

7 Advocacy on children's rights

By the end of this chapter you will:

- understand what is meant by advocacy
- understand each step of the advocacy cycle
- know about the key tools needed to apply these steps within your programme.

This chapter builds on and requires an understanding of the core CRP principles, tools and processes given in Chapter 2.

This chapter explains briefly how advocacy can help you achieve the fulfilment of children's rights. It is not a definitive guide, but sets out the key steps you need to take.

Why do advocacy?

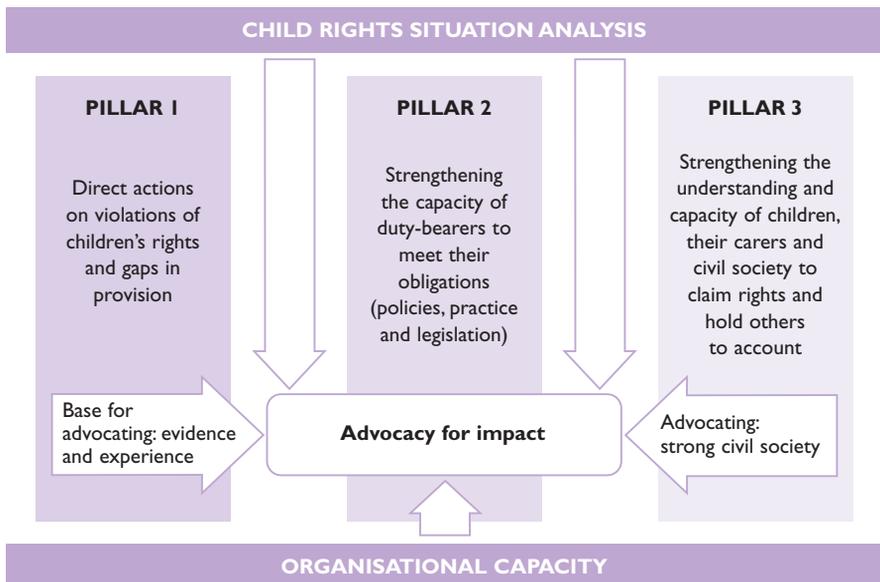
You cannot bring about all the changes you want to improve children's lives alone. Children's rights are often violated through a combination of complex processes, from the levels of family and community to those of national, regional and international. You need to be able to influence and lobby duty-bearers so that they meet their obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Based on evidence from your experience and your commitment to giving children a voice, you can play a key role in supporting children, their families and communities to claim their rights. By doing effective advocacy, you can bring about key changes in policy, legislation and practice that will have a lasting impact on children's lives.

Effective advocacy can:

- demonstrate the value of children, their families and communities participating in decisions that affect their lives, and being key actors in their own development
- demonstrate the advantages of changing policies, practices and legislation to benefit children
- encourage states to recognise children's needs (particularly those of disadvantaged children), and act to fulfil their obligations
- challenge international donors to spend their budgets in ways that will make a real difference to children's lives
- document the need to put systems in place to monitor the situation of children.

Your CRSA should guide your advocacy strategy. You can see below how this fits in to the three pillars (see Chapter 2). You use the experience and knowledge gained from your activities (the first pillar) to inform and influence changes in policy, practice and legislation (central pillar). This process is reinforced by a strong civil society, with children and young people expressing their views, claiming their rights, and holding duty-bearers to account (the third pillar).

Advocacy and child rights programming



Some definitions

Save the Children defines advocacy as:

“a set of organised activities designed to influence the policies and actions of others to achieve positive changes for children’s lives based on the experience and knowledge of working directly with children, their families and communities”.

Top tips:

For advocacy that promotes children’s rights:

- start your advocacy in the field: base it on evidence from your programmes and those of your partners
- never see advocacy as a one-off event or an add-on to an existing programme
- plan, on the basis of your CRSA, clear goals and measurable indicators, so that you can monitor progress and achievements
- make sure that the process is itself empowering
- take positive action and offer credible alternatives that lead to changes in policy, practice and legislation to benefit children
- work in a wide range of partnerships, coalitions and networks
- work for long-term results. It may take years, even decades, before your overall aims are reached.

