

Toolkit for Children and Young People's Participation in Advocacy



**SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES**

Toolkit for Children and Young People's Participation in Advocacy

This Toolkit was commissioned by SOS Children's Villages International, and researched and written by Harry Shier. The Toolkit benefitted from guidance, inputs and oversight of those in policy and advisory roles within SOS Children's Villages International, including Claudia Arisi (project manager), Almandina Guma, Chathuri Jayasooriya, Gabriella Rask and Arianna Tripodi.

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Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Using this Toolkit | 5 |
| 1. Introduction | 6 |
| 1.1 What is advocacy? | 6 |
| 1.2 Why engage children and young people in advocacy? | 7 |
| 2. Conditions for quality participation in advocacy | 10 |
| 2.1 Principles to ensure children and young people's right to be heard | 10 |
| 2.2 Nine essential requirements for effective participation | 11 |
| 2.3 Putting it into practice | 12 |
| 3. Advocacy methods | 14 |
| 3.1 An overview | 14 |
| 3.2 Advocacy actions: Children and young people creating opportunities | 16 |
| 3.3 Advocacy actions: Responding to opportunities that arise | 16 |
| 4. Assessing an advocacy opportunity | 18 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 18 |
| 4.2 Tools for initial situation assessment | 18 |
| 5. Preparation and planning | 22 |
| 5.1 Drawing up an action plan | 22 |
| 5.2 Identifying participants in the advocacy activity | 22 |
| 5.3 Identifying and preparing supporting/accompanying adults | 24 |
| 5.4 Building children and young people's capacity | 24 |
| 5.5 Risk assessment and safeguarding | 24 |
| 6. Communicating with children and young people | 26 |
| 6.1 Listening to children and young people | 26 |
| 6.2 Voluntary participation and informed consent | 26 |
| 6.3 Helping children and young people become well-informed | 27 |
| 6.4 Representation and delegation | 28 |
| 6.5 Talking about safety and keeping ourselves safe | 28 |
| 7. Keeping children and young people safe | 30 |
| 7.1 Safeguarding policies | 30 |
| 7.2 Building staff capacity | 30 |
| 7.3 Risk assessment | 30 |
| 7.4 Safety away from home | 31 |
| 7.5 Online safety | 32 |
| 7.6 Use of images for publicity and media coverage | 32 |
| 7.7 When children and young people go public | 33 |
| 8. International and long-distance advocacy | 34 |
| 8.1 Planning ahead | 34 |
| 8.2 Administrative arrangements | 34 |
| 8.3 If a child or young person is unable to travel | 35 |
| 8.4 Logistics | 35 |
| 8.5 Preparing for long-distance/international travel | 35 |
| 8.6 Guidelines for accompanying adults | 36 |
| 9. Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and follow-up | 38 |
| 9.1 Critical Reflection | 38 |
| 9.2 Accountability to children and young people | 38 |
| 9.3 Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation | 38 |
| 9.4 Evaluating SCOPE | 39 |
| 9.5 Evaluating QUALITY | 40 |
| 9.6 Evaluating OUTCOMES | 40 |
| 9.7 What if nothing changes? | 40 |
| References | 42 |
| Online Resources | 43 |
| Publications available online | 43 |
| Websites with further information | 43 |

A young person from an SOS Children's Villages programme in Colombia painted her hands for international Red Hand Day. Each year on 12 February, children from around the world participate in awareness raising activities to end the use of children in armed conflict by both government military and armed groups.

Photo: © SOS Children's Villages Colombia.



"In my society it is very important to have young people like me and to inspire other young people to make a change. Not just talking, and saying that things are bad, but making changes. I like making changes – especially changes that are good for somebody else."

Member of the International Youth Coalition

Using this Toolkit

This Toolkit is intended as a practical resource for SOS Children's Villages' co-workers, including management at all levels, to contribute to continuous improvement of both practice and outcomes in supporting and facilitating advocacy activities by children and young people. It is different from other available tools on children and young people's advocacy, because it addresses the specific implications of involving children and young people with care experience (i.e. who live or have lived in alternative care outside their family of origin).

To ensure the relevance and "realness" of this Toolkit, the development process included an international consultation with children and young people, as well as co-workers, belonging to the wider SOS Children's Villages Federation in 20 countries across four continents.

All the feedback from this consultation has been studied, taken on board and "given due weight" in the drafting of the Toolkit. Some of the wise words of the children and young people who contributed are also shared, with respect for their privacy, throughout the text.

The Toolkit has been designed to complement guidance in the 2020 SOS Children's Villages Youth Participation User Guide¹, and the Youth Development User Guide², and builds on globally recognised standards of quality and safeguarding in child and youth participation.

Throughout the Toolkit you will find references to other resources in footnotes. Internet links to these are provided along with additional resources at the end.

¹ SOS Children's Villages (2020) Youth Participation User Guide.

² SOS Children's Villages (2020) Youth Development User Guide.

1.

Introduction

1.1 What is advocacy?

"For the first time in my life I had been given the chance to stand up and voice out girls rights and I did it with courage."

Young woman 18, Malawi

"Advocacy" originally meant speaking out for others, and for many centuries, adults have spoken out on behalf of their children and those in their care. Today, we recognise the power of self-advocacy, and the importance of supporting people so they can speak up for themselves. Voices that were formerly silenced or ignored, such as those of children and young people in care, can now be raised, heard, valued and acted on in decision-making.

SOS Children's Villages has an important role to play in supporting advocacy by and with children and young people living in alternative care settings, those leaving care, and all those for whom care experience is part of their personal history.

There are many ways to define advocacy, but SOS Children's Villages' basic working definition is:

Taking action to improve understandings, policies and practices that affect the rights and well-being of children and young people who have lost or risk losing parental care.

You can further specify and adapt this basic definition according to your context and need, involving children and young people in the discussion wherever possible. As the following pages will show, this definition covers:

- **Advocacy at all levels:**

It covers everything from action at an individual, home and family level, through local community-level advocacy, district, national or regional level, all the way to the international level.

- **Advocacy for many objectives:**

Raising awareness, pushing for better laws, improving policy and practice in public services, challenging injustice, defending human rights and more.

In this Toolkit, the focus is on advocacy with and by children and young people, whether on their own behalf or on behalf of others. As will be discussed in the following sections, adults may be closely involved as guides and collaborators, or, where children and young people take the lead, adults may take an accompaniment or facilitation role. All are valid forms of advocacy and can be effective when conditions are right.

1.2 Why engage children and young people in advocacy?

"You know your voice is important and somebody has to listen to you; I feel a power that I can make a change. I think it is important in every society that there are young people who do this – they will inspire other young people to also do this."

Member of the International Youth Coalition

As experts on their own lives, young people must be empowered to participate in all matters that are important to them. Participating in advocacy activities brings benefits at multiple levels: benefits for the individual participants, both directly and through improved policies and practices; and benefits for the wider society through evolving attitudes and understanding, leading to progressive social change.

Benefits for children and young people

"The young people's participation changed their entire view of the world around them."

Boy 17, Guatemala

- Children and young people can develop new knowledge and skills through the preparation and capacity-building stages, which are then practiced and perfected through experience in action.

These may include:

- communication and self-expression;
 - teamwork, sharing, problem-solving and social skills;
 - organising, negotiating, influencing and advocacy skills;
 - knowledge about rights;
 - understanding the social issues underlying the advocacy activity.
- Increased confidence and self-esteem, and a sense of their own capability as influencers and change-makers in their own lives and more widely.
 - Children and young people recognising themselves as rights-holders, able to defend their rights and support others in doing so, and as active citizens with a positive role to play in their community.
 - All the above combine to generate empowerment, which serves children and young people throughout their lives, as young people now and as adults in the future. This is particularly valuable to children and young people with care experience, who cannot count on empowerment factors that occur within families.
 - Empowerment enables children and young people to keep themselves safe: recognising and avoiding or dealing with risks, speaking up about abuse or mistreatment, seeking support when needed, and helping others in difficulty.
 - Children and young people skilled in dialogue and negotiation will have new kinds of conversations with parents and caregivers, leading to a more responsive parenting style based on mutual respect and understanding, better family conflict-solving, and improved quality of family life.

Benefits through improved policies and practices

"After the advocacy activity, the percentages showed that forced marriages do exist, but not as much as before; because many cases of abuse and violation of children's rights are regularly reported."

Young Woman 19, Benin

- Through advocacy, children and young people can bring about improvements in programme design and implementation, leading to programmes and practices which better respond to their needs and local context. This is particularly important to children and young people in alternative care settings, whose quality of life and future opportunities are directly affected by the in-care, leaving care and aftercare services they depend on.
- In addition, advocacy often plays a part in policy development, changing the overall direction of agencies, organisations and authorities to better serve the needs and respect the rights of children and young people. Again, this is particularly important to ensure justice and equality of opportunity for children and young people with experience of care.
- Improved policies and practices mean better outcomes with more efficient use of resources, which benefits the whole community.
- Advocacy makes organisations and authorities more accountable to those they serve, both directly and indirectly. Directly, through advocacy children and young people hold those in power accountable for their actions and omissions, highlighting failures and calling for change. Indirectly, where advocacy by children and young people is part of the institutional climate, decision-makers are kept permanently aware that they will be held accountable for their actions, or lack of action.

