letter to allied system for increased child protection (on a particular topic)

- Be courteous/polite
- In the introduction, state why you are writing the letter and who you are
- Point out achievements already made, be specific, use national data
- Point out projects of the child helpline and your role in protecting children
- What is going wrong? What violations are not being addressed? What should change?
- Make your case: use data from the child helpline and partners on violations, case studies, examples from other countries etc.
- Make a proposal for how things should be changed and improved
- Propose to meet in person so that the issue can be discussed face to face/utter the hope that you will be invited for a personal conversation to discuss the issue
- Closing statement and thank you

Advocating for toll free number with telecommunication authorities and telecom providers

- Be courteous/polite
- In the introduction, state why you are writing the letter and who you are
- Point out achievements already made, be specific, use data from your child helpline
- Point out projects of the child helpline and your role in protecting children
- Emphasise the importance of toll free numbers. Use data and examples from Connecting to Children (child helplines can

always ask the CHI Secretariat for support letters and specific data or information)

- Make your case: use data from the child helpline and partners on violations, case studies, examples from other countries etc.
- Make a proposal for how things should be changed and improved: which number would you like to have allocated and how
- Propose to meet in person so that the issue can be discussed face to face/utter the hope that you will be invited for a personal conversation to discuss the issue
- Closing statement and thank you

Annex 2 Example of a press release

Example of a press release

MEDIA STATEMENT

Positive discipline - long term solution to developing children into responsible adults

Cape Town, 16 September 2007 – Following community consultations on the draft Children’s Amendment Bill that were held in four provinces during August, the Portfolio Committee on Social Development announced that public hearings will be held in Parliament on Tuesday, 18 September 2007.

The National Assembly will consider some of the issues that were raised during the provincial consultations, and will afford another platform to various groups to discuss the merits of banning corporal punishment in homes, as included in the current draft of the Bill.

Children and youth who also presented during the provincial consultations gave unanimous support for the ban of corporal punishment in homes and recommended the promotion of positive and guiding relationships between parents and children.

Their views are strongly endorsed by a working group on corporal punishment, which includes child rights advocates and experts on prevention and management of abuse and neglect, child development, child law and child care from various civil society and faith-based

The Social Development committee will also hear submissions from groups that are against the ban of corporal punishment.

Despite such calls to exclude the ban from the final Bill, numerous valid reasons exist to oblige parliament – and society – to outlaw smacking and hitting of children as a way of disciplining them. The organizations and bodies represented in the working group are aware of numerous reports and instances which indicate that many South African children are subjected to beatings with belts, sticks, cables and hosepipes on a daily basis.

“We mustn’t underestimate the contribution of violence experienced in childhood to the violent nature of our society,” concludes Carol Bower, an independent consultant specializing in child rights and prevention of abuse.

Issued on behalf of the working group on the banning of corporal punishment by Meropa Communications, telephone 011 772 1000.

To obtain further information or schedule interviews, please contact Thembakazi Skenqa, telephone 011 772 1062, cell: 072 332 3708, email: thembakazis@meropa.co.za

Annex 3 Useful websites

- For information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child: www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm
- For information on the Committee on the Rights of the Child: [www.2,ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm).
- For information about the status of ratifications of the UNCRC: www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/ratification/11.htm.
- The Guidelines for report-writing: [www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CRC.C.5.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CRC.C.5.En?Opendocument) (Initial Reports); [www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CRC.C.58.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CRC.C.58.En?Opendocument) (Periodic Reports).
- For information on your country's reporting to the CRC: www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm), and choose 'Sessions' under 'The Committee and its work' on the left; then choose the session in which your country was reviewed, and then your country and the language in which you want to open the documents. This link will also provide you with information on the list of issues which the CRC wished to raise with individual countries
- General Comments: www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm.
- The CSO guideline for the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: www.crin.org/resources/find_NGO.asp?projID=9&sec=NGO&page=title=Guide+to+Reporting
- For information on the African Children's Charter: www.africa-union.org/official_documents/Treaties_%20Conventions_%20Protocols/A.%20C.%20ON%20THE%20RIGHT%20AND%20WELF%20OF%20CHILD.pdf.
- For information about the Council of Europe: <http://www.crin.org/RM/coe.asp>
A very useful source for all sorts of information about child rights is the Child Rights Information Network website at www.crin.org

Also useful is the website of the Save the Children Alliance: www.savethechildren.net/alliance/resources/publications.html. www.savethechildren.net/alliance/resources/publications.html.

Also useful for information about advocacy is the website of the Children's Institute:

http://www.ci.org.za/site/includes/content/PolicyLawReform/projects/sub_prov_parliament.html

- For information about monitoring and evaluation: <http://www.civicus.org/new/media/Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation.pdf><http://www.civicus.org/new/media/Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation.pdf>



Child Helpline International

www.childhelplineinternational.org