How to do advocacy work

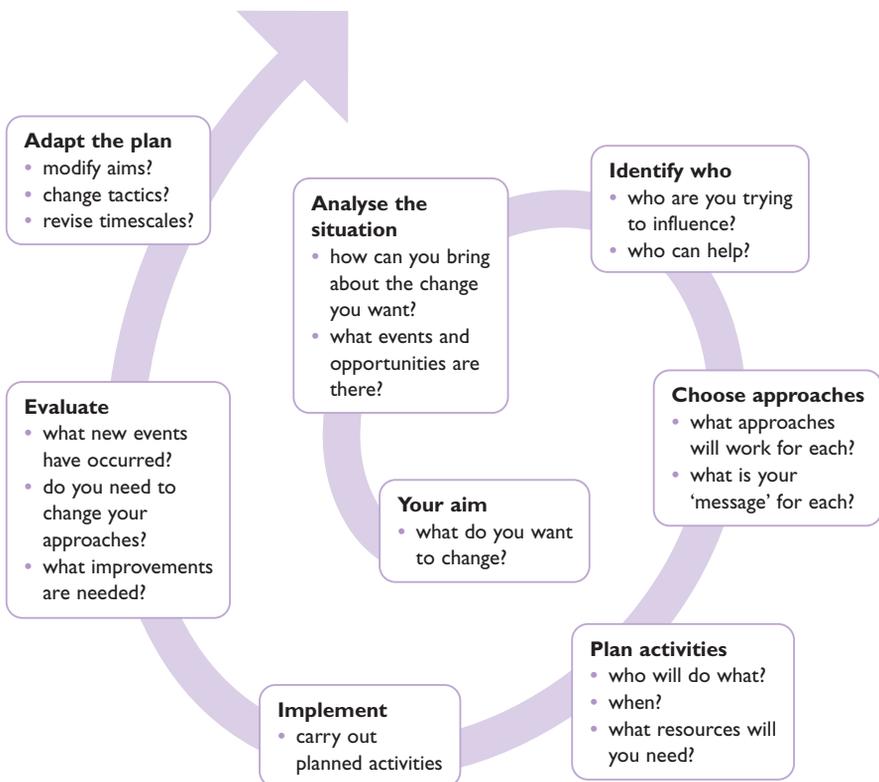
Here are the key steps you need to take to make your advocacy work effective in bringing about positive changes for children.

1. Understand child-rights based advocacy
2. Identify your aim: what do you want to change?
3. Analyse the situation: how can change be brought about?
4. Identify your target and influentials/allies – who are you trying to influence? Who can help you influence them?
5. Set your goals and change objectives
6. Identify events and opportunities you can use to get your message across

7. Choose different approaches that will work for different targets. What is your message to each target?
8. Plan activities: who will do what? When? What resources do you need? What indicators will you use to monitor progress?
9. Implement your planned activities
10. Monitor and evaluate: what has happened? Do you need to change your approaches? What improvements are needed?
11. Adapt the plan: Modify aims? Change tactics? Revise timescales?

Here is a diagram to help you think through the different steps of the advocacy cycle:

Key steps for effective advocacy



Charting the advocacy cycle

Some people find diagrams a useful way to think through all the steps that they must undertake. But people picture these processes differently.

- The diagram on the previous page shows them as a continuous spiral. What are the advantages of this? Is there anything it leaves out?
- Work with one other person to devise your own diagrams, which include the processes your organisation will need to go through.
- Get each pair to explain their diagram to the others in the group. Together, decide on the features that work best, and produce a final diagram for your own planning.

Based on the above cycle, Save the Children in Liberia devised its education advocacy strategy. The result was a range of messages, objectives, targets and approaches, outlined below.

Save the Children Liberia education advocacy strategy

Message 1: The new government of Liberia and the international community use the post-conflict environment to ensure free primary education is adequately funded and becomes a reality for all children.

Advocacy: The Liberian government, donors and the international community match their promises and commitments with adequate funding to rebuild Liberia's education system, which provides quality and free primary education.

Change objectives:

1. Government allocates a minimum of 20% of the national budget to education, 40% of which is allocated to primary education.
2. Government supports the transparency and accountability of education funding.
3. Increased donor funding supports the government of Liberia to provide free quality education.