Benefits for the wider society

"I was able to speak up about my fundamental rights in front of government officials and public builders. I was able to change the mindset of many people towards people with disabilities. As a wheelchair user, the most difficult was to find an accessible place to participate in advocacy programs."

Young woman, Nepal

- Advocacy by children and young people over time helps build a national culture of respect for them as active citizens and recognition of their rights.
- Advocacy by children and young people helps to dispel false myths existing in many countries about problems associated with children's rights.
- Advocacy by children and young people puts pressure on decision-makers to improve mechanisms for hearing children's voices within society (or to create new mechanisms where these do not exist).
- In particular, advocacy by children and young people with care experience helps to combat stigma and stereotypes, and so contributes to equal opportunities for all.

SOS Children's Villages International advocates globally for the rights of children and young people who have lost, or risk losing, parental care. Their meaningful participation in advocacy brings to light the real issues in their lives that policymakers should prioritise to improve child care and protection policies and services. It also helps children and young people with care experience develop skills to become agents of change in their own lives and communities.

Case Study 1: Benin

Working in partnership with young people to advocate for their rights

(2007-Ongoing)



Action



- Child participation bodies called *Executive Councils of Children & Young People (ECC)* have been set up where children and young people elect their own representatives among their peers in SOS Children's Villages programmes to foster their participation.
- ECCs are consulted over what concerns children and young people in the programmes. They also participate in a wide range of activities: annual planning workshops, youth employability initiatives, inputs to concept notes, feasibility studies, etc.
- Advocacy issues include: Child marriage, corporal punishment, sexual harassment in schools, infanticide and gender inequality.
- Policies and information are translated in child friendly versions.
- Every Children's Council has an annual budget to conduct an advocacy project under the guidance of the national advocacy team.
- The Children's Councils are consulted by the government on development of key national policies (National Child Protection Policy, Children's Code, etc.).

Achievement



- Strong new official measures to combat sexual harassment in schools.
- Worked with UNICEF to jointly take a stance against ritual infanticide and schedule a national conference.
- Strengthened local authority response to corporal punishments in schools.
- Made possible the first football match where girls and boys played together.

Benefit



- Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child fulfilled in SOS Children's Villages Programmes.
- Sharing authority with adults develops children's autonomy, builds empowerment and leadership.
- Learning valuable skills for the future: public speaking stress management, engaging in dialogue and raising issues.
- Children report that showcasing a valuable contribution to the community in this way has helped develop their self-esteem.

2.

Conditions for quality participation in advocacy

2.1 Principles to ensure children and young people's right to participate

Principle 1: Participation is every child's right

Article 12 of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child³ says:

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

"The first time I was six or seven and it was all new for me. I tried to protect myself, my rights, even if there was no need. It was like a natural instinct."

Young woman 22, Georgia

Advocacy is a clear instance of children and young people expressing their views on matters that affect them. Therefore, in undertaking advocacy, they are exercising this fundamental human right.

Principle 2: There is no lower age limit

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is clear that the right to speak out and be heard belongs to every child "capable of forming his or her own views". Those of us who work with very young children know that even the youngest of children are able to make choices, show preferences and express their feelings. Our task is to be creative and committed, so the voices of even the youngest children can be properly heard and respected.

Principle 3: Safeguarding must never trump the right to participate

Keeping children in our care safe from harm is our first responsibility (discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 below). However, we must never use our concerns for children's safety as an excuse to silence their voices.

When children or young people wish to speak out on an issue that concerns them, and we can see risks attached, our responsibility is NOT to keep the children silent, but rather to deal with those risks and find a safe way in which their voices can be heard.

Principle 4:
"Tradition" and "culture" are never valid reasons for silencing children and young people

In some parts of the world, tradition holds that adults should speak on behalf of the younger members of the community. This can lead to the voices of children and young people, especially girls, being ignored or devalued. It is OK for children and young people to respect the traditions of their elders. However, throughout the world there are children and young people who believe culture evolves from within, and who, by speaking out on their own behalf, choose to be a part of that evolution. These children and young people's right to participate in advocacy and advocate on their own behalf should be respected and supported, which may include challenging the old ways that have hitherto silenced them.

Principle 5:
Avoid manipulation

"Adults shouldn't use children like marionettes."

Boy 17, Equatorial Guinea

With their greater experience, power and access to resources, adults can structure and manage advocacy activities in pursuit of their own ends. This includes things like steering debates so that children and young people agree with the adult's opinion, choosing children and young people to participate who will say what the adults want to hear, ignoring contradictory views and selecting only the views approved by adults to be taken forward. To prevent manipulation and ensure children and young people's genuine voices are heard in advocacy we must:

- Understand the risk of manipulation in ourselves and others;
- Monitor our own practice to ensure we never manipulate a situation;

- Be vigilant and identify manipulation by others;
- Challenge manipulative behaviour in a constructive way that helps people change.

Principle 6:
Nothing about us without us

Decisions about children and young people in care, or with care experience, should never be made – at any level – without the voices of those children and young people being heard and taken on board as part of the decision-making process.

Principle 7: Being in care is not the only thing about us

When a child or young person is in care or has care experience, we must not let that become a defining characteristic or a label for them to bear. It is just one factor in their rich and complex lives – though sometimes an important one. Children and young people in care have the right to speak out, participate and advocate on all issues that concern them, not just those that hinge on their care experience.

2.2 Nine essential requirements for effective participation

"They should allow young people to decide the agenda and only provide advice to shape it up. It is young people who know and experience the abuses as such. We should not be relegated to the backseat and only receive what co-workers imagine are the problems."

Young woman 22, Malawi

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has proposed nine essential requirements for meaningful and effective participation⁴. Though these are relevant to all types of participation, they are especially important in supporting and accompanying advocacy as explained here.

**Requirement 1:
Participation is transparent
and informative**

Children and young people must be given information about their participation in advocacy in a child-friendly and accessible format. The information should include how they will participate, why they have been given this opportunity, the scope of the advocacy activity and its potential impact.

**Requirement 2:
Participation is voluntary**

Children and young people must be able to choose whether or not they would like to participate in an advocacy activity, and should be able to withdraw from activities at any time. They must not be coerced into participating or expressing their views.

**Requirement 3:
Participation is respectful**

Children and young people should be treated with respect and provided with opportunities to express their views freely. Staff should respect and understand the family, school and cultural context of their lives.

**Requirement 4:
Participation is relevant**

Advocacy should build on children and young people's own knowledge and should be focused on issues that are relevant to their lives and interests.

**Requirement 5:
Participation is child-friendly**

Child-friendly approaches, based on participants' ages and abilities, should be used to ensure that children and young people are well prepared for advocacy and are able to contribute meaningfully.

**Requirement 6:
Participation is inclusive**

Advocacy initiatives must provide opportunities for marginalised children and young people to be involved and should challenge existing patterns of discrimination.

**Requirement 7:
Participation is supported by
training for adults**

Staff must have the knowledge and capacity to facilitate children and young people's meaningful participation in advocacy. This may involve training and preparation prior to the activities.

**Requirement 8:
Participation is safe and
sensitive to risk**

Adults working with children and young people have a duty of care. Staff must take every precaution to minimise risks of abuse and exploitation and any other negative consequences of participation in advocacy.

**Requirement 9:
Participation is accountable**

After they have been involved in advocacy, children and young people must be provided with feedback that clearly explains how their input has been interpreted and used, and how they have influenced any outcomes. For further guidance on applying the nine essential requirements, see the SOS Children's Villages Youth Participation User Guide⁵.

2.3 Putting it into practice

There is a huge range of possibilities for advocacy activities by and with children and young people. Therefore, there is no standard template for planning an advocacy activity. However, there are some common steps involved in supporting an advocacy initiative, which are outlined in a simple roadmap in this Toolkit. The roadmap can be used as a starting point for drawing up a more detailed

and contextualised plan for your own advocacy activity (see 5.1). Numbers in brackets in the roadmap show under which section of this Toolkit you can find more information.

