

B1

The *why* of advocacy

Poverty reduction and motivations

Section B1 explains what poverty is and how advocacy fits in the context of poverty reduction. It considers some of the advantages and disadvantages of using advocacy as an approach to development work, by exploring how it contributes to poverty reduction. It also looks at motivations for doing advocacy and explains why Tearfund is involved in advocacy work.



Facilitator's notes

This section explores a series of questions and answers. A training workshop facilitator must be familiar with this material.

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- TOOL 6: Poverty definitions 25
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Training exercises

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SECTION B1 Facilitator's notes



What is poverty?

In 2000 the World Bank published findings of interviews with more than 60,000 men and women from 60 countries, attempting to understand poverty from the perspective of people living in poverty. It concluded:

*'Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom.'*¹

Poverty is about the whole person and that person in community. It is about deprivation: a lack of the things needed to live a complete life. It is complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic, and it changes over time. It looks and feels different in different contexts, and it is experienced in multiple ways. It threatens life and undermines human dignity. Its scale is enormous.

It is helpful to consider various components of poverty:

■ Symptoms of poverty

Symptoms include different expressions of deprivation, such as hunger, malnutrition, ill-health and isolation, and also other 'higher-level' indications, such as illiteracy and low self-esteem.

■ Causes of poverty

Causes include factors that lead to poverty occurring:

- Primary causes, such as a lack of access to health care services, clean water, food, sanitation, education or land, and also greed and a desire for power.
- Structural (social, cultural, political, environmental) causes, such as economic inequality, abuse of power, unjust trade rules, corruption, conflict, weak governance or discrimination against particular groups (for example, based on gender, ethnicity or race).

■ Vulnerability to poverty

Vulnerability impacts people's ability to withstand changing or unforeseen circumstances (such as crop failure, accident, sickness, funerals or flooding) and sustain an adequate quality of life over time. Poor communities are particularly vulnerable to social, economic and environmental changes in the world around them.

Poverty is both *absolute* and *relative*. *Absolute poverty* is about not having enough to live well, and means a common minimum standard, often related to income – which does not change over time – has not been reached. *Relative poverty* is about having less than those around you, and refers to a minimum standard that is defined according to the society in which a person lives, and therefore varies between different contexts and changes over time.

The most enduring framework of international agreement on people's entitlements is the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). See Section G4 on human rights.

For more information, please see **TOOL 6: Poverty definitions**.

¹ Narayan D et al (2000) *Voices of the poor. Can anyone hear us?* World Bank. For more information, see: <http://go.worldbank.org/H1N8746X10>



How does advocacy contribute to poverty reduction?

Tackling the *causes* of poverty, as well as its *effects*, is central to tackling poverty itself. Advocacy work often addresses the underlying *causes* of poverty, while programmatic work often addresses its *effects*. The aim of both is the same: to reduce poverty.

Much development work focuses on provision of essential services, such as water, sanitation and health care. It is principally the responsibility of governments to deliver these services for their citizens. When citizens hold governments to account for fulfilling their mandate to provide service delivery, this is at the heart of advocacy, and when governments provide these services, this is a fundamental part of poverty reduction. Advocacy therefore has an important role to play in addressing poverty and in challenging the injustices that lead to and are caused by poverty.

Here is an analogy that illustrates the point:

