

Foundation module 5

Advocacy

Section 1 Roles and types of advocacy in emergencies

Handout 2



Why use advocacy in emergencies? Frequently asked questions

Won't advocacy endanger access?

UNICEF has long held the belief that there should be no such thing as a silent witness to atrocities. At the same time, simply speaking out on sensitive issues in sensitive situations and risking undermining access to vulnerable populations is not effective advocacy. Advocacy is a core element of UNICEF's mandate and is a key priority area in the organisation's *Medium-term strategic plan for 2006 to 2009*. In emergencies, special attention must be paid to considering appropriate strategies for advocacy activities before implementation.

With a good analysis of needs and strategic choices about methodologies, advocacy risks can be reduced. Any action that has an effect on power has risks. There are also risks if the wrong advocacy approach is carried out or if a strategy is not well thought out; for example, increased security risks, loss of legitimacy, distortion of messages, duplication of effort, lack of internal coordination, and division of scarce resources. Risks are best handled through good planning and risk analysis, the appropriate choice of methods and objectives, evidence, analysis, flexibility, and partnership.

Isn't advocacy about long-term issues and better practiced in development response, not emergencies?

The move towards advocacy strategies that are participative, rights based, and people centred is a move towards a further professionalisation of advocacy in emergency situations and towards increased short-term and long-term impact. Advocacy at the outset of a crisis can help to galvanise resources, capacity and strategic thinking to address programming priorities in the long term. Advocacy in emergencies is fundamentally about changing policies and actions that affect the people facing the crisis, whether it is the need for education facilities, child-friendly food aid, or the halting of child soldier recruitment. Advocacy in emergencies is a tool that can be used to bridge the humanitarian gap in emergency and development programming.

Isn't advocacy about making noise, protest marches, and petitions? None of that works in emergency situations.

There are two main arenas for advocacy: private and public. **Private advocacy** approaches can work where noise is not required. **Private advocacy** refers to actions that take place privately; a conversation, a private negotiation, a meeting, advocacy





without publicity. This gives everyone a chance to explore the issue quietly, openly, and from a problem-solving point of view. It may act as a reminder or a warning of potential issues. This kind of advocacy is often used in the earliest stages of a crisis, when a brief conversation with a manager from another organisation can suffice to remind them of, for example, the need for child-friendly rations, a school space in a camp, or lighting by latrines.

Public advocacy refers to advocacy that takes place in the public eye. It may be participative, it may or may not involve the media, but it does involve people from a wider group. Public advocacy uses the pressure created by public understanding to bring about change in policy or implementation. It does not have to be very high profile, it can simply be a group of women meeting with refugee camp organisers to discuss safety issues, but it can also involve international lobbying and media coverage around child soldier recruitment. Methodologies may include workshops, seminars, petitions, opinion polls, one-to-one meetings, public meetings, and media interviews.

Despite the more informal appearance of some private advocacy activities, it is still strongly recommended that a full planning mechanism be undertaken with the identification of evidence, solutions, objectives, and methodologies.

Taken from *Advocacy in emergencies, Draft framework and guidelines* UNICEF