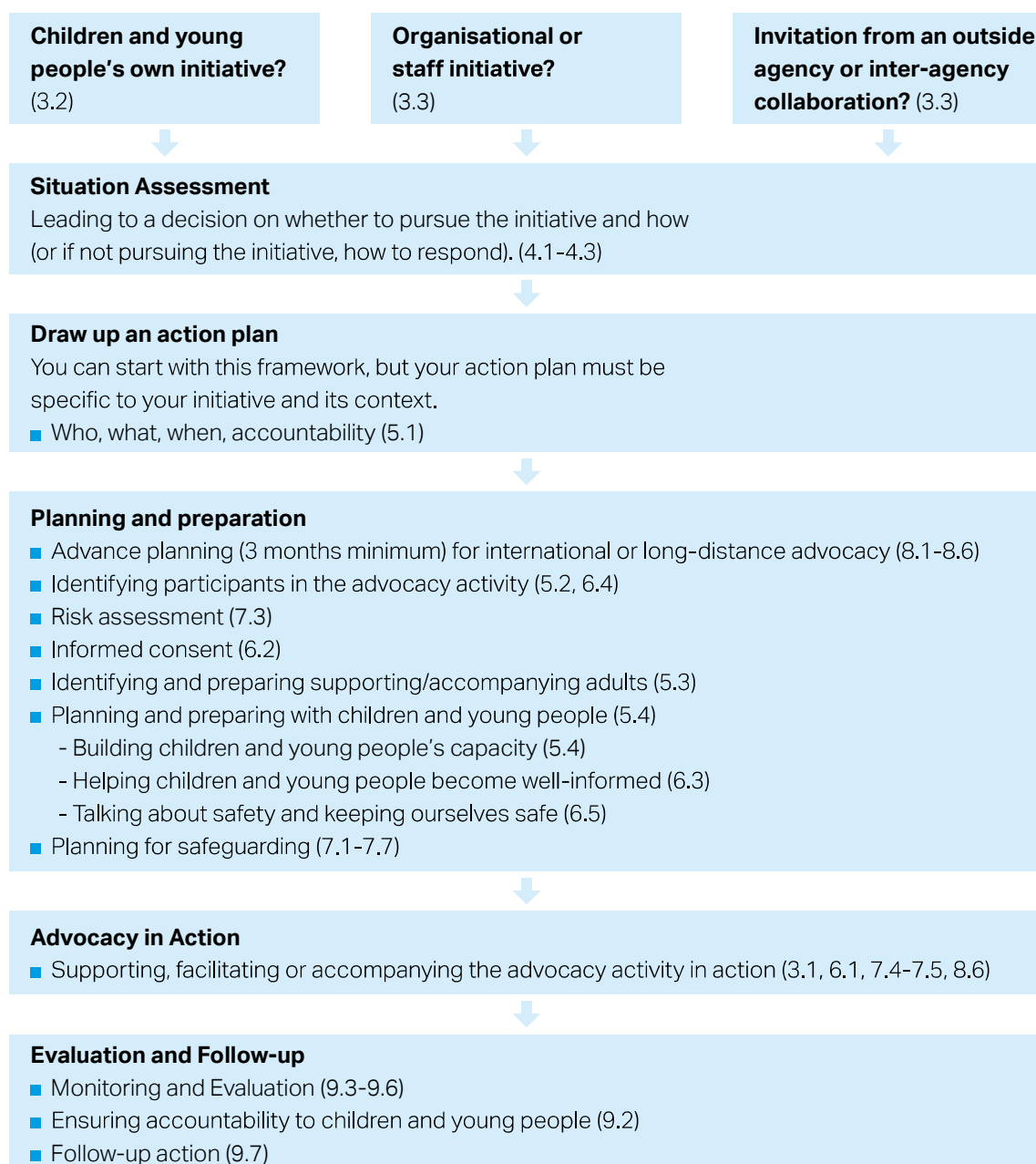
Staff supporting or accompanying advocacy should make all reasonable efforts to try to engage children and young people in the various steps, and as early as possible in the advocacy process, whenever relevant and meaningful (see also section 4).

³ United Nations (1989), Convention on the Rights of the Child.

⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009), General Comment No 12: The child's right to be heard. United Nations.

⁵ SOS Children's Villages (2020) Youth Participation User Guide. [Another useful tool for planning and evaluating advocacy activities endorsed by SOS Children's Villages is the SPACE, VOICE, AUDIENCE AND INFLUENCE model (the Lundy Model), also described in the Youth Participation User Guide].

Start from an idea...



3.

Advocacy methods


3.1 An overview

Advocacy encompasses all kinds of actions that contribute to influencing decision-makers at all levels, from individual advocacy, local and national community, to regional and international level. This means there is a vast range of possibilities for action open to children and young people with energy and a desire to see change for the better.

Here you can see a range of the best-known and most widely-used approaches, and one or two top tips for each type. The following sections contain further guidelines on how to facilitate and support them, with links to more detailed information.


Investigations and recommendations for change

- Investigating an issue: young people undertaking surveys or consultations, or carrying out their own research, reporting their findings and recommendations to those in power.
- Participating in consultative forums or working groups to develop recommendations, proposals and policy inputs over time.

 **Top Tip:** This needs skilled facilitation so research is fully owned by children and young people but 100% credible and valid.


Public policy dialogue and lobbying

- Speaking out at meetings, conferences, and other events.
- Direct lobbying of local and national politicians and authorities.


 **Top Tip:** This needs children and young people who are confident, articulate and informed; must be willing and able to speak out for others as well as themselves.

Traditional media

- Using traditional media (newspapers, radio and television): Being interviewed, getting journalists and programme-makers interested, getting in the news, or making your own.


 **Top Tip:** Children and young people can make their own radio programmes.

- Messages on T-shirts, caps, bags and other items used by children and young people (and their adult supporters); this also helps to identify with a group and build solidarity.
- Posters, flags, banners, billboards.

 **Top Tip:** Let children and young people do the design; have experts help with production.


Reporting to the United Nations

- Engaging with other national organisations to contribute to an alternative report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.
- Contributing to other UN reporting mechanisms like Universal Periodic Review and Voluntary National Reviews
- Engaging directly with UN CRC activities through Child Rights Connect in Geneva or other channels.

 **Top Tip:** Participate in national NGO networks and keep track of the UN reporting calendar to engage with advocacy processes in good time.


Raising issues through complaints mechanisms

- Making a complaint about a rights violation to the Children's Rights Commissioner / Ombudsman or equivalent in your country.
- Making a complaint about a rights violation direct to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child under Optional Protocol 3.

 **Top Tip:** Get to know your national Commissioner or Ombudsman and build a strong partnership as a basis for future advocacy work.


On the streets

- Marches, demonstrations (can be enhanced by banners, costumes, carnival floats, Chinese dragons etc.)
- Sit-ins, protests and non-violent direct action (NVDA).

 **Top Tip:** Remember that freedom of assembly and peaceful association are children's rights under CRC Article 15. Don't deny them, or let others violate them. These are often good as follow-up to other types of advocacy.


Online media

- Social media campaigns: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and other social media (adults should note that the platforms favoured by children and young people are constantly changing).
- Making videos: either factual/documentary videos or creative videos that tell a story. Using YouTube and similar platforms to share and promote videos.
- Online publishing, creating a website or a blog.

 **Top Tip:** Learn about online safety before it is too late. Teach children how to keep themselves and others safe online. Accept that children and young people understand new media better than we do.

Creative arts

- Visual artwork with a message: particularly murals; also sculpture, paintings, drawings, and all kinds of computer-generated artwork.
- Theatre: Community theatre, street theatre and performance art.
- Music: Songs with messages – adapting old songs, creating new ones: For live performance and/or recording. Sharing and distributing music online.

 **Top Tip:** Children's creative work presented to the right audience at the right moment can move the hearts of those in power.

3.2 Advocacy actions: Children and young people creating opportunities

"They should allow young people to decide the agenda and only provide advice to shape it up."

Young woman 22, Malawi

Many successful advocacy activities are the result of the children and young people's own ideas and initiatives, which may arise out of their analysis of their own situation, expression of their goals and priorities, or the need to defend their rights. In English, this kind of advocacy is often called pro-active or child/youth-led participation. In Spanish it is known as "protagonismo".

At SOS Children's Villages, these initiatives are taken on board and supported through yearly plans and multi-year projects or campaigns, where children and young people can participate according to their interest and capacity, from initial brainstorming through to final evaluation. Where children and young people want to take the lead and pursue their own advocacy actions, our role as adults becomes more flexible. At some moments we may take a step back and offer accompaniment and support, while at other moments the children and young people may need us to take a more active role in facilitating the process with them. The support we can offer young people undertaking their own advocacy actions includes:

- Providing a safe space to meet and talk;
- Providing resources for the work, which may include IT and internet resources, paper and markers, food and refreshments;
- Offering capacity-building to enhance knowledge and skills;
- Providing transport;
- Arranging access to adult decision-makers, setting up meetings;
- Facilitating group processes if requested (older young people may choose to self-facilitate);
- Safeguarding – identifying and mitigating risks to ensure children and young people are safe at all times (see also Chapter 7).

3.3 Advocacy actions: Responding to opportunities that arise

Another kind of advocacy activities are the result of an opportunity that arises. Though these may not be the result of the children and young people's own initiative, we can still maximise the positive advocacy potential in responding to such opportunities. Advocacy opportunities can arise in various ways:

Consultations:

Invitations to participate in consultations being carried out by government and other national and international agencies.

Invitations to events:

SOS children's Villages commonly receives invitations for selected children and young people to attend and participate in national and international events like conferences, hearings, working groups or discussion days.

NGO collaborations and partnerships:

Major advocacy actions are often organised by several NGOs in collaboration or partnership. One example is the regular processes of UN reporting, particularly the development of alternative reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Participating in coalitions, peer networks and shared activities:

Successful advocacy can arise out of joint working by children and young people from different groups and organisations. By developing their ideas and planning actions together, they can achieve greater impact.