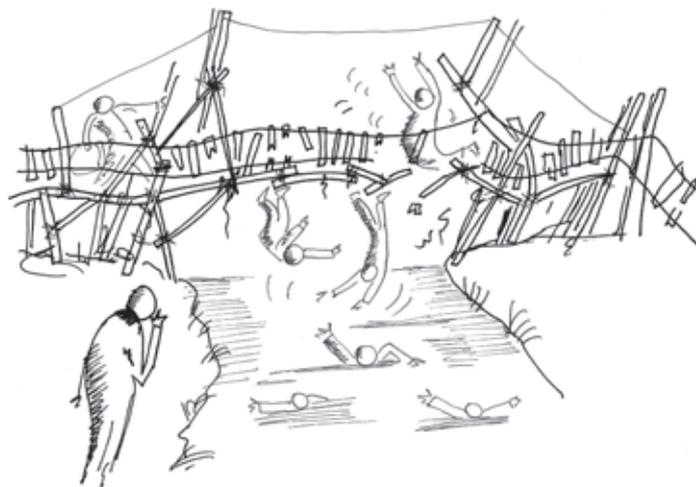
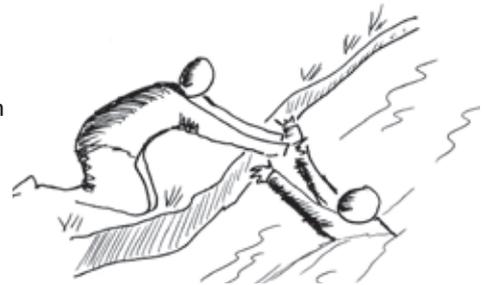
THE UPSTREAM STORY

Imagine that you are standing by a river and someone in front of you has floated downstream and is drowning. What would you do?

- Most people would be motivated by compassion and would probably help to pull that person out of the river.
- But what if it happens again? What if someone else floats downstream and starts drowning in front of you? What if it keeps happening – again and again and again? How many times can you keep pulling people out of the water?
- You may call other people to come and help you. Together, you can keep pulling people out of the water. But how long do you keep doing this for?

- If you are able, you might start teaching people how to swim, so they can stay afloat and get themselves out of the water.

- But someone, somewhere, somehow, needs to head upstream and find out why people are falling into the river. (Perhaps a bridge has broken and people cannot cross the river?) Something needs to be done to try to prevent people falling into the river in the first place.



Each time someone falls into the river and starts to drown, it is as if a disaster is occurring. Rescuing these drowning people is similar to humanitarian relief work, in that we are responding to an immediate need in the face of a crisis.

Teaching people to swim is like our longer-term development work, in that we are empowering them to cope with the situation they are facing.

Heading upstream to make investigations, and to try to prevent people from falling into the river in the first place, is where our advocacy work fits in. It is calling on those responsible for the bridge (such as the land owner or the local authority) to fix it, to try to prevent people falling into the river.



What motivates us to do advocacy?

There are many reasons why people do advocacy work. It is a good idea to understand our own personal reasons for doing advocacy and, if applicable, our organisation's reasons.

Some of the most common motivations for doing advocacy include:

■ Involvement

- Being directly affected by a situation that needs an advocacy response
- Working with those directly affected by the advocacy issue.

■ Values

- Personal beliefs and values
- The vision, mission and values of the organisation for which a person works
- The values of the community to which a person belongs
- Biblical values, such as compassion, love and active responsibility for others, wise stewardship of resources, reconciliation and peace-building, equality and social and economic justice.

■ Desires

- To achieve sustainable change by addressing the causes of poverty, as well as its effects
- To use limited resources strategically to have a greater impact than is possible with direct service-delivery and development interventions alone
- To establish legitimacy, credibility and cooperation between civil society and policymakers
- To encourage citizen participation and consultation in decision-making processes, and maintain and expand democratic space
- To hold governments to account for delivery of service provision.

For more information, please see [TOOL 7: Weighing it up](#). See also [Section B3](#) and/or [TOOL 13: Study notes: Biblical motivations for advocacy about the biblical basis for advocacy](#).



Why does Tearfund do advocacy?

These are the main reasons for Tearfund's involvement in advocacy work:

■ Being motivated by the compassion of Christ

Christ is our motivation and our strength in all that we do. He has compassion for those in need, including those suffering injustice, oppression or poverty. Our compassion is based on the love and the mercy that Christ has shown us.



■ Fulfilling the mission of the church to bring good news

God uses the church to help extend his kingdom. This includes preaching, prayer, caring for those in need, defending the cause of others, speaking out against injustice, working for change and looking after God's creation. Advocacy is therefore part of the overall mission of the church. We are motivated to do this out of obedience to God and compassion, and in order to point people towards Jesus.

■ Viewing people living in poverty as agents of change

Part of the development process is helping people living in poverty to see themselves as agents of change. Advocacy work can help to achieve this, so that people living in poverty are more in control of their lives and better able to participate in decision-making that affects the future of their community and wider area.

