

# tool 54 Planning Advocacy on the Grave Violations

## Guiding questions

Advocacy, whether at the local, national or international level, is a way to respond to concerns and needs of victims of grave violations. Depending on the type of engagement in the MRM, on the capacity of the organization and on the level of visibility that the organization is willing to accept, the following are some guiding questions that may be useful when planning advocacy action:

Questions		Examples
<b>What?</b>	What do we want to achieve concretely?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End a violation in a particular case (e.g., opening humanitarian access).</li> <li>• Change a practice or policy that is allowing violations to happen (e.g., active recruitment of children).</li> <li>• Call for a particular practice or policy that would prevent future violations (e.g., standard operating procedures to protect and/or deal with children during hostilities, zero tolerance policy on sexual violence).</li> <li>• Help victim claim a right (e.g., child-friendly procedure for children in violation/with the law).</li> <li>• Accountability/punishment.</li> </ul>
<b>Why?</b>	<p>What rules, laws, standards and commitments can we rely on to back-up our request?</p> <p>What evidence can we use to justify our request?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Policies, procedures and commitments adopted/endorsed by the armed actor:</b> standard operating procedures, peace agreements, public declarations, Action Plans, Deeds of Commitment.</li> <li>• <b>National legal provisions</b> relative to the protection of children in conflict.</li> <li>• <b>International instruments (binding and non-binding) relative to the protection of children in armed conflict:</b> humanitarian law, human rights law, Paris Principles and Commitments (children associated with armed forces/groups), <i>Lucens Guidelines</i> (military use of schools), Security Council Resolutions, Security Council 'Conclusions' on the country.</li> <li>• <b>Governmental policies and procedures.</b></li> <li>• Specific case of violation (with informed consent and in accordance with the confidentiality rules agreed upon with the victim).</li> <li>• Prevalence, patterns and trends in violations observed through monitoring.</li> <li>• Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict (annual and country-specific).</li> </ul>
<b>Who?</b>	<p><b>Who is the target?</b></p> <p>This can include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the person/entity that must change their practice/behavior.</li> <li>2) person/entity who has a duty to ensure the respect for the right we want to see realized.</li> <li>3) person/entity that has influence or leverage on any of the former.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Armed group, armed forces, judicial authorities, law enforcement authorities, government entities/representatives, parents/communities.</li> <li>2) Relevant government entity; individual at the top of the chain of command or hierarchy.</li> <li>3) Legal or administrative oversight entities, embassies/diplomatic representatives, international high profile individuals, community leaders, religious leaders, education or medical personnel, media.</li> </ol>

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Questions	Examples
<p><b>How?</b></p> <p>Should the action be discreet or public? Will the action be taken at the local, national or international level?</p> <p>In what format will we conduct the advocacy action?</p>	<p><b>Discreet:</b> limited exposure for the organization but higher vulnerability for the individual carrying out the advocacy, more space for negotiation and dialogue but less pressure for the target to act.</p> <p><b>Public:</b> more pressure and scrutiny on the advocacy target, more exposure but also more protection for the organization, limited space for negotiation and dialogue.</p> <p>Letter, meeting, series of meetings, report, submission of information, media communication, campaign, etc.</p> <p>Think of how formal the interaction should be.</p>
<p><b>When?</b></p> <p>Are there any dates, moments or events particularly relevant for this advocacy action?</p>	<p><b>Signature/adoption of new instruments:</b> adoption of new legislation or policies strengthening the protection of children, ratification of treaties relative to the protection of children in armed conflict, ceasefire, peace agreement, Action Plan, Deed of Commitment.</p> <p><b>Anniversaries or celebratory dates:</b> anniversaries of the signature of new instruments (see above), international children's day, 'red hand' day,<sup>14</sup> etc.</p> <p><b>Release of a report:</b> by your organization, by the Secretary-General, by treaty bodies or special procedures.</p> <p><b>Discussion of the situation of children in the armed conflict in international fora:</b> Security Council, Human Rights Council, treaty bodies, International Criminal Court.</p> <p><b>High-profile visits:</b> national government officials, foreign government officials, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict, UN Special Rapporteurs, Special Envoys (UN, European Union, African Union), UN Commissions of Inquiry, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Determine when exactly to intervene in order to take advantage of any of these dates/events/moments (e.g., meeting high-profile visitors on arrival, submitting information to international fora prior to discussions.)</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Allies?</b></p> <p>Can we rely on 'allies' to help us pass a message to the advocacy target?</p> <p>Could any of these 'allies' affect our neutrality and independence or our reputation in the eyes of the advocacy target?</p> <p>Is the advocacy approach of a potential 'ally' compatible with our approach?</p>	<p>'Allies' can include: UN MRM focal point, other NGOs, the CTFMR, diplomatic representatives, donors, high-profile visitors (see above).</p>
<p><b>Entry points?</b></p> <p>To what issues are the advocacy targets sensitive to and on which can we expect openness and cooperation?</p>	<p>Compliance with legal obligations and political commitments taken publicly, political legitimacy and credibility, reputation (internal or external), community support, legacy, professionalism, etc.</p>


<sup>14</sup> Red Hand Day, February 12 each year, is an annual commemoration day on which pleas are made to political leaders and events are staged around the world to draw attention to the fates of child soldiers

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Questions		Examples
<b>'Sticky' points?</b>	On what issues can we expect resistance or opposition from advocacy targets?	Allegations of grave violations, credibility of the source of these allegations, allegations of inaction or slow reaction, relevance of internationally-agreed upon standards, foreign interference, past interactions between the advocacy target and your organization (or organizations similar to you) that may not have had a positive outcome, etc.
<b>Security?</b>	<p>Can the action be carried out without raising additional security risks for victims, communities, organization staff or the organization as a whole?</p> <p>Are there any precautions that need to be taken to mitigate those risks?</p> <p>In the case of advocacy linked to individual case follow-up: does the victim concerned consent to advocacy action being taken on his/her case?</p>	<p>Exposure to stigma or retaliation, misinterpretation or politicization of our advocacy message by others (armed actors, communities, authorities) impacting existing relationships, etc.</p> <p>Special safeguards for children, in particular if they are actively involved in the advocacy action.</p>

## related tools

-  tool 5 – International legal foundation of the six grave violations
-  tool 23 – Factsheet 'Mapping relevant international obligations of your country of operation'
-  tool 24 – Guiding questions 'Mapping national provisions that protect children in conflict in your country of operation'
-  tool 22 – Guiding questions 'Stakeholder analysis and mapping'
-  tool 49 – Factsheet 'Other avenues to report grave violations'
-  tool 55 – Case study 'Options for local advocacy in Eastern DRC'
-  tool 56 – Case study 'Responding through advocacy: ad-hoc release of children in Eastern DRC'
-  tool 58 – 'Practice standards in children's participation' (Save the Children Alliance)
-  tool 59 – Case study 'Child-led advocacy in Colombia'

## other resources

- *Humanitarian Negotiation: A Handbook for Securing Access, Assistance and Protection for Civilians in Armed Conflict*, Deborah Mancini-Griffoli and Andre Picot, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2004.
- *Guidelines on Humanitarian Negotiations with Armed Groups*, Gerard McHugh and Manuel Bessler, United Nations, 2006.
- *Humanitarian negotiations with Armed Groups – A Manual for Practitioners*, Gerard McHugh and Manuel Bessler, United Nations, 2006.
- *Engaging Armed Non-state Actors on Humanitarian Norms: Reflections on Geneva Call's Experience*, Pascal Bongard, Humanitarian Practice Network - Humanitarian Exchange Magazine - Issue 58, July 2013.
- *Building Respect for Humanitarian Action and IHL among 'Other' Weapon Bearers*, ICRC, Overview.
- *Draft Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict*, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2013.
- *Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups*, February 2007.