All such invitations should be welcomed, as all show in some way that the children and young people and their views are valued. Analyse the invitation from different perspectives (see Chapter 4), involving children and young people as appropriate, and search for a positive response. There will be costs, but, provided the proposed time-frame allows time for preparation, the benefits will usually be greater.

Case Study 2: Albania



Children and young people participate in reporting to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

Action



- Children and young people with care experience, supported by SOS Children's Villages, joined with peers from other organisations to work together on a report to identify progress and gaps on children's rights in Albania.
- The children, many from vulnerable contexts, were supported to analyse the reality of children's rights in their country, then to write and submit the report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Benefit



- Through the reporting, the government received recommendations on what needs to be done to ensure children's rights are respected in Albania.
- In particular, the children's report focused the government's attention on: (1) children in care; (2) child labour; and (3) violence against children.
- Other recommendation covered: education, early marriage, community safety, the right to play, Roma rights, poverty and child abuse.

Achievement



- This was a unique experience for children and young people from different organisations to come together, learn about the reporting process, and be supported in developing their own report.
- The group selected representatives to present their report in person to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva, so the Committee members heard the key findings directly from the children and young people involved.

4.

Assessing an advocacy opportunity

4.1 Introduction

When an opportunity for advocacy presents itself, whether it is the result of an invitation, or the children and young people's own initiative, the first step is to assess the situation, before deciding on action. Whenever possible, children and young people can be involved in this initial assessment and the resulting decision-making. The following section provides two linked tools:

Tool 1:

is a table to help with ensuring children and young people's participation in the initial assessment.

Tool 2:

is a series of checklists to guide the initial assessment process, all of which can be adapted to suit specific situations and different contexts.

4.2 Tools for initial situation assessment

Tool 1: Involving children and young people in initial assessment

Use the table at page 19 to plan for involving children and young people in your initial situation assessment. Choose the best box for each element of the situation assessment and add the reason in the right-hand column.

Tool 2:

Situation assessment check-lists

A note on using the check-lists: When assessing a potential advocacy opportunity, do not think of it as a simple YES/NO decision. There is nearly always a positive outcome that can be achieved, even when the circumstances and the time-frame are not ideal. For example, even if you have to decline an invitation to an international event in five days' time, the fact that the invitation is on the table is a positive, and there may be alternative ways for children and young people to build on this.

Assessing benefits (See Chapter 1)

- ☒ Benefits to the children and young people (include personal growth, learning and empowerment as well as practical or material benefits).
- ☒ Benefits to SOS Children's Villages (include learning experiences for staff, extending networks, reputation and positive profile).
- ☒ Human rights benefits: Which of the children and young people's rights will be claimed, defended, exercised, protected or promoted?
- ☒ Benefits in terms of improved policies and practices.
- ☒ Benefits to the community and wider society.

| Element of initial assessment | Children and young people not involved | Children and young people consulted | Joint assessment with children and young people | Children and young people do their own assessment | Reason for the choice |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|
| Assessing benefits | | | | | |
| Assessing costs | | | | | |
| Assessing commitment | | | | | |
| Assessing children and young people's support needs | | | | | |
| Assessing staff capacity and support needs | | | | | |
| Risks, barriers and mitigation measures | | | | | |
| Organisational, financial and material resources needed | | | | | |

Assessing costs

- ☒ Staff time.
- ☒ Resourcing preparation activities, including logistics, venues, refreshments (where an activity has a fixed target date, e.g. a conference or UN activity, is there enough time to do everything required?).
- ☒ Travel costs, including pre-travel bureaucracy, visas, permits etc. (see 8.2).
- ☒ Any additional costs to ensure safeguarding and ethical practice.
- ☒ Opportunity costs: What will NOT happen if you go ahead with this? (e.g. children and young people missing school, staff withdrawn from normal responsibilities).

Assessing commitment

- ☒ Level of commitment and interest of children and young people in taking this opportunity.
- ☒ How many children and young people are interested?
- ☒ Level of commitment and interest of staff in supporting and facilitating the activity.
- ☒ Level of interest and buy-in of management/ institutional leadership to back the initiative and give green light to resourcing it.

Assessing children and young people's support needs

- ☒ What support will children and young people need to get maximum benefit from the advocacy activity – both for themselves and for others?
- ☒ Will additional resources be needed to ensure the opportunity is accessible to all (for example, for children with disabilities to participate on an equal basis, or for those without access to computers and internet to participate fully)?
- ☒ Would young people benefit from prior training/capacity-building?
- ☒ What kind of programme of preparation activities is needed? As with all preparation activities, check if there will be enough time to do everything required. If meeting a deadline will mean speeding up the preparations, assess the risks of doing this against the potential benefits.

Assessing staff capacity and support needs

- ☒ Does our team have capacity to provide the support that children and young people need?
- ☒ Would staff members benefit from additional capacity-building to be better able to support this initiative?
- ☒ How can this additional capacity-building be provided? (Again, check if there will be time to do this before any set deadlines).
- ☒ Are there other sources of support available? Is there a case for bringing in specialist outside expertise?

Risks, barriers and mitigation measures

- ☒ What are the potential risks or barriers to participation? These may include:

- cultural issues,
- anxiety,
- emotional impact,
- lack of accessibility for children with specific support needs,
- negative attitudes,
- lack of commitment (staff and/or young people),
- security, informed consent and safeguarding aspects,
- organisational constraints.

- ☒ What mitigation measures can help overcome barriers and minimise risks? (see also section 7.3 on risk assessment).

Organisational, financial and material resources needed

- ☒ Organisational resources (including office and meeting spaces, IT systems and networks, a management structure to oversee and hold accountability, an accounting and banking system to handle the finances, access to legal advice, etc.).
- ☒ Time resources: If there is a fixed target date, can this be done in time and without compromising the quality of child and youth participation?
- ☒ Staff resources: Number of staff needed, suitably experienced/qualified staff, staff time.
- ☒ Material resources.
- ☒ Financial resources.
- ☒ For each of the above, if they are not currently available, can sources be identified to access them?

Case Study 3: Indonesia

Child-led campaign on responses to COVID-19

(2020-Ongoing)



Action



- SOS Children's Villages Indonesia is leading the "Joining Forces" NGO consortium in facilitating a child-led campaign to promote children's advocacy on responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 36 children from the 6 member organisations have explored the issues children are facing due to the pandemic, and proposed solutions based on their experiences and perspectives.

Benefit



- The children's proposals were incorporated into the final statement that was presented to the Minister for Children and the President of Indonesia.
- Based on the children's advocacy, their ideas have also been incorporated into the Indonesian Child Protection Commission's COVID-19 Policy Brief to government ministries. The children organised a webinar and made a video to disseminate the policy brief.
- Children gain increased competence and become effective agents of change in child right issues.

Achievement



- Children are already involved in coordinating the campaign, and the intention is to hand over more responsibilities until eventually children lead the whole campaign.
- The participating children were invited to discussions in the National Children's Forum, where they presented the issues related to child rights during the pandemic and their proposals for future action.
- Participation in the National Children's Forum gave them an opportunity for advocacy in developing the statement of 'Indonesian Children's Voices' for National Children's Day.

5.

Preparation and planning

5.1 Drawing up an action plan

Once you have done the initial assessment and made a firm decision to go head, the next step is to plan the activity step by step. The action plan for an advocacy activity should include:

- A time-line with an ordered sequence of tasks to be done and dates for completing each one (you can use the framework provided in 2.3 above as a starting point).
- A note of the resources that need to be in place for each task.
- The name of the person responsible for each task. The person responsible is not necessarily the person who has to do the task, but the person who has to make sure it is done on time.
- If you have identified the need for preparation, including training/capacity-building for staff involved, putting this in motion needs to be a priority, especially if staff already have a full work-load.

5.2 Identifying participants in the advocacy activity

"They should involve more young people, not the chosen few who participate in all advocacy activities all the time. And the tendency of involving star performers only should be discouraged unless advocacy and school performance are one and the same."

Girl 17, Malawi

Most advocacy activities involve a selected group of children and young people. In these cases, it is necessary to agree fair and transparent criteria for identifying those who will take part. This is important because, if only a small number can be selected, many others will be excluded. There are many criteria that can be used for selecting advocacy participants. The fairest and most appropriate criteria will depend on the type of activity and the specific circumstances of each situation.

The following is a list of selection criteria that might be used. A good approach is to consider each one and choose those that are most relevant, fair and justified in your situation:

■ **Age range:**

Are there age limits? Who has set them? Are they entirely justified? Are they strict limits, or is there flexibility? Is it important to include a range of different ages?

■ **Interest and enthusiasm:**

Is it fair and appropriate to let children propose themselves based on their own level of interest and enthusiasm? Often this is a good criterion to use combined with other factors. (Note: if there is any payment or reward on offer, do not mention it at this stage, so you can distinguish those who are genuinely enthusiastic from those who want the reward).