■ Addressing root causes of poverty and injustice and providing long-term solutions

Development work should deal with the root causes of poverty, as well as tackling the consequences and effects of poverty, so that it is sustainable. Advocacy tackles the root



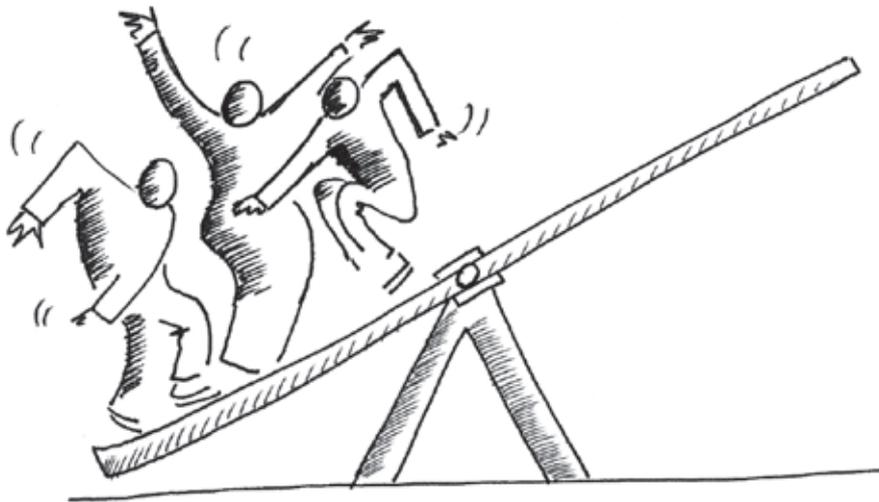
causes by asking what policies, practices or other factors are leading to poverty and injustice and by challenging these.

■ **Sharing good development practice**

A key part of advocacy work is showing what works in practice and persuading others to do the same. For Christians, this is part of what it means to be a light to the world, demonstrating God's kingdom. Building on good development practice and promoting positive change is central to advocacy work. Advocacy work is not only about preventing negative change.

■ **Leveraging greater change**

Advocacy work can generate or attract resources and actions that would not be available in individual development projects. As a result, advocacy work can have a significant multiplier effect on development work that is already happening.





TOOL 6

Poverty definitions

Poverty is one of humanity's biggest problems. It is often a result of social corruption, war, physical or economic disaster, or personal irresponsibility. Its underlying cause is sin, usually committed against those affected by it, and not by poor people themselves. It is a painful, fearful, hopeless and vulnerable way of life due to exploitation, isolation, lack of choice and powerlessness.

● Saúl Cruz-Ramos
– Armonía, Mexico

Poverty is powerlessness. It is about people being unable to meet their basic human needs. Most often this is due to lack of opportunity in a society marked by oppression and injustice which has led to disempowerment. The poor and the non-poor are people created in the image of God, who are designed to grow into mature human beings able to meet their own socio-economic, personal, social, cultural and spiritual needs. Poverty is powerlessness to fulfil that God-given role.

● René Padilla
– Kairos, Argentina

Poverty is experienced by people who are limited in choice. Economic poverty is limited ability to meet basic needs. Spiritual poverty is limited knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of the world. Poverty dehumanises people, so that they believe that the problems that they face need to be solved by somebody else.

