

FROM NEEDS BASED TO RIGHTS BASED

A CASE

Capacity building of SOS Children's Villages Rwanda

2013-2016

 SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
INTERNATIONAL



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Introduction

Five years is a very short time in a development perspective. In SOS Children's Villages Denmark and SOS Children's Villages Rwanda five years is what it has taken to change dramatically; from being merely delivering services, homes and families to orphans and other vulnerable children the two organisations today have gradually become child rights based organisations focusing on sustainable development.

Such fundamental organisational changes do not happen automatically. Yet, experiences show that no matter how many changes, at times challenging, an organisation has undergone, staff and programme participants tend to forget the processes involved if no documentation exists. SOS Children's Villages Denmark has therefore decided to document its child rights capacity building process with SOS Children's Villages Rwanda.

The aim of the capacity building process was to become a rights based organisation that is able to work with the point of departure in children's right to participation and engage in advocacy that improves policies and practices that undermine the well-being of children at risk of losing parental care, or those who have already lost it.

Background

When SOS Children's Villages International launched the epoch-making *ONE Strategic Plan 2009-16* it indicated a new direction in the work of SOS Children's Villages internationally. Since then, SOS Children's Villages organisations have increasingly used their expertise, the facilities and the infrastructure of the children's villages to strengthen a community focus as child rights organisations working for social empowerment of orphans and vulnerable children.

SOS Children's Villages Denmark followed up the *ONE Strategic Plan 2009-16* with a new Danish *Programme Policy* that set a framework and guidelines for the Danish organisation's programme work for 2012-16.

The Danish programme policy states that, "In SOS Children's Villages we use a child rights based approach in order to integrate principles and goals from the international human rights system into the SOS Children's Villages' work. By addressing the root causes of children being orphaned or at risk of losing parental care, we recognise poverty as an injustice perceived within the structures of power and inequity and as such SOS Children's Villages has an implicit goal to work for a more equitable distribution of resources."

The policy also states that, "For our work to be successful, it is crucial that our processes are participatory and our starting point is for beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders to voice their opinions and be involved in solving their own problems. This way we also enhance democratic processes and popular participation in general in the communities in which we are present. As such we secure sustainable interventions that not only fulfil an immediate need but help build capacity within local authorities and in civil society for it to help meet the populations' basic development needs in the future."

Rwanda as a case

SOS Children's Villages Denmark and Rwanda have been partners for 23 years and cooperate on a number of programmes. For many years, the partnership was mainly characterised by SOS Children's Villages Denmark doing fundraising in Denmark and SOS Children's Villages Rwanda providing services in the children's villages, SOS schools, kindergartens, medical clinics and Family Strengthening Programmes. The partnership itself, learning, knowledge management and the development of new tools and methods were not priorities.

In 2009, SOS Children's Villages established its first Department for Programme and Partnerships. Since then, the emphasis has increasingly been on the formation of child rights based development programmes. Following that and the new strategy internationally and in Denmark, SOS Children's Villages Denmark and Rwanda have gradually turned into development organisations partnering in building community capacity and implementing sustainable strategies together.

Changing organisations' direction is a challenging process that requires a systematic provision of knowledge, new tools, testing and feedback. A series of training workshops, participatory midterm reviews and advocacy tools that are all interlinked and build on the learning from previous activities has played an important role in the process. This publication provides an overview of these activities.

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The training workshops

General information about the training workshops

Participants: All programme staff from all Family Strengthening Programmes, including programmes not funded by SOS Children's Villages Denmark, participated along with SOS mothers, parents and children from the children's village and from the Family Strengthening Programme in the two initial child rights and participation training workshops. This was to ensure learning across the organisation as well as closer cooperation, understanding and experience sharing between the family based care within the children's village and the Family Strengthening Programme in the community.

Gradually, as the Rwandan community based programmes grew and the number of staff increased too, it became impossible to invite all staff for subsequent training workshops. Instead, SOS Children's Villages Rwanda prioritised to include the most relevant staff, children, volunteers and representatives from community based organisations in the following three training workshops that focused on advocacy. These people are to play main roles in advocacy activities included in the programmes.

Children's participation: As the concept "children's participation" is often challenging to adults children have been included in all activities in the capacity building process. This has multi-fold purposes: First, children have a right to participate in activities concerning their own lives. Then, the participation of children enable the adults to practice new child facilitation skills through direct cooperation with children. Last, but not least the children were empowered at least as much from the trainings workshops as the adults. Subsequent interviews with some of the children and participatory midterm reviews reveal that the children have in fact used their new knowledge to a very wide extent to share with others and initiate their own advocacy activities.

The child participants generally have been above 12 years of age to ensure a certain maturity.