■ **Informed consent:**

Can the child or young person get the necessary informed consent from their parent or legal guardian? Will difficulties in this area lead to some being unfairly excluded?

■ **Gender balance:**

Take all reasonable efforts to ensure equal gender representation, for example equal numbers of boys and girls. LGBTI children and young people must also have equal opportunities to participate.

■ **Previous experience:**

Will it be beneficial to include children and young people with previous advocacy experience? Is it important to give opportunities to those who do not have previous experience? What is the right balance between these two factors?

■ **Different abilities:**

What steps can you take to encourage and support the participation of children and young people with disabilities? To what extent is positive action needed to achieve this? Consider:

- a) Do children and young people with disabilities know about this opportunity? Has information reached them?
- b) Do children and young people with disabilities feel confident that, if they participate, their support needs will be met and they will be able to participate on an equal basis?

■ **Representativeness:**

How important is it that the group of advocacy participants is representative of a wider population of children and young people? The groups who are at risk of being marginalised, ignored or excluded will vary according to your local context. In your situation, how important is it to include:

- Members of different ethnic, racial or national groups?
- Indigenous children and young people?
- Migrants or refugee groups?
- Both rural and urban children and young people?
- Children and young people in care or with care experience? (This is a theme running throughout this toolkit, but is included again here for completeness)
- Children and young people identifying as LGBTI (or alternative identifiers used in your context)?
- Children and young people from traveller or nomadic groups?
- Working children and young people?

There may be other groups in your community that you feel it is important not to exclude.

■ **Elected delegates:**

In some circumstances, it may be a good idea to let a larger community of children and young people elect their own representatives who they can send as delegates to advocate on their behalf. How appropriate is it in your situation to have children and young people elect their own delegates? (See also 6.4 on Representation and Delegation)

Whatever selection criteria you choose, the important thing is that they are transparent and everyone knows what they are. Only by establishing fair and transparent criteria and sticking to them can you be sure to avoid favouritism, bias and prejudice.

5.3 Identifying and preparing supporting/ accompanying adults

"Supporting adults have to ask about what the young person needs assistance with, instead of assuming."

Young woman 21, Jordan

Care is needed in selecting and preparing the adults who will support, facilitate or accompany children and young people during an advocacy activity.

- All adults involved must have the required police vetting certificate, police record or equivalent according to their country of residence.
- Adults in leading roles must have a good level of knowledge, skills and experience in facilitating the kinds of activities involved. Guidance on a suitable capacity-building programme can be found in the Examples of Youth Participation Training Agenda at Annex 1 of the SOS Children's Villages Youth Participation User Guide⁶.
- Adults with less experience may be involved in supporting roles, under the supervision of more experienced colleagues, as this is an effective form of apprenticeship whereby adults learn through experience the practice of supporting advocacy.
- Where travel away from home is involved, the selection of adult staff must also take into account the relevant guidelines on chaperoning (see 8.6), and the fact that each child or young person must be accompanied by an assigned adult they know and trust (see 7.4).
- Children and young people may find it useful to have a list of supporting adults detailing for which issues each of them is the go-to person.

5.4 Building children and young people's capacity

"It will be better to provide us from time to time with advocacy trainings."

Children's Focus Group (12-15), Azerbaijan

Planning for an advocacy activity will often include activities to help the participating children and young people prepare themselves for effective advocacy. Once the participating young people are identified, discuss with them what they need to do to ensure they are well-prepared. This might include:

- Becoming better-informed about the issues they are advocating around (see 6.3).
- Preparing a strategy to make their advocacy as effective as possible.
- Rehearsing or role-playing new or unfamiliar situations to build confidence.
- Practising specific advocacy skills relevant to the activity: negotiating, questioning, public speaking, giving media interviews etc.
- Drafting key messages, slogans, soundbites.
- Designing creative elements that will form part of their advocacy message: banners, posters, theatre, exhibitions etc.

Timetable a number of preparatory workshops to cover the necessary topics in good time (see 6.3). Ensure adult facilitators are capable and well-prepared, but consider also the empowering potential of peer-to-peer capacity-building and mentoring.

5.5 Risk assessment and safeguarding

The preparation stage is the time to lay the groundwork for keeping children and young people safe and helping them keep themselves safe (see Ch. 7).

⁶ SOS Children's Villages (2020) Youth Participation User Guide.

Case Study 4: Nicaragua

Red Megajoven (Mega-Youth Network)

(2018-Ongoing)



Action



- SOS Children's Villages Nicaragua promoted the establishment of a national youth network, 'Red Megajoven' (Mega-Youth Network).
- Red Megajoven has 103 participants in total: 63 girls and 40 boys, and elects its own leaders.
- The Network organises workshops, forums, training and cultural activities.
- The young people plan and carry out all activities themselves, with adult support when needed. Each group develops, implements and then evaluates a quarterly action plan.
- Promotion and leadership related to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Achievement



- Red Megajoven organised the celebration of the anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was featured on national television.
- The network's activities promote the development of decision-making, teamwork, communication, interpersonal relationships and democratic leadership.

Benefit



- Members recognise themselves as rights-holders, with new skills, and increased self-esteem.
- Developing the network has created a sense of belonging, identity and solidarity, with young people capable of taking responsibility and making decisions.

6.

Communicating with children and young people

6.1 Listening to children and young people

"The really negative side is that you cannot accept that someone is not listening to you. That is negative when the person who can help you doesn't listen to you and take you seriously."

Member of the International Youth Coalition

- Adults supporting and facilitating advocacy activities should practice active listening. Consider building this into your preparation and capacity-building phase.
- It is also important to create spaces where children and young people feel safe and comfortable to speak out.
- Shy or quiet children may have important things to say, but being urged to speak can make matters worse by making them feel anxious or uncomfortable. Be sensitive and patient in helping shy children find their voice.
- It is also important to be sensitive in getting more outspoken children and young people to listen to their quieter peers.

- Some children don't speak at all, but often have other ways to express what they are thinking and feeling, including gesture and sign communication, written and artistic expression. Facilitators should be sensitive and responsive to this.

6.2. Voluntary participation and informed consent

One of the essential requirements for effective and meaningful participation is that it is voluntary (see Chapter 2). This means every child or young person must give their informed consent before they get involved.

- In order for consent to be informed, participants must be given honest and accurate information (in an appropriately user-friendly way) about:
 - The purpose of the advocacy: The reason for doing it.
 - What is being asked of them, and what is expected: How much time will they be expected to give, over how long? Will this mean missing out on other opportunities?

- What they can expect to get out of it: Are they agreeing to participate on the basis of personal commitment, to be rewarded through personal growth, fun and adventure, learning and empowerment? Or will they receive other forms of compensation, or even payment?

- What has already been decided by adults, that they will have no say about (for example the date and place of a major event), and what will they be able to decide for themselves (for example, the message they take to the event)?

- Their right to change their mind and decide not to participate at any stage.

- Any risks that the adults in charge are aware of, and the measures proposed to safeguard the participants.

- Informed consent of parents or legal guardians may also be needed, but this is not a substitute for children and young people's own informed consent. Parents or guardians cannot give consent to participate in advocacy activities on behalf of a child or young person.
- A child or young person can withdraw consent and decide not to participate in the activity at any time, but if they do this when they are away from home, they are still obliged to remain in the care of the accompanying adults/chaperones as originally agreed, until it is safe and practical to return them to their home.
- If children and young people are undertaking an advocacy activity as a team, it is worth discussing with them the expectation of teamwork and solidarity, so they are aware of the consequences for the rest of the team if they choose to withdraw (though they still have the right to withdraw without penalty if they wish).

6.3 Helping children and young people become well-informed

"Sometimes advocacy programmes get boring because of the presentation only by lecture method. Moreover, they should be understandable by everyone."

Child, 13, Nepal

- Children and young people should never be put in a situation where, in the course of an advocacy activity, they are expected to discuss issues they know little or nothing about. If an activity will involve discussing issues beyond the children and young people's everyday experience, then helping them to become well-informed on these issues must be part of the overall plan for the activity (Chapter 5).
- Involve children and young people in designing active and participatory learning activities adapted to their age and experience, and using appropriate language: discussions, quizzes, real-life case studies, role-plays, representing ideas visually on posters, banners etc.
- Create child-friendly versions of key documents like UN reports⁷. Though it is quicker for adults to do this in advance, it is often more effective for children and young people to take this on as part of their learning about the issue.
- An "overload" of adult knowledge can leave children and young people feeling disempowered, rather than informed. Where providing information to children and young people, avoid a lecturing approach, and share the essential information in appropriate, user-friendly language, with visual elements and opportunities for feedback. Also, allow sufficient time for children and young people to process the information and reflect on it.

- In international activities, a handful of languages are recognised as official working languages; for example, the official languages of the United Nations are English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian, and Chinese. Therefore it is worth talking with children and young people about the significance of using their own language with pride and dignity.

6.4 Representation and delegation

Often a small number of children and young people have to be selected to participate in an advocacy activity, and the importance of doing this fairly and without bias was discussed in Chapter 5. In these situations, where children and young people are charged with speaking on behalf of others, it is important to discuss with them their role as representatives.