● Francis Njoroge – Co-author of *Umoja*
and independent consultant, Kenya

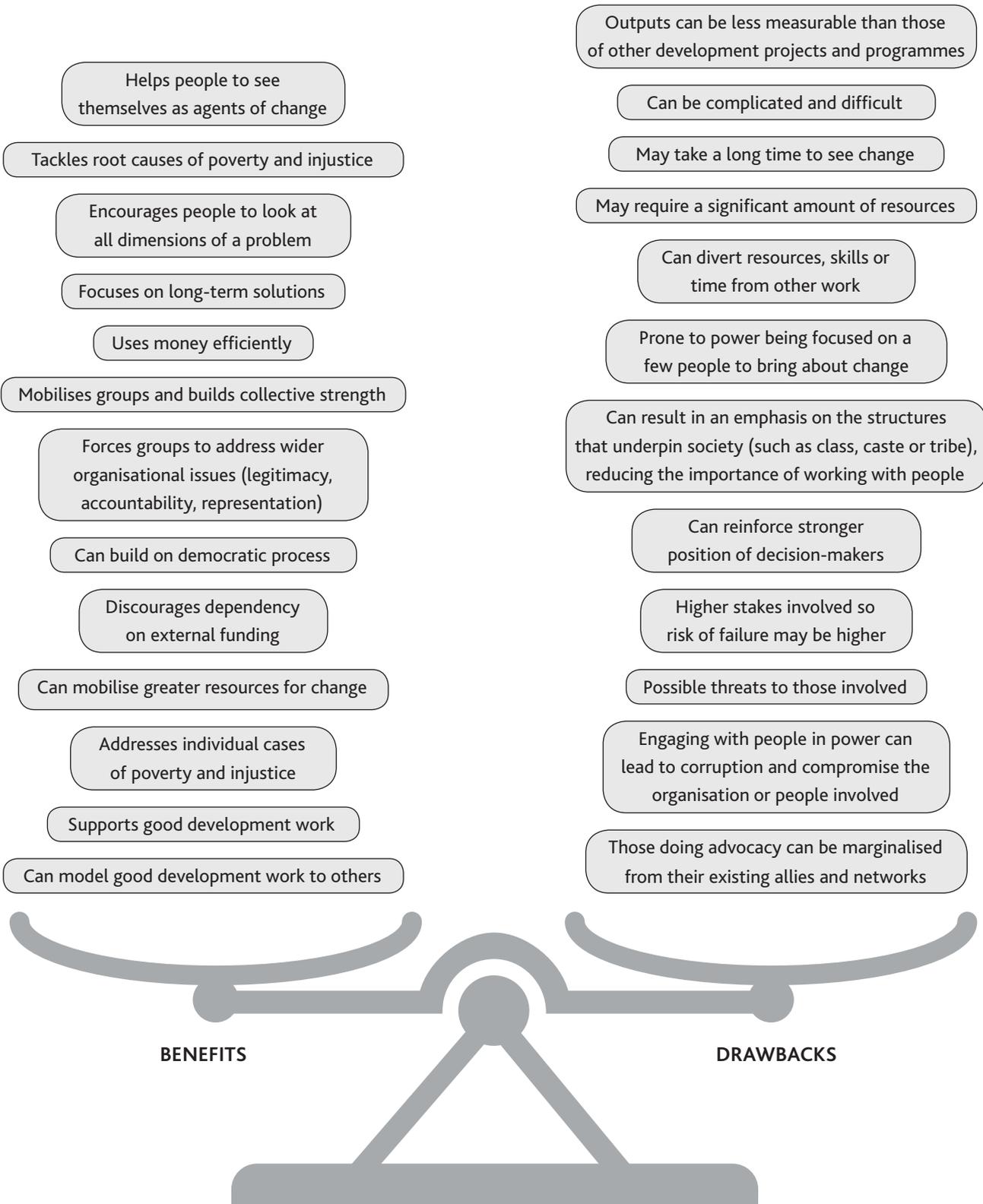
The poor don't really need us unless, of course, they are utterly destitute, severely sick or disabled, or the victims of war and natural disasters. What they need is not our charity but a recognition by us of their rights. They want us to remove the barriers that we (the rich) have erected, locally and globally, that prevent them from participating in their own sustainable development.

● Vinoth Ramachandra
– Sri Lanka



TOOL 7 Weighing it up

Advocacy work might not always be appropriate. This tool weighs up the benefits and drawbacks ahead of making a decision about whether to proceed with advocacy work. (This is not a comprehensive list, and some of the benefits and drawbacks listed apply to all development projects and programmes, not just advocacy.)