Planning: All training courses are developed and planned one after another to ensure that the following training workshop deal with and follow up on learning and challenges from the previous training workshop. At the same time, there has been an overlap of participants. One training is rarely enough for someone to be able to implement the learnings at field level. The more comprehensively a group of people are involved over a longer period, the more likely they are to start practicing their new knowledge outside the training venue.

For that same reason, there is also an overlap in the training participants and the participants in participatory midterm reviews worked out as a part of the capacity building. This ensures that especially the children, but also volunteers, representatives from community based organisations and parents are already somewhat empowered and therefore more easily may be trained to engage in research. While a participatory midterm reviews includes a lot of learning about research and interview technique, the ability to pose the right questions and draw conclusions is empowering in itself. The participatory midterm reviews are described more closely later in this publication.

The trainings have taken place over three years. In between the trainings has usually been gaps of about six months to allow the participants to reflect on and test their new knowledge and tools.

Methodology: Interactivity is the foundation for all training workshops. Very short input sessions lead up to exercises, games with a learning perspective, role-plays, group work, plenary presentations, peer feedback and discussions. Apart from being entertaining and securing learning-by-doing this approach has enabled learning across backgrounds, educational levels, ages and personal learning methodology likings. It has also worked to bring all participants together and increase cooperation and respect between the participants from very different backgrounds. Furthermore, the comprehensive participatory approach made space for a relatively high number of participants – up to 36 in some trainings. Had all sessions taken place in plenary, only few and the most empowered would have raised their voice.

Three of the training workshops wind up with an outward-oriented activity such as a child rights celebration with participants from the community; a community meeting with elements of advocacy towards local leaders and Theatre for Development performances. This is to ensure that the participants are able to activate their new workshop knowledge in real life from day one.

All trainings and midterm reviews have been facilitated in English with translations into Kinyarwanda to ensure uniform understanding among the participants.

Certificates have been distributed to all training workshop participants.

Manuals and facilitation: Consultant and facilitator Lotte Ladegaard, Development Close-up, has developed and facilitated all training workshops in close cooperation with SOS Children's Villages' Programme Manager Camilla Torp Olsen.

1. Basic child rights training workshop

Duration: Five days in March 2013.

Place: Gikongoro children's village.

Objective and contents: The initial session sensitises the participants to children's ways of seeing things, enabling the participants to analyse children's needs now and in the future, and to look into and develop the participants' own programme in the light of children's needs and rights.

Having been sensitised to children's needs and rights, and thereby having had a basic understanding of children, the participants learn to conceptualise the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to develop their capacity to analyse the present status of child rights in their country.

The training also makes the participants aware of their personal, social and professional viewpoints and helps them identify their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The training focuses on the emotional and attitudinal aspects in addition to knowledge and skills, and the training winds up with a child rights celebration that enables the participants in sharing their new knowledge with the wider community, including local leaders. This approach forces the participants to start applying their new knowledge and skills immediately.

Facilitation of children and child-led events is an integrated part of the training.



2. Children's participation training workshop

Duration: Five days in November 2013.

Place: Gikongoro children's village.

Objective and contents: This course helps the participants internalise children's participation rights, challenge their assumptions and develop their child facilitation and participation skills in theory as well as in practice. During the training, the participants dig deeper into facilitation of children and child-led events.

Taking its point of departure in why children should participate and challenging assumptions about children's participation the training course build upon the basic child rights training. The training make the participants understand that participation is a value, not a process, and that giving children space to true participation ultimately leads to improved democracy.

Through the training, the participants learn to create space for true participation, and they learn how adults support children's participation according to different age groups and different capacities.

The participants also lean to overcome hurdles and to avoid risks and unwanted consequences. The training workshop winds up with a child rights community meeting that nudges the participants to share their new knowledge with the wider community, including local leaders, immediately.

3. Basic advocacy training workshop

Duration: Five days in October 2014.

Place: Kayonza children's village.

Objective and contents: This training course increases the participants' understanding of advocacy and its processes and tools, including the importance of working out an advocacy strategy. As a part of the training, the participants map and analyse problems, their own organisations' capacity, carry out stakeholder analysis, and set realistic objectives, which are the fundament for effective and sustainable advocacy.

During the training workshop, the participants also plan their own advocacy activities.

4. Communication tools for advocacy

Time: Three days in May 2015.

Place: SOS Children's Villages' training centre in Kigali.

Objective and contents: This training takes its point of departure in the basic advocacy training workshop and provides in-depth knowledge about different communication tools for advocacy and inspires the participants to use child-friendly communication tools.

Selection of and knowledge about how to use various communication tools is an essential part of any advocacy activity. During the training the participants select, prepare, test and exhibit the most appropriate communication tools for the advocacy strategies, they worked out during the basic advocacy training workshop.

Generally, the training workshop focus on low cost communication tools and use materials that are available locally.

5. Children's participation in advocacy

Duration: Five days in August 2015.