- In some cases, the wider community of children and young people may have come together to agree a message, a proposal or a set of demands; and their representatives are charged with taking that message forward and putting it to those in power (they may be described as a mandated delegate).
- In other cases, it is understood that the chosen representatives are expected to use their own initiative to engage in dialogue and debate, but always with the best interests of the people they represent as their first concern (an autonomous representative).

Depending on the age and experience of the children and young people involved, it is important to discuss these ideas with them, and help them work out for themselves whether their role is to speak for themselves, or to speak for those that they represent.

6.5. Talking about safety and keeping ourselves safe

"It was not easy to face police officers, magistrates, local chiefs, business people and other big people. But in the end, I gathered strength and spoke out."

Young woman 22, Malawi

Adults supporting children and young people in advocacy must take time to discuss safeguarding measures with children, so they feel secure, informed and confident. This topic is explored in more detail in Chapter 7.

⁷ For example: SOS Children's Villages (2019). You have the Right to Care and Protection! The Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children in Child and Youth Friendly Language.

Case Study 5: Malawi

Celebration of the Day of the African Child (2018)



Action



- National event held to celebrate the 2018 Day of the African Child.
- Co-organised by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), the Government of Malawi, SOS Children's Villages Malawi, the UN Family in Malawi, Save the Children, World Vision International, Plan international Malawi and partners.
- Moderated by Dessio, a programme participant representing SOS Children's Villages' Blantyre Family Strengthening Programme.
- Participants included the Chair of ACERWC, government ministers, the United Nations country representatives, senior figures from SOS Children's Villages Malawi (including the Brand Ambassador, Board chair, National Director) and representatives from other child rights organisations.

Achievement



- Children, duty bearers and partners reflected together on Africa's flagship development agenda, Agenda 2040, and how to make this a reality – in Africa in general and in Malawi in particular.
- All actors, including government departments and NGOs, renewed their commitment to promote the rights of children in Africa.
- Media practitioners were trained on contemporary reporting on children issues and promoting child rights through media.
- This was a demonstration of authentic participation by children and young people at national level.

Benefit



- Reinvigorated commitment from government to make children's rights a reality.
- "We will register a lot of gains in child rights when children, parents, governments, NGOs and the private sector work together to create a society that values children and works to ensure our development and protection; an Africa that respects the rights of her children, and African children who are conscious of their responsibilities". (Dessio, youth representative)

7.

Keeping children and young people safe

7.1 Safeguarding policies

Every organisation working with children, in any country or setting, should have a child safeguarding⁸ policy (in some places this may be called “Child Protection Policy”).

The child safeguarding policy must be:

- Kept up-to-date: reviewed regularly and updated or renewed when necessary;
- Made known to ALL relevant stakeholders. This may require translation into different languages and the development of one or more user-friendly/child-friendly versions;
- Backed by practical implementation guidelines for staff and managers (these may be part of the policy document but are generally developed as separate resources);
- Backed by awareness-raising and capacity-building for staff, appropriate to their roles and responsibilities (see 7.2 below).

SOS Children’s Villages has a global Child Protection Policy, “Child Safety is Everybody’s Business”,⁹ which is the main point of reference for all activities including advocacy.

7.2 Building staff capacity

All those who work with children must be aware of and competent in their safeguarding responsibilities. This is usually achieved through initial child safeguarding training and regular update or refresher training, which is provided by SOS Children’s Villages as prescribed by the Child Protection Policy.

However, when an advocacy activity is being planned, one of the key aspects to assess is the capacity-building needs of staff involved (Chapter 4). There may be a need for additional training in specific aspects of child safeguarding, such as chaperoning or online protection, and this must be allowed for in the planning and preparation phase.

7.3 Risk assessment

SOS Children’s Villages’ Youth Participation User Guide¹⁰ encourages SOS staff, before engaging children or young people in any participation activity, to conduct an appropriate risk assessment, involving them in the process of identifying potential risks and finding the measures needed to mitigate them. This is an important stage in the planning of every advocacy activity.

SOS Children’s Villages’ Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment guide¹¹ provides a reliable, but adaptable framework to take you step-by-step through the risk assessment process.

7.4 Safety away from home

When children and young people take part in advocacy at the international level, they might find themselves in unfamiliar situations, whether visiting a new city, a new country (Chapter 8), or just meeting new people.

When supporting or accompanying children and young people undertaking advocacy in unfamiliar situations, all the normal standards and practices set out in your safeguarding policy and guidelines still apply, and must be interpreted and acted on in a sensitive yet decisive way.

There are also additional points to take on board:

- Ensuring that children learn how to keep themselves and others safe is particularly important when they are in unfamiliar surroundings; so this must be part of the preparation undertaken before any journey. This should include children and young people learning:
 - to identify and manage risks;
 - how to interact with strangers safely;
 - to look out for one another;
 - not to let themselves get separated from their group or accompanying adult(s);
 - to report anything that they feel isn't right or makes them feel uncomfortable to an accompanying adult;
 - what to do if they get lost or find themselves in difficulties.

(See also section 8.6 on guidelines for accompanying adults – also known as chaperoning).

- When children and young people are learning about keeping themselves safe and looking out for others, there is an essential underpinning principle that must be understood:

Children may be actively engaged in keeping themselves and others safe, but safeguarding is never children's responsibility; Safeguarding is always the adults' responsibility.

- Accompanying adults may also find themselves in new or unfamiliar situations, both personally and professionally, so they too may need additional training and preparation for this role (see 7.2).
- It is particularly important that children and young people have an assigned trusted adult that they know they can turn to if something happens.
- The preparation of accompanying adults must include preparation for the role of assigned trusted adult, even though they hope they will never have call to exercise it. This should include training on how to handle situations where a child or young person is considered to be at risk of harm or abuse. The trusted adult has a duty to respect the privacy and confidentiality of the young person, and also a duty to report their concerns to the competent authority. Managing both of these duties in parallel can be challenging.
- Despite pre-travel preparation, accompanying adults will need to be constantly vigilant, reminding the children and young people of what they have learnt, and making sure they are aware of risks and acting appropriately. This is especially important when children and young people are excited, distracted, overawed or exhausted by their experience.

7.5 Online safety

Children and young people are increasingly involved in advocacy by social media or on virtual communications platforms. Online safety is an emerging area in child protection/safeguarding and new or updated guidance appears regularly. Up-to-date sources of guidance on online safety are provided in the List of Resources at the end of this Toolkit.

Besides everyday internet and social media use, in the modern age, advocacy may involve children and young people participating in online meetings, conferences or forums with adults. Specialist guidance on keeping children and young people safe in these settings is also available.¹²

Advice to supporting or accompanying adults includes:

- Help young people prepare, including what to do if they feel uncomfortable or if anyone behaves in an inappropriate way.
- Remain present and available to them during any live online event.
- Ensure consent forms (for both child/young person and parent or guardian) include informed consent for the proposed online activity.
- When seeking informed consent, make sure that both children and young people and parents/guardians understand the permanent nature of information on the internet, and that once it is up there, they have no way to control its circulation or who has access to it.
- Consider the background that will be seen behind a young speaker. It should be authentic and appropriate, and must not accidentally reveal identifying information.
- Agree with the child or young person in advance how much personal information is to be shared (e.g. if they are to be known by first name only) and help them stick to what is agreed.

7.6 Use of images for publicity and media coverage

Thoughtful use of photographs of children and young people actively engaged in advocacy activities for wider social benefit can greatly add to the effectiveness of the advocacy, and the power of its message to influence decision-makers.

Video is also increasingly used as an advocacy tool, whether this means videos made by children and young people themselves, or those made of them by others.

Therefore, when planning an advocacy activity, do not be too quick to rule out the use of photography or video on child safeguarding grounds. Discuss with the children and young people themselves and their parents or guardians the potential to use photographs and/or video as part of their action or campaign, and agree guidelines on how these will be made and used. Consider the potential benefits as well as the risks of publishing photographs or videos of children.

Some points to consider are:

- Consent forms (for both children and young people and parents/guardians) should include consent for taking, publishing and storing of photographs under agreed conditions, and also make it clear that the child or young person has the right to opt out of being photographed.
- Decide with children and young people how photographs will be credited: To an individual, to the group or to the organisation.
- Choose photographs, which show children and young people taking an active role in advocacy. Avoid photographs showing them as objects of sympathy or "children in need". Photographs of groups of people staring at the camera are less powerful but occasionally serve a valid purpose.
- Involve the children and young people in selecting photographs for inclusion in reports or media messages. Agree together the criteria for selecting or rejecting a photo.

Never use a photo that someone in the photo doesn't want used.

- Provide an accurate and informative caption for published photographs.
- Help children and young people to make informed decisions about whether full names, first names, pseudonyms, no names, or other references such as to specific locations and programmes, will be used in captions.

7.7 When children and young people go public

"They trained us a lot before our appearance on the local radio so that I was not afraid of the microphone"

Boy, 17, Benin

It is generally advisable to protect the privacy of children and young people engaging in advocacy activities. However, from time to time a young advocate emerges who is readily identifiable due to the publicity they receive at local, national or international level. For example, current world-famous young advocates include Malala Yousafzai (for girls' education) and Greta Thunberg (for climate action).

Here are some points to consider when supporting a young advocate who is publicly known:

- As far as possible the young people themselves should decide what information about them is public and what is private. However, they should be informed of the possible consequences of such decisions before they agree to make any information about themselves public.

- In such situations, young advocates are often given opportunities to be interviewed by journalists or speak to the media. Preparing for these opportunities and practising the skills needed to make an effective impact should be part of the capacity-building offered to them in advance, and the relevant trusted adult should always be close by to offer support as needed.
- Though young advocates may welcome a certain amount of media coverage, they should be protected as far as possible from intrusive media attention.
- They should have access to psycho-social support, as besides pressure, stress and burnout, they may have to face trolling and hate campaigns on social media.
- If they advocate on a controversial issue, risks must be assessed and mitigating measures taken (Malala was nearly killed because the risks she faced as an advocate for girls' education were not foreseen).
- The principle that "Safeguarding must not trump the right to be heard" (see 2.1 above) emphatically applies.

⁹ SOS Children's Villages International defines child safeguarding as follows: All activities an organisation undertakes to ensure that its co-workers, operations, and programmes do no harm to children and do not expose them to the risk of harm and abuse; that appropriate responses and effective management of child safeguarding concerns are in place; and that any concerns the organisation has about children's safety in its own programmes and within the communities they work in are reported to the appropriate authorities.

⁹ SOS Children's Villages (2008), SOS Children's Villages Child Protection Policy, Child Safety is Everybody's Business, [This is SOS Children's Villages' child safeguarding reference document, and the first steps to update it are planned for 2021].

¹⁰ SOS Children's Villages (2020) Youth Participation User Guide.

¹¹ SOS Children's Villages (2020) Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment.

¹² End Violence Against Children (2020) Safeguarding Child Speakers During Online Meetings with Adults.

8.

International and long-distance advocacy

8.1 Planning ahead

From time to time children and young people are invited to participate in international advocacy activities in other countries and other continents. SOS Children's Villages has built up years of experience in supporting and facilitating international advocacy. It is time-consuming and demanding, but with foresight and good planning it is feasible and, because of the large-scale benefits that can be achieved through global impact, it is worth planning ahead to make the most of these opportunities. (This section deals with travelling, but note that international activities are increasingly organised as virtual events using online platforms where there is no need to travel, which is covered in 7.5 above).

8.2 Administrative arrangements

It can take several months to complete all the administrative arrangements needed to enable a child or young person to travel to an international event, and the importance of advance planning cannot be overstated. However, the effort is more than repaid when they are able to influence outcomes in the international arena. Administrative requirements can include:

- **Consent of parents or legal guardians:** Legal requirements differ from country to country, and legal advice may be needed on whether one or both biological parents need to be contacted and give consent. This may need to be given in the form of a legal document prepared and certified by a lawyer. Where a child is legally in the care of an institution, there

may be different requirements around consent to travel. All of this takes time, but these issues can be addressed and surmounted with good planning.

- **Passport:** Depending on the country, application for a passport may be a long and costly process, and some form of parental consent will usually be needed. Provided the process is begun well in advance (at least 3 months before the planned travel) a positive outcome is likely.
- **Visas:** Often a visa will be needed to enter the country where the event is to take place. This can take time, involving payment of fees and submission of legal documents. In some cases, an additional visa is needed to transit through a third country (e.g. USA), and this may be important in planning the travel itinerary. Some countries require an exit visa to permit children to leave their home country. It is important to start addressing these issues some months before the date of travel, and if this is done, there is every chance of success.
- **Vaccination/Health certificates:** Some countries require vaccination certificates as a condition of entry, for example Yellow Fever vaccination, though this may depend on where the traveller is coming from. This needs to be researched in advance, as in remote locations the required vaccination may not be readily available in local health centres.
- **Insurance:** Make sure you check whether the host organisation and the supporting organisation have policies regarding travel insurance requirements, including health

insurance, which need to be checked and complied with. SOS Children's Village's insurance requirements will vary depending on the regulations in each country, so it is important to get advice from the relevant country office.

- **Emergency contacts:** These can include next of kin or alternative contacts at home, as well as sources of help in the country visited such as the hosting organisation and an embassy or consulate.

8.3 If a child or young person is unable to travel

It is important to acknowledge the possibility that, despite diligent efforts, it may not be possible to meet all the requirements, and a child or young person may not be able to travel. In such circumstances, consider the following:

- This may come as a great disappointment to the young person. It needs to be communicated sensitively, and the young person supported as they process and react to it.
- It may be possible to move to a "Plan B". For example, the young person could be invited to participate in the event via a virtual communications platform, or they may prefer to make a video recording of their advocacy message, which can be shared at the live event.
- Occasionally, organisations opt to send a substitute, usually a young person who has done this kind of thing before and already has a passport, visa, parents' consent etc. However, this strategy is problematic, as it risks the creation of an elite of "professional young people" who are seen to get all the opportunities.

8.4 Logistics

Making the practical arrangements for international travel with children and young people is also time-consuming and expensive, although there is not so much to go wrong. Logistical arrangements include:

- **Travel:** Not just international air travel, but safe and appropriate travel to and from airports, to and from lodgings, and to and from the event venue.
- **Accommodation:** Usually the host organisation in the destination country will be the best source of advice in this, and may make the arrangements for you.
- **Arrangements for different abilities and special needs:** Section 5.2 above looked at the preparation needed to ensure that children and young people with disabilities can participate in advocacy activities with equality and respect. This must also be carried through into the logistical planning for international travel, ensuring in advance that spaces and facilities are accessible and support systems needed are in place.
- **Out-of-pocket expenses while away from home (for both children and young people and accompanying staff):** As well as food and snacks en route, consider the cost of optional activities and entertainment besides the main advocacy event, and the possibility of bringing home a small souvenir for those not fortunate to be able to travel. Decide whether children and young people will be encouraged to bring and spend their own money (if they have any), or will be provided with an appropriate spending money allowance.

8.5 Preparing for long-distance/ international travel

Embracing diversity

Participating in international advocacy will often involve children and young people encountering new and unfamiliar cultural contexts. Exploring the value of diversity should therefore be part of the prior capacity-building with the children and young people (see 5.4 above). Even if they are well prepared, adapting to the unaccustomed wealth of diversity may still be a challenge for some, so accompanying adults need to be on hand in case they need help to adjust.

Staying safe

The guidance on keeping children and young people safe when away from home, and helping them keep themselves safe, covered in section 7.4 above, is equally important, if not more so, during international travel. The further a child is from home, and the greater the difficulty of getting back there, the greater is the responsibility on the accompanying adult to deal sensitively and professionally with risky situations, unexpected incidents, and emotional upsets.

Knowing they are supported

Also, the further they are from home, the more essential it is for children and young people to know they have a specific trusted adult on hand to whom they can turn for support at any time (see 7.4).

8.6 Guidelines for accompanying adults

Adults accompanying children and young people travelling to international events are often known as chaperones. Generally, a chaperone will also be the assigned trusted adult that each child or young person knows they can turn to if something happens on the journey (see 7.4).¹³

Selection and preparation of chaperones is an essential part of the preparation for any such activity (see 5.3). Issues to consider in selecting chaperones include:

- Number and ages of children and young people travelling (consult your local country office to see if there is a prescribed minimum or recommended adult/child ratio).
- Gender balance in relation to the children and young people travelling.
- Accompanying adults must hold relevant police vetting or equivalent certification as prescribed in their country of residence.
- Previous experience of chaperoning on international activities (note that a team of

accompanying adults may include some less experienced workers who will learn from their more experienced colleagues, but there must always be highly experienced chaperones in charge).

- Language and communications skills that are necessary during the journey and the stay abroad.

A chaperone's overriding responsibility is to keep the children and young people in their care safe at all times. However, to fulfil this, they must take on many specific responsibilities. Depending on the number and ages of the children and young people, these may include:

- **Before travel:** Preparing the children and young people, liaising with parents or guardians, administrative arrangements (8.2)
- **While travelling:** Ensuring safety on buses, at airports, on aeroplanes, managing travel tickets, passports etc., arranging meals and snacks, relieving boredom.
- **At hotels or lodgings:** Ensuring safety, and balancing this with allowing children and young people to enjoy their new surroundings, managing the schedule of activities including sleeping and mealtimes, reporting back to home base.
- **At an event:** Ensuring safety, ensuring communication (which may involve translating, or arranging for translation), supporting children and young people in carrying out their advocacy activities effectively with maximum impact.
- **During sightseeing or informal activities:** Ensuring safety, keeping to schedule, keeping the group together and getting everyone back to their lodgings.

¹³ The World Vision chaperoning guide identifies the essential characteristics of a good chaperone as: respect, for children and young people as rights-holders; friendliness that builds trust and confidence; patience to deal with every problem; protecting children and young people as their primary responsibility. World Vision (2013), Chaperoning: It's fun but it's not a holiday!

Case Study 6: International

International Care Leavers' Convention (2020)



Action



- The first International Care Leavers Convention involved over 900 participants from 83 countries across 6 continents.
- The convention took place on an online platform, which brought together in a safe space care leavers, policymakers and service providers to discuss leaving care and aftercare support.
- SOS Children's Villages played a leading role in organising the event, including pre-events and follow-up action, and counted on the collaboration of various partners.

Achievement



- Care leavers from across the world played an active role in organising the event, and during the event as emcees and speakers.
- About 100 care leavers from many countries came together to develop the International Care Leavers' Declaration, which was presented during the convention.
- Adult participants declared that they were moved by the passion and resilience of these young people, and the lived experiences that they shared.
- The prioritized recommendations from the convention were presented to policy-makers representing four regions at a post-convention policy forum.

Benefit



- Care Leavers were empowered to advocate, amplify their voices and attract the attention of decision-makers to influence policy-making globally.
- The International Care Leavers' Declaration provides clear recommendations for change based on the lived experiences of care leavers around the world.

9.

Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and follow-up

9.1 Critical Reflection

Critical Reflective Practice is a valuable approach in any area of work with children and young people, and supporting or facilitating advocacy is no exception. Adults involved in this work should make time to reflect on their experiences and what they have learnt along the way that will be of use to them in the future. Essentially this means looking in depth at:

- What worked well, and why did it work well?
- What didn't work so well, and how could it have been made to work better?

Critical Reflection is best done as a group, but can also be done individually.

Note that Critical Reflection is a process of workers looking at themselves and their own practice. It is not a substitute for evaluation of activities with children and young people as discussed below.

9.2 Accountability to children and young people

One of the essential requirements for effective and meaningful participation is that it must be **accountable** (see 2.5). This means that those who organise, support, facilitate or resource it must hold themselves accountable to the children and young people for their actions and inactions.

In the case of advocacy activities, this means the children and young people must receive **feedback** on what, if anything, has happened as a result of their advocacy. This feedback must be:

- **Timely**
The children and young people must hear what has happened before too much time has passed and they have lost interest, or worse, become disillusioned.
- **Appropriate**
The feedback must come in a format and language appropriate to the children and young people involved. For example, if advocacy influences the content of an official policy document, it will be necessary to produce a child-friendly version, so they can clearly understand how their work has influenced the outcome.

The importance of feedback and accountability to children and young people must be covered in the capacity-building provided for adult facilitators (see 5.2 above), including skills for communicating outcomes to children and young people and supporting participatory follow-up activities.

9.3 Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is crucial to the work of all organisations, particularly those working with children and young people.

■ Monitoring

is the continuous process of looking to see "What's going on?" in a project or process. It therefore requires gathering information on the activities carried out, the people who participate in them, the resources used and the outcomes observed.

■ Evaluation

is the process of analysing the information produced by "monitoring" in order to make an assessment of some aspect – or various aspects – of the process.

Traditionally M&E have been done by adult professionals, but participatory monitoring and evaluation are now widely recognised as best practice, and a range of tools now exist to promote the participation of children and young people in monitoring and evaluating the projects in which they participate.

The following sections are based on the Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation published by Save the Children and partners in 2014. This resource shows how to involve children and young people in three aspects of evaluating a participation¹⁴ or advocacy activity: **Scope, Quality and Outcomes**.¹⁵

9.4 Evaluating SCOPE

Scope refers to which children and young people (and how many) were involved, and how they participated at every stage of the process. The scope of participation can be evaluated using this simple table, or adapting it to suit a specific situation:

| | Children are not involved | Consultation (by adults) | Collaboration | Child-led participation | Which children and young people are participating, and how many? |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Situation analysis | | Children and young people are asked for their views. | Children and young people are involved in the process of finding out what the problems are. | Children and young people undertake their own research with other children to identify issues of concern. | |
| Project planning | | Planning by adults takes account of the issues raised by children and young people. | Children and young people are involved in project planning. | Children and young people decide on actions to take and plan them themselves. | |
| Implementation | | Children and young people are invited to take part in some activities. | Children and young people work with adults to carry out the programme of activities. | Children and young people organise and run the programme of activities. | |
| Monitoring and evaluation | | Children and young people are asked if they think the activity or project has been successful. | Children and young people work with adults to evaluate the programme. | Children and young people evaluate the programme according to their own criteria. | |
| Dissemination and feedback | | Children and young people are invited to comment on the results of the evaluation or make suggestions for future work. | Children and young people and adults together consider the findings of the evaluation and develop ideas for future work. | Children and young people develop their own proposals and present these to adults. | |

(Note that this table uses a similar framework to the situation analysis planning table in section 4.2 above. That table is used before a new initiative, this one is used after it is complete).

9.5 Evaluating QUALITY

Quality refers to the extent to which the advocacy activities meet the UNCRC requirements for effective and meaningful participation as discussed in 2.2 above. The above-mentioned Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation provides a simplified set of three indicators for each of the requirements, suitable for working with children and young people to help them determine the overall quality of the activities they have participated in.

9.6 Evaluating OUTCOMES

Outcomes refer to the results of the participation process. This includes outcomes at all levels:

- Effects on the children and young people themselves;
- Effects on their families, schools or communities;
- Effects on adult attitudes;
- Effects on laws, policies, practices or projects at local or national level.

In other words: **What has been achieved through children and young people's advocacy?**

Because every project is different, there is no universal tool for evaluating outcomes. However, there are two elements involved:

1. Review the intended or hoped-for outcomes established at the beginning of the project, and find out to what extent each one has been achieved.
2. Identify any unintended or unexpected outcomes (either positive or negative) and assess the scale of these effects.

9.7 What if nothing changes?

When children and young people take part in an advocacy project that does not achieve the desired change, it is important to talk about it openly and address frustration that might emerge. Adults supporting children and young people's advocacy can undertake follow-up work with them if they are not satisfied with the feedback they receive.

- The first step is often to reconvene the group of children and young people involved in the original advocacy so they themselves can plan the appropriate next steps.
- The second step is to facilitate follow-up actions if in the interest of the children and young people; for example:
 - Writing to the decision-makers in question to express dissatisfaction, and ask why nothing has been done.
 - Generating a campaign to focus media attention (traditional media, online media or both) on the fact that the children and young people feel let down by those in power.
 - Researching the current situation and creating a body of hard evidence on the hardship and/or rights violation being suffered due to lack of action by those in power.
 - Paying a visit to the decision-makers' power-base (Government Ministry, Town Hall, Parliament Buildings) to draw attention to the need for a better response.

¹⁴ Lansdown and O'Kane (2014), Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation.

¹⁵ An additional recommended resource with guidance on monitoring and evaluation is the Youth Participation Assessment Tool that can be found as Annex 2 of the SOS Children's Villages Youth Participation User Guide.

Case Study 7: International

Influencing the global post-2015 development agenda (2015)



Action



- Global project of SOS Children's Villages International, which aimed to ensure the voices of children and young people with care experience were heard in UN decision-making around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- SOS Children's Villages worked with children and young people in many countries to gather their views and perspectives.
- Rodrigo (14 years old) from Chile was chosen to present the children and young people's views to world leaders at the event Children Speak Out on SDGs at UN Headquarters in New York.

Achievement



- Contribution of children and young people with care experience, like Rodrigo, was recognised by world leaders, who spontaneously applauded Rodrigo's speech.
- Rodrigo represented more than 1,000 children and young people who took part in the process supported by the Global Movement for Children in Latin America and the Caribbean, of which SOS Children's Villages is a member.

Benefit



- The 2030 Agenda endorsed by the UN contains a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relating to children's care and well-being.
- The nations of the world are organising and collaborating to meet SDG targets, based on the global development agenda that children and young people like Rodrigo helped to create.
- The right of children and young people with care experience to speak out and influence decision-making was recognised and reinforced at the highest international level.

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Online resources

Publications available online

Leading the Way:

Guidance on the participation of children and young people in global engagements. World Vision (2017)

<https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/WV-Leading-the-Way-2017-04-11.pdf>

Save the Children's Advocacy and Campaigning Course. Save the Children (2014)

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/save-childrens-advocacy-and-campaigning-course>

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https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Advocacy_Toolkit.pdf

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Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (2020)

https://www.alliancecpha.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/safeguarding_children_online.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=40324

Websites with further information

Protest and Activism Resources Child Rights International Network (2020)

<https://home.crin.org/protest-and-activism-resources>

www.globalkidsonline.net:

Global research toolkit on the opportunities, risks and protective factors of children's internet use.

<http://globalkidsonline.net/about/>

www.childnet.com:

Detailed information on a range of key online safety topics including sexting, grooming and social media.

<https://www.childnet.com/teachers-and-professionals>

www.webwise.ie:

Provides a range of free teaching resources addressing topics including cyberbullying, image-sharing, social media and more.

<https://www.webwise.ie/>

