



Advocacy Policy

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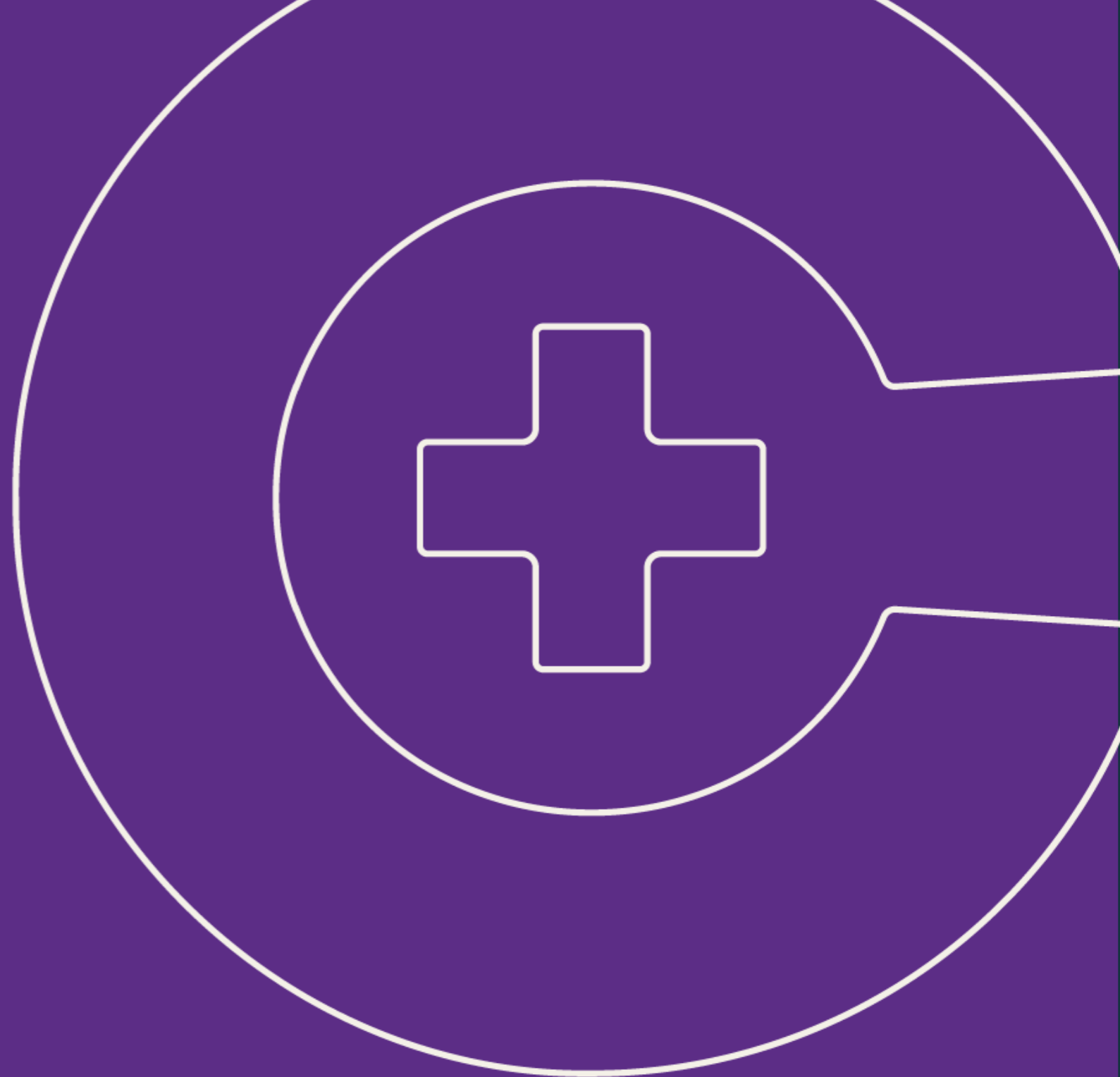
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Advocacy Policy

This policy represents the commitment of CKU (Board, members and secretariat) to work towards advocacy in our development work. CKU members are committed to implementing this policy in the way we operate in cooperation with our partners and in the objectives we strive to achieve together.

The overall objective of CKU's advocacy policy is to secure an advocacy focus. CKU supported interventions should, to the widest extent possible, promote sustainable structural change in favour of the poor and marginalised.