SECTION B1 Training exercises



EXERCISE 6 Understanding poverty

Aim To come to an understanding of poverty and how advocacy contributes to poverty reduction

TYPE Group exercise

METHODS Individual reflection, small group discussion, plenary discussion

MATERIAL Sticky notes or blank cards

HANDOUT TOOL 6: Poverty definitions

- STEPS (VERSION 1)**
1. Give all participants some sticky notes or blank cards.
 2. Using one word or phrase per sticky note or blank card, ask participants to write or draw words or phrases that come to mind when they hear the word 'poverty'.
 3. Stick the sticky notes or cards on the wall or place them on the floor.
 4. Invite participants to group the ideas in themes.
 5. Lead a plenary discussion around the key themes and draw out a common understanding of poverty and how advocacy contributes to poverty reduction.

- STEPS (VERSION 2)**
1. Present participants with TOOL 6: Poverty definitions as a handout.
 2. Ask participants to draw out the key words, phrases, themes, issues or statements. They can do this individually or in small groups.
 3. Invite participants to feed back their findings in plenary.
 4. Lead a plenary discussion around the key themes and draw out a common understanding of poverty.



EXERCISE 7 Benefits and drawbacks of advocacy

Aim To identify the benefits and drawbacks of doing advocacy work

TYPE This exercise works well with a group but can be used by individuals

METHODS Individual reflection, buzz groups, small group discussion, ranking, plenary discussion, interactive agree/disagree line

MATERIAL Sticky notes or blank cards

HANDOUT TOOL 7: Weighing it up

- STEPS (VERSION 1)**
1. Draw a set of weighing scales at the bottom of a piece of flipchart paper. Label one side 'benefits' and the other side 'drawbacks'.
 2. Split participants into two groups.
 3. Give each group a set of sticky notes or blank cards and pens.
 4. Ask one group to brainstorm the benefits and the other group to brainstorm the drawbacks of advocacy work.

5. Ask each group to write the benefits and drawbacks on separate sticky notes or blank cards.
6. Ask each group to place their sticky notes or cards on the appropriate side of the drawing of the weighing scales on the flipchart paper. As they do so, ask them to order the cards, from the most positive aspect to the most negative.
7. Draw everyone back together. Facilitate a plenary discussion about why each group came to their conclusions. Allow for each group to challenge the other group. Discuss whether the benefits or the drawbacks weigh more and why.
8. Distribute **TOOL 7: Weighing it up**.
9. Refer to **TOOL 35: Advocacy risk analysis** (see Section F2).

STEPS (VERSION 2)

1. Get participants to stand up.
2. Assign one end of the room 'benefits' and the other end of the room 'drawbacks'.
3. Using **TOOL 7: Weighing it up**, call out the statements, one at a time, making sure to read out a mix of the list on the left of the tool and the list on the right of the tool. Do not read them out in the order they appear. For each one called out, ask participants to stand along an imaginary line between 'benefits' and 'drawbacks', according to what they think about the statement that has been read out. Before moving on to read out the next statement, ask different participants to explain why they are standing where they are.
4. Encourage plenary discussion and draw out the fact that there are always benefits and drawbacks in advocacy work, and we need to recognise them and assess them.



EXERCISE 8 Understanding motivations for advocacy

Aim For participants to reflect on, and understand, their own (and their organisation's, if applicable) motivations for doing advocacy work

TYPE This exercise works well with a group but can be used by individuals

METHODS Individual reflection, buzz groups, small group discussion, ranking, agree/disagree, plenary discussion

MATERIAL Sticky notes or blank cards

HANDOUTS **TOOL 2: For, with or by?**
TOOL 13: Study notes: Biblical motivations for advocacy (optional)

- STEPS**
1. Ask participants to divide into pairs.
 2. Give each pair a set of sticky notes or blank cards.
 3. Get each pair to write directly on to the sticky notes or blank cards, one per card, their responses to the question, 'What motivates you to do advocacy?'
 4. Collect all the sticky notes or cards together, without any discussion, and group similar cards together.
 5. Read out, one at a time, the most common motivations. As you do so, for each one, ask participants to move to either end of the room, according to how strongly they agree or disagree with the motivation for themselves. Make one end of the room 'very strong agreement' and the other end 'very strong disagreement'.
 6. Lead this into a plenary discussion about the different reasons why people do advocacy. If appropriate, refer to Section B3 about the biblical basis for advocacy.