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Save the Children Liberia education advocacy strategy

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Targets: Ministry of Education (MoE) at national and local levels; key donors involved in education (EU, USAID). Ministry of Finance, World Bank (WB) and IMF for the macro-economic framework and decisions that allow increased investment in social services from the government budget.

Globally: WB/other Education for All-Fast Track Initiative (EFA/FTI) donors.

Allies: USAID and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) are both potential allies who can influence the forthcoming donors' conference.

Approaches:

- Coalition for Better Education in Liberia, which aims to improve the resourcing of the education system, through lobbying in key national meetings (eg, donor group) for better funding of education.
- Analysis of budget allocations and spending to primary education at national and local levels (with UNESCO, who are leading on analysis of financing, at local level working with MoE and schools).
- Children's and communities' awareness of local budget allocations for their schools and their involvement in monitoring whether money is getting through.
- Constructive dialogue with MoE and Ministry of Finance using evidence generated in programme areas.

Save the Children's advocacy strategy in Liberia is part of the International Save the Children Alliance's Rewrite the Future Campaign to ensure access to education for children living in countries affected by conflict. See www.savethechildren.net/rewritethefuture

At every stage of your advocacy work you should be looking for opportunities to involve children, members of their communities, and local organisations. Not only does this give you greater credibility, it can also help defuse politically or culturally sensitive situations. Through this process, you are also empowering the people who will most benefit from the changes you are seeking.

Case studies

In **Bangladesh**, a local NGO, supported by Save the Children, facilitated the involvement of a group of street children working in a city marketplace who were experiencing harassment. After some discussions, the street children suggested that carrying identity cards would help their situation. The local NGO supported the children to discuss this with the market committee. They convinced them of the benefits of ID cards, not just for children, but for stallholders and customers too. The children were successful in their advocacy – they now have ID cards and their situation has improved.

Also in **Bangladesh**, acting at a national level, Save the Children and UNICEF took a proactive stance in advocating for the inclusion of children in the National Plan of Action (NPA) process. The NPA was led by the government, which had its own agenda. Save the Children insisted that the government honour the commitment it made to the UN concerning children's participation in the NPA process. Towards the end of this process, 12 children were involved, two in each of the six committees of the NPA.

Save the Children has extensive experience in working at international levels, and in influencing policies and international legislation. Our advocacy work is constantly informed by our experience working directly with children and their communities. Here are some examples of the different approaches we use.

Case studies

In 2005 the G8 nations agreed to support any country that abolished healthcare user fees. Intense **international lobbying** by Save the Children, using solid and credible research, contributed to this decision and the subsequent results. Now, even the World Bank acknowledges that user fees discriminate against the poor and it no longer promotes fees for basic health services for poor people. **Uganda, Kenya, South Africa and Zambia** have now stopped charging for some or all of their basic healthcare services. Take-up of healthcare by children in these countries has risen dramatically and

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Case studies *continued*

at relatively low cost to governments. In Uganda, use of health services has more than doubled, largely as a result of increased take-up by children. We are now encouraging more countries to follow this lead and abolish healthcare fees.

We have also worked on an **international** level, in coalitions of like-minded organisations, to lobby multinational corporations to change their practice – for example, in relation to the harmful use of child labour in the textile industry, or to stop advertising baby milk powder. These campaigns are rooted in our programme experience and are backed up by research. They operate internationally and rely on the active participation of a diverse group of partners.

The **UN Study on Violence against Children** and its nine national and regional consultations held around the world during 2005 provided a platform for effective and meaningful participation of children. Giving greater importance to children's voices, recognising their concerns and recommendations, and, most importantly, providing a platform for the recognition of children's own action to end violence against girls and boys has been central to the UN Study.

Representatives of children's networks from countries in each region took part in preparatory meetings prior to each of the regional consultations. This gave them an opportunity to explore with peers the issues relating to violence and to plan their participation in the consultations that followed.

The participation of children and young people in the regional consultations was designed to ensure that they actively shared their voices and, more importantly, their actions to stop violence. Advocating for their own recommendations alongside government representatives, planners and policy-makers proved to be much more than just a meeting of minds.