Place: Kayonza children's village.

Objective and contents: This course helps the participants internalise how they may cooperate with children for the most efficient advocacy targeting the most important problems facing children, challenge the participants' assumptions and develop their child facilitation and participation skills in theory as well as in practice.

Through the training, the participants learn to create space for true children's participation in advocacy, and they understand how adults support children's participation according to different age groups and different capacities. The adult participants practice listening, supporting and

suggesting to children without stealing the process from the children. At the same time, the child participants gain confidence and gradually dare to participate in the advocacy on an equal footing.

The participants also learn to overcome hurdles and to avoid risks and unwanted consequences, and at the end of the training workshop, they carry out their own Theatre for Development performance and other child-friendly advocacy activities at field level.



6. Best practice documentation training workshop

Duration: Five days. Dates still pending.

Place: Yet to be planned.

Objective and contents: Quality best practice documentation is becoming increasingly important and invaluable in fundraising. While civil society organisations undergo professionalization, the competition about funding is increasing. At the same time, donors demand proofs of impact, and they want to know why a specific approach works better than other approaches. They also often demand that methods developed may be cascaded and used at scale. Hence, best practice documentation is also to inspire, motivate and enable other professionals to replicate and apply the methods developed in a certain project or programme. Documentation, together with monitoring and evaluation, helps prove that methods developed actually work.

The documentation training workshop aims at improving the participants' ability to understand the importance of quality documentation. During the training the participants will learn what documentation and best practice documentation is and how they may document the impact of projects and lessons learnt via interviews, observation, case studies and illustrations.

Participatory midterm reviews

As a part of the capacity building, SOS Children's Villages Rwanda has carried out two participatory midterm reviews with the support and facilitation of SOS Children's Villages Denmark and Consultant and Facilitator Lotte Ladegaard, Development Close-up. A third participatory midterm review will take place in November-December 2016.

The participatory reviews underpin the capacity building, equips the participants with research tools and interview technique and further empower them to work child rights based.

The action research approach has several advantages:

- The children and other programme participants are empowered when they know how to conduct research and take on the role as researchers in their own communities.
- Children, parents, volunteers and community based organisation representatives from a specific community have access to more in-depth knowledge about individual families and how they benefit – or not benefit - from the programme.
- Peer approaches generally work well. Children within a community usually trust other children more than an outsider or an adult and therefore provide more frank answers.
- Children and parents who benefit from the programme know the weaknesses and strengths of the ongoing activities from their own lives and may therefore ask critical questions.



Overall methodology

The two initial midterm reviews started out with a three-day preparatory workshop for all participants. The third midterm review workshop will last five days, including excursions, as this is the first midterm review where all the researchers are children. Usually, children need more facilitation time and breaks than adults or mixed groups where a greater number of adults are available to care for the children.

During the preparatory workshop, the participants divide into teams and decide:

- Who are we doing the midterm review for?
- What do we want to measure? The point of departure is the indicators in the programme document.
- Methods, tools, numbers of informants, roles and responsibilities.

Amongst the tools to learn about, develop and apply are e.g.:

- Questionnaires.
- Mappings, drawings, role-plays, games and other child-friendly tools.
- Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and other individuals.
- Staff self-reviews.
- Focus group discussions with parents, children and other stakeholders.

Each research team initiates the research at field level when it has worked out the methodology, tools and plans. The other teams provide peer feedback at field-level during a test period, and the facilitator coaches the process to ensure that learning takes place and that the methods are tested and refined.

Further research

There are some weaknesses in having relatively inexperienced researchers, who themselves are participants in the project. Their questions may be biased, or their communities may more easily influence them. They may also avoid asking certain questions because they worry that they themselves may lose support if they are too critical. Jealousy and other internal mechanisms in the community may also affect the research. At the same time, inexperienced researchers may not be able to follow up on indications, answers that are not clear-cut or answers leading in several directions.

To counteract such problems, and to ensure that triangulation may take place, the facilitator also carries out some focus group discussions and interviews with child participants of the project, parents of the project and other community stakeholders. Furthermore, baseline survey, project document and regular monitoring reports also feed into the midterm review.

The research is analysed and compiled into a report by the facilitator.

First participatory midterm review

Place and time: Gikongoro November 2014.

Participants: Almost the same as in the child rights and children's participation trainings: Family Strengthening Programme staff from Gikongoro, SOS mothers, parents from the family strengthening programme, children from the children's village and Family Strengthening Programme.

Second participatory midterm review

Place and time: Kayonza November 2015.

Participants: Almost the same as in the three advocacy trainings: Family Strengthening Programme staff from Kayonza, volunteers, community based organisation representatives, children from the children's village and the Family Strengthening Programme.

Third participatory midterm review

Place and time: Kigali, Byumba, Gikongoro and