It is recognised by the CKU Board, members and secretariat that implementing the CKU advocacy policy will require the active leadership and allocation of resources on behalf of the CKU Board, members, staff and partners.

The CKU, the Policy for Danish support to civil society and advocacy



Since the 1970s and 1980s, CKU members and partners have, along with other NGOs, moved towards empowerment in their development approach. Since 2001, the Danish government's Policy for Danish support for civil society has encouraged CKU, members and partners to move beyond local partnership 'bases' and towards helping partners obtain a voice in society. Steps have since been taken to combine traditional loyalties to local people and successful joined up processes with a more outward-looking approach designed to benefit partners, beneficiaries/citizens and wider societies in the southern hemisphere. Drawing on experiences from institutions and projects, CKU members and partners work with political structures at local, regional and national levels. Advocacy has been undertaken using different approaches. One approach has been to develop and demonstrate good models in education and health work. Other approaches have been to raise concerns through empowerment of marginalised groups and/or through raising sensitive issues via the

church network. Where CKU traditionally work locally, other churches and Christian organisations have for many years worked with advocacy at an international level. The World Council of Churches has successfully set agendas e.g. for fair trade and writing off third world debt (Jubilee 2000). We face many persistent challenges demanding advocacy. The overall issue is the de facto exclusion of the poor from political and economic decision-making. Another issue is to highlight discrimination of women and consequently gender inequality. However, one special challenge should also be mentioned here as it is close to our identity as faith-based organisations: the issue of freedom of religion. In Asia and parts of Africa many churches and Christian groups have little local influence and are even marginalised to the point of suffering discrimination, harassment or even persecution from residents and authorities. Many ethnic and religious minority groups worldwide face a

similar scenario. In such contexts, advocacy at local and national level regarding freedom of religion is relevant, and this includes the right to change religious affiliation according to one's own desire. With the updated Policy for Danish support for civil society of 2008 and again in 2014, a strong focus on advocacy has been maintained and the link between different types of development work in namely service, capacity building and advocacy has been more clearly spelled out. This policy seeks to combine these elements to promote a sustainable future for CKU's work. This policy came out of a need to adjust the focus of members' and partners' work in the South and does not cover advocacy in the North. CKU encourages its member organisations to consider incorporating elements of the advocacy approaches outlined here and adapt according to the national context. CKU will consistently consider implementation of advocacy in Denmark.



Characteristics of CKU advocacy work

Experience from other Danish NGOs indicates that civil society advocacy work generally focuses on one of the following three areas:

A. Empowerment of marginalised groups: Supporting poor and marginalized groups to strengthen their voice and exercising of basic rights in their daily lives.

B. Political participation: Aiming to influence local decision-makers and their decisions regarding the allocation of resources e.g. through civic education and civic action.

C. Changing of policies: This work can take place at different levels e.g. advocating for new laws, rules and regulations; and/or implementing existing laws, rules and regulations.

Advocacy reviews and screening revealed that CKU members and partners offer great potential for advocacy work, particularly within empowerment of marginalised groups (A.). There are also some examples of projects aimed at political participation (B.) and changing policies (C.). As regards to (C.), the examples found concern advocacy for different practic-

es/models implemented in health and education.

CKU wants to encourage members and partners to pursue an advocacy agenda that is closely related to the organisation's own vision and core activities. The advocacy agenda has to grow out of the daily practice of members and partners. It has to build on the results they have achieved and on the real situation they have identified, analysed and documented.

Definition

CKU uses the following definition of advocacy:

Advocacy should be understood as strategic action to influence political processes aimed at bringing about sustainable change in favour of the poor and marginalised. This definition can be unfolded at the following levels:

1. The purpose of advocacy is to address the structural causes of poverty and bring about sustainable change for the better in favour of poor and marginalised groups.
2. To do advocacy is to influence political, economic, cultural, social processes and decisions locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Advocacy work must be targeted at powerful institutions and/or individuals, whereas the beneficiaries are the poor and vulnerable.
3. Advocacy should be based, to the greatest extent possible, on empowerment. This means strengthening the voice of poor and marginalised groups vis-à-vis powerful groups.