The lively participation and involvement of children in all stages of the consultation brought a sense of urgency and reality that is crucial for the success of the study. Children and adolescents adopted their own declaration or outcome document at every regional consultation. They identified their

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Case studies *continued*

own priorities that contributed directly to the working group's discussions at the consultations. These priorities were ultimately reflected in the final recommendations of each consultation.

A total of 260 girls and boys from various backgrounds in various countries took part in the regional consultations. Save the Children was largely responsible for arranging their participation in the study, creating the appropriate structures and providing technical support and training. Quality standards for children's participation were systematically applied. We also led national, regional and global advocacy strategies in relation to the UN Study, with resulting direct influence on the final recommendations, the UN resolution on violence against children, and the commitments made by individual member states.

Key tools

You can use the *Advocacy Toolkit* (Save the Children, 2007) to help you plan your overall strategy. Here are the stages of the advocacy cycle, with the tools you can use at each stage:

1. Understand child-rights based advocacy

Use the advocacy competency and capacity assessment tool, based on a list of advocacy skills required as individuals and as a team. There's also an exercise to identify strengths and weaknesses (*Advocacy Toolkit*, Save the Children, 2007, pp.19–20).

2. Identify what you want to change

See the Roots and Fruits tree, *Working for Change in Education: A handbook for planning advocacy*, Save the Children, 2000, p.21.

3. Analyse the situation

How can you bring about the changes you want for children? What events and opportunities are there?

Refer back to your CRSA for your evidence base and analysis. Use the Circles of Influence and Obligation as a starting point.

4. Identify who you are trying to influence and who can help you reach them

Use any of the following tools to help you in this:

- Identifying targets and influentials, *Working for Change in Education*, Save the Children, 2000, p.29
- Lines of influence, *Working for Change in Education*, p.35
- Allies and opponents matrix, *CRP: A resource for planning*, Save the Children, 2003

A reminder of who's who

Stakeholders are all those individuals or groups who may have an interest in the change you are advocating.

Targets are the key individuals who are in a position to bring about the change you want.

Influentials are those people who have influence over your targets.

5. Set your goals and objectives

Use the Roots and Fruits tree, *Working for Change in Education*, p.21.

6. Identify events and opportunities you can use

Use the opportunities planner, *Advocacy Toolkit*, Save the Children, 2007, p.68.

The NGO group for the UNCRC has also produced a guide to assist NGOs in reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006 edition). This includes an outline of procedures, tools for planning, checklists and tips for each stage of the process.

Save the Children has produced a guide to help teams wanting to engage with the reporting process. It presents background material, tools, references and case studies: *Reporting on the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child: A Starter Pack*, Save the Children, 2007.

7. Choose the right approaches

What approaches will work for each objective and target? What is your message for each objective and target? There are different types of approach –

co-operative, persuasive and confrontational. Make sure you carry out a risk analysis related to the different approaches.

The range of possible advocacy approaches includes:

- events
- demonstrating solutions
- action research
- policy analysis
- awareness-raising
- campaigning
- lobbying
- media work
- partnerships
- creating ways for people to act.

For more discussion on risk in advocacy, see the *Advocacy Toolkit*, Save the Children, 2007, pp.65–67. It includes a risk assessment matrix and risk management matrix.

Case study

Working in a coalition of international agencies, Save the Children brought the deteriorating situation of people in **Gaza** to the attention of donors and the public. We did this by working through the media. As chair of the Advocacy Sub-Committee of the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA), we led the planning for an event called Gaza Six Months On.

Lessons learned:

- *Safety in numbers.* Get a group of reputable organisations to work together on potentially risky or sensitive statements.
- *Be prepared.* The AIDA planning committee did a lot of work to make this possible.
- *Know your audience.* Our messages were tailored to a receptive audience. The donor community was on board with our basic message, but wanted support in making the case at their HQ level.

