

Global Connections Relief and Development Forum

“A Voice for the Voiceless” (role of advocacy)

15 November 2005

Principles of Good Practice

Paper from session “*Supporting Southern Partners in Advocacy*”, given by Naomi Sosa, Tearfund

- Consider whether it is best, given the situation, for those affected by injustice to do advocacy work or whether it should be done on their behalf. In some situations it may be appropriate and more effective for the northern organisation or its partner organisations to advocate on behalf of poor people, having consulted them fully. However, where possible advocacy work should be carried out by those affected, with the support of the northern organisation or its partners.
- If advocacy is done on behalf of poor people, ensure that there is a capacity development element so that poor people themselves can start to become agents of change.
- Advocacy work is often done in an ad hoc way. Ensure that there is systematic planning so that advocacy work can be most effective. Carry out a needs assessment with full community involvement to identify needs and possibility of an advocacy intervention.
- Gain an understanding of the wider political and social context in order to analyse the root causes of poverty in the community. This involves participatory research with the community and desk-based research.
- Consider advocacy as one of the solutions when development projects are designed. Advocacy work can be a legitimate development project in its own right.
- Identify all stakeholders, their interests and their influence over the issue.
- Carry out a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis to show that the partner has the capacity to carry out advocacy work. This should show the organisation’s commitment to advocacy, internal systems and structures and staff skills and external linkages to support advocacy work.
- Advocacy work brings challenges that need to be addressed carefully. These include the diversion of resources from other development activities, disempowering groups by speaking for them without consultation or agreement, temptation to compromise due to involvement with power structures, and threat of loss of property, job or personal safety. Therefore, carry out a full risk assessment.

- Ensure that the budget clearly shows advocacy costs (e.g. staff and travel) as there may be a tendency for organisations to think that advocacy costs nothing.
- Become involved in networks, as increases the effectiveness of advocacy work through pooling of resources (money, skills, information, contacts), strength in numbers and avoiding duplication.
- Seek to build relationships with policy makers, even if not currently lobbying about an issue so that in a crisis situation fast and effective contact can be made.
- Consider that advocacy is not just about lobbying politicians. It includes campaigning work, awareness raising, media work, modelling a different lifestyle, peaceful civil disobedience and may focus on authorities in the public, private and civil society sectors.
- Ensure that advocacy work seeks to propose alternatives or solutions, and does not just criticise the current situation.
- Since we are dependent on God's power, ensure that prayer is integral to advocacy work, in planning and implementation.
- Ensure that advocacy work is non-violent in order to maintain legitimacy and reflect our biblical values.
- Document the learning from advocacy experiences, share it and seek to learn from others' experiences.
- Review advocacy work regularly to take account of changing contexts.
- Ensure that advocates show respect. They can criticise actions and policies but should not make personal attacks on individual policy makers.
- Encourage advocates to be an example in their lifestyles, in actions, professionalism and speech, not leaving room for personal criticism.
- Encourage advocates to act with integrity, ensuring that any issues that they have asked decision-makers to address, are also being addressed within their own organisation

(Handout in session: "Supporting Southern Partners in Mission" : Naomi Sosa, Desk Officer, Latin America and Haiti Region, Tearfund).