How to get the poor a voice

According to the Human Development Report 2002, out of 147 countries with data, 121 had some or all elements of formal democracy in 2000. Nevertheless, poverty has continued to increase in a more democratic Sub-Saharan Africa and established democracies in Asia seem no better equipped to tackle high levels of poverty and in some cases, increasing inequality. Despite formal democratic reform, decentralization and other meas-

ures taken to narrow the gap between state administrations and citizens, large groups remain excluded from political and economic development processes. The formal presence of democracy and the de facto exclusion of the poor from decision-making processes call for new strategies to empower poor people to voice their concerns and improve their lives.



Values: Dignity, Justice, Human Rights

CKU consider advocacy work as part of the mission of CKU members and partners. It should be a natural part of our work to speak out against injustice, defend the cause of the poor and marginalised, hold those in power to account and empower people to speak out for

themselves. The inspiration to this commitment includes Biblical notions of the sanctity of life, human dignity and equality and justice, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Operational approaches

As a point of departure CKU members and partners work with four different operational approaches.

1. Strategic service:

Modelling to advocate for better service

CKU wishes to foster and support innovative modelling for better service. A high professional standard of the service in question is required, as well as good cooperation with the authorities.

CKU partners have many years of experience in health, education and social work often aimed at serving the poorest parts of society. This service gives CKU partners important legitimacy as advocates of the poor people they serve. The work can in itself be seen as a message: these people have needs that are unmet.

Service work can, by its very existence as an alternative, be seen as a challenge to authorities where they operate. Alternative service, to put it that way, can be seen as a message: how vital services such as health and education can be done better and more efficiently, how health work can be more caring and respectful for the individual's needs, and demonstrate how education can foster a democratic spirit. However, the downside is that private funded services that are free to local governments can become an excuse for

the local authorities not to fulfil their responsibility. They gradually become complacent and rely on these institutions without needing to budget for them. Even worse, the authorities are not held accountable for absent services if, for example, the CKU member and partner continue to deliver it without expressing a demand for government involvement.

The challenges of (strategic) service modelling projects include:

- Modelling projects must be documented accurately so as to be able to be disseminated to other localities or sectors.
- The challenge of modelling is to phase the model out. During the process there is a risk that the partners become so occupied with developing the model itself that the network with authorities is neglected.
- Another risk is that the beneficiaries/citizens the model should serve are not involved, do not get ownership or responsibility and are left dependent on the service granted.



2. Advocacy through the church structure and beyond

CKU wishes to foster and support internal advocacy projects where the church networks are used to bring out messages to church leaders, congregations and eventually the wider population.

Church structures enjoy great local and national legitimacy. Those operating within church structures and advocating a relevant issue also have the potential to go beyond the structure alone. This has particularly been relevant in the case of controversial issues such as domestic violence and stigmatisation of people living with HIV/AIDS. Via church channels of pastors, congregations, youth groups, women's groups messages can be efficiently communicated out to a large geographical area. Messages can pass beyond the church structure if traditionally accepted and if a plan for cooperation with local formal and informal authorities exists.

Within the CKU network innovative advocacy work has been carried out with messages transmitted via church net-

works and thereby be appropriated to local contexts. This has been particularly relevant with controversial issues such as domestic violence and stigmatisation of people living with HIV/AIDS. Many local churches offer a safe space where people can seek solace and comfort, ask for forgiveness and be forgiven and find peace between neighbours and families. This is the case where the attitude of local churches is inclusive and non-condemning.

Challenges of internal advocacy projects include:

- To keep the process open and inclusive to development at grass roots level, at best with an independent coordinator.
- To keep the independence of the advocacy initiative while enjoying good dialogue and sharing with church leaders.
- To secure a balance between the internal and the external (the wider society) demands continuously so that hidden agendas do not dominate.



3. Advocacy with people as the fruit of empowerment

CKU wishes to foster and support advocacy work that grows from empowerment interventions where the capacity of people and civil society organisations are developed.

CKU members and partners have wide experience in empowerment work, mostly in training. This approach is acknowledging that the first step in developing people's own competence for undertaking advocacy is to first train individuals to mobilise and speak and then train organisations. The context determines where advocacy work can start: Is it a very poor context without tradition for mobilisation - or is the starting point an organisational body that can quite easily form a platform for advocacy work? In poor contexts it might be necessary to enable people to organize themselves e.g. in self-help groups before moving onto advocacy. In other contexts some tradition of organisation or a basis of civil society organisations might exist and hence it is possible to design slightly more advanced training programmes in human rights and advocacy. Speaking

in terms of projects it could mean that some projects have to work at a very basic level with mobilisation and maybe

in a later phase with advocacy, whereas other projects have the potential to make considerable headway right from the beginning.

The challenges of empowerment projects include:

- It is a challenge to describe clearly the exact purpose of a concrete empowerment or capacity development intervention. Advocacy as one single part of a large, general capacity development programme might not work as the focus on advocacy may be blurred by other activities covered by the intervention. One solution could be that advocacy becomes one option for a smaller, capable and motivated group who manages to focus and work here.
- Capacity development of the partner organisation is very important. The role of the partner organisation will be more facilitating and less driving/owning and this can give way to internal conflict in the partner organisation.
- It is important that CBOs are appropriately trained in advocacy. Capacity building for e.g. efficient management is very different from training for advocacy. It might be necessary to link up with appropriate training agencies external to the CKU partner.





4. Linking as advocacy strategy

CKU wishes to foster and support interventions that might not themselves contain advocacy activities but are linked with other organisations' advocacy work, thereby creating synergy.

Not all CKU members and partners wish to or are capable of carrying out advocacy work. It is acceptable to have different roles and priorities other than advocacy. It is possible for a CKU partner to work in advocacy through linking up with other organisations that take upon themselves to do the advocacy work.

For instance, small organisations can undertake service work for the beneficiaries/ citizens and by their experiences feed into an advocacy process aimed at changing practice in a given sector (but where other organisations carry out political tasks). Linking up with a human rights network and local efforts to document harassment or abuses is also an option. Organisations could take it upon themselves to work with local authorities to make sure laws are actually implemented.

Challenges of advocacy through linking include:

- It takes some effort and maybe a capacity development process for a partner organisation to clearly determine whether advocacy is a task for the partner organisation or whether it is better left to other specialised organisations.



Advocacy work as a process

Moving more into advocacy might necessitate a change in mind-set. Project designs aimed to deliver concrete services within a rather short time-frame can be understood as fairly closed systems where inputs and outputs are managed. Advocacy, on the other hand, entails working in a field where control is more limited and where skills like negotiation and political flair are greatly needed. Advocacy could be rooted in a rights-based approach.

As part of CKU supported development work, many examples of civic action and successful single, isolated initiatives in favour of poor people have been found. Examples include the allocation of a Doctor to a poor area, access to land for poor individuals and access to benefits for disabled people. However, there is some way to go from civic action and isolated change examples to 'sustainable changes in favour of the poor' (see earlier definition). Yet several isolated

changes (e.g. access to land for individuals entitled to it) lead to a pattern and repeated changes (e.g. by local land authorities) could become institutionalised practice. In many Southern countries, the legislation is in place but not implemented accordingly. Civic action can be the beginning of a practice that can initiate actual implementation of legislation and thus sustainable change. Other sustainable changes could be greater visibility of stigmatised people and greater inclusion

of those in communities. To be clear, a distinction thus needs to be drawn between civic action, single changes and advocacy. Not all civic actions and single changes that can be characterised as advocacy, but civic actions via single changes are probably an element of any advocacy process.

Advocacy Process



1st stage could be that the partner is undertaking information- or awareness-campaigns to put a particular issue on the agenda.

2nd stage could be that the campaigns take on the characteristics of Civic Education e.g. focusing on citizens' existing rights and thus enabling beneficiaries/citizens to act on these rights.

3rd stage could be a mobilisation of the beneficiaries/citizens to stand up and speak out, and in the form of building platforms where civil society organisations are able to relate to authorities.

4th stage could be that mobilised citizens (or the partner on their behalf) manage to act in various ways e.g. dialogue, negotiations with authorities or even to demonstrate commitment to change. At this stage 'change' could mean a one-off service rendered to a local area or a poor person getting his/her land back. At best these single events compound and create a pattern that brings greater change in legislation or implementation.

5th stage represents sustainable change in favour of the poor and marginalised. This could be a change in legislation, implementation of legislation, rules and regulations or communication between decision-makers and citizens. A change in attitude to formerly stigmatised people, as reflected in rules and regulations, would also represent sustainable change.

With the aim of achieving sustainable change in favour of the poor, all CKU supported interventions are placed along the continuum line. Capacity development of the partners in question should be an integrated part of the Advocacy Process.



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