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Case study *continued*

- *Get the timing right.* The event was held at the right time, as high-level discussions were taking place within the donor community on exactly the issues we were trying to influence.
- *Do your homework.* Make sure you get your facts and figures correct, quote others, base your information on impartial sources.
- *Monitor the environment.* The election of Hamas really distracted people from the situation in Gaza.
- *Get support from head office.* They will help with press releases, media statements, etc, but they can also promote the message at their end. You can also reduce your risk on sensitive issues by making sure other relevant departments (fundraisers, public advocacy, campaigners, media people, regional office) know what's happening.
- *Be punchy.* Make your statements clear, make your 'asks' clear, use soundbites.
- *Don't just be responsive – have a bigger goal in mind.* You're not just saying children are suffering because of a single event, but that children's rights are denied, and the action you are taking now is one of a series to point out the structural/systematic reasons why.
- *If it's a high-risk event, get your sign-off/risk reduction procedures clear.* Know who can make the decision, where they are, let them know when to expect the statement and then provide it.
- *Identify your enemies.* Know your allies but know your enemies too. This can help you prepare, think through the arguments, understand the other point of view, make sure you've identified risks, and have strategies to respond to attacks!

8. Plan activities

Who will do what? When? What resources do you need?

You can use the three pillars to plan your activities. This will help you make sure you have the evidence base, the experience and the support of a strengthened civil society to influence duty-bearers in terms of their policy, practice and legislation as it affects children.

9. Implement

Carry out your planned activities.

You can use the planning matrix in *Working for Change in Education*, Save the Children, 2000, p.77.

10. Monitoring, evaluation, learning and feedback

What have you done and what has happened so far? Do you need to change your approaches? What improvements are needed?

Use either: Frameworks for monitoring the advocacy process and monitoring advocacy impact, *Advocacy Toolkit*, Save the Children, 2007, pp.71–72.

or: List of questions and dilemmas when evaluating advocacy, *Advocacy Toolkit*, p.78.

Oxfam has developed an alternative to the Dimensions of Change, known as the Stages of Change (see box opposite). These can be applied to your planning, monitoring and evaluation systems.

11. Adapt the plan

Do you need to modify your aims, change your tactics or revise your timescales?

The learning and feedback loop is again key to improving your advocacy programme, and informing its content, approaches and evolution.

When you have carried out your analysis, planned your advocacy work and resourced it, and are sure your partners are ready and that you all share the same motivation, then check through the following questions:

- Are you clear about your change objectives?
- Have you involved and listened to the views of children?
- Do you have evidence and solutions in place?
- Do you know your audience?
- Do you have good contacts among your influentials?
- Have you decided on what approaches to use?
- What are you expecting from your partners?
- Are you sure of their motives and goals?
- Do they enhance your credibility?
- What will happen if they drop out of the picture?

The Stages of Change

1. Change in debate: the first step to getting your advocacy message into the policy development process is to make sure that your message and argument feature in debates on the issue among relevant stakeholders. For example, are the press carrying your message? Is a minister using your terms of reference for the issue? You will need to note factors that enable or constrain, eg, ideological biases.

2. Changes in opinion: did your message change any opinion? Are the messages being used within debate to effectively influence what people think and then may do? You will need to make sure you cover a wide range of stakeholders in this analysis.

3. Changes in policy: getting suggested alternative policy into legislation or relevant context.

4. Change in implementation: recommended change in policy is implemented by targets – government or agency. Funding has been allocated and is being spent. Implies monitoring budget allocations and distributions, eg, to regional or local-level budgets, and tracking whether or not funds are expended on target activity (and if not, why not?).

5. Change in people's lives: this stage is only reached when the desired policy has been put into practice and the results are showing (or not). At this point the changes should be considered through the perspective of all the dimensions.

- What resources – financial, technical, human – are available?
- How will you co-ordinate and monitor the different approaches you are using?
- Are there any risks?
- How will your activities affect the reputation of your organisation?
- How will it affect your funding?
- What would you do if...? What are your alternatives and contingency plans?

Case study

A success story from **Bulgaria**: Save the Children became aware of three signs of bad conditions and maltreatment in a home for children with disabilities. The programme immediately informed the responsible ministries, the European Union in Bulgaria and key investigative journalists. Each of these exerted pressure, and this triggered an immediate reaction. The home was planned for closure, while each child's needs were assessed and plans made for their care outside of institutions. The team summarised their learning points as: *"Don't go it alone, don't expect quick results, don't underestimate the negative 'fall out', don't forget you are dealing with politicians, and don't take 'no' for an answer."*

The Advocacy Center at the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) has developed an alternative strategic planning tool for advocacy, known as the 'Nine Questions' (see www.advocacy.org).

The Nine Questions

- External factors**
1. What do we want? (goals)
 2. Who can give it to us? (audiences, key players or power-holders)
 3. What do they need to hear? (messages)
 4. Who do they need to hear it from? (messengers)
 5. How can we get them to hear it? (delivery)
- Internal factors**
6. What do we have? (resources)
 7. What do we need to develop? (gaps)
 8. How do we begin? (first steps)
 9. How do we tell if it's working? (evaluation)

Yes, but...

“ We can’t measure the impact of our advocacy work. It will take many years and who knows if our efforts will have contributed to any change? ”

Break it down into phases, each with objectives and indicators. This way you can monitor your progress and maintain momentum and motivation over time.

“ What happens if a great opportunity arises – eg, we’re invited to a high-level round table discussion on a subject that we have not planned any advocacy for? ”

The short answer is, go! But before you go, ask yourself these questions:

- Does the subject for discussion relate to our existing programme and strategy?
- Do we have a clear position?
- Do we have evidence to back up our position?
- Do we have the skills to present our position?
- Do others share our position and objectives?
- Is this the best use of our time and resources or would we be better off doing something else?
- Can we document the discussion, share the conclusions and ensure follow-up?
- Can we present children’s opinions, directly or indirectly?

“ Policy and legislation is more about politics than children and their rights. Aren’t we just wasting our time here? ”

You need to know who can bring about change and how, so you have to have a good understanding of power relations. This can take a long time, but it is vital for large-scale change. Through fundamental changes to policy and legislative frameworks you will start to see changes take place for large numbers of vulnerable children, potentially over generations. Taking strong positions based on direct experience, working in good partnerships and demonstrating real commitment over time will earn respect from the ‘powers that be’ and bring eventual success.

“Without the financial resources at national and decentralised levels neither us nor the state can really have an impact.”

You need to work with governments and donors at all levels and press for the necessary funding and budget transparency to bring about the improvements you want to see in children’s lives. For example, Save the Children’s global campaign, Rewrite the Future, calls on states and donors to adequately fund education in conflict and post-conflict countries. The specific recommendation demands: “increasing allocation of long-term predictable aid for education in conflict-affected fragile states, with a significant proportion of this aid being used to provide basic education”.

Where to go for more information

There are many resources on advocacy. Here is a small selection of the most practical ones and those that deal with child rights-based advocacy.

Child Rights Advocacy Operational Guideline and Advocacy Position Paper, Save the Children Denmark, 2006. Two complementary papers outlining what is meant by advocacy and practical approaches to carrying out advocacy initiatives, with a focus on planning.

Advocacy Toolkit, Save the Children UK, 2007. A step-by-step practical guide with a range of tools, explanations and formats.

Advocacy Matters: Helping children change their world. An International Save the Children Alliance guide to advocacy, 2007.

Working for Child Rights from a Budget Perspective. Studies and experiences from a number of countries, Save the Children Sweden, 2005

Working for Change in Education: A handbook for planning advocacy, Save the Children UK, 2000. A key reference that, despite its focus on education programmes, is of great value across all programme areas. It includes key tools, checklists and case studies.

Act Now! Some highlights from children’s participation in the Regional Consultation for the UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children, Save the Children, 2006

Regional Capacity Building Workshop on Advocacy for Realising Child Rights, Save the Children Sweden, 2007

A New Weave of Power, People & Politics: The action guide for advocacy and citizen participation, VeneKlasen L, Just Associates, 2002, Washington DC
www.justassociates.org

Critical Webs of Power and Change, ActionAid International, 2005
www.actionaid.org

Children's Ombudsman Training and Resource Manual, Save the Children Norway, 2006

Recommended websites:

New Tactics in Human Rights: www.newtactics.org/main.php provides a range of good training tools.

The International Budget Project, www.internationalbudget.org, is more rights-based with a further focus on budget analysis, country case studies, information exchange and tools. Civil society and capacity building feature highly.

Young Lives, www.younglives.org.uk, is an innovative long-term international research project, investigating the changing nature of child poverty in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. The project links research and policy-makers and planners, so that the information produced is used to improve the quality of children's lives. Young Lives involves academic and NGO partners in these four countries, as well as in the UK and South Africa.

For information on **ombudspersons** see the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, www.ombudsnet.org, which includes background information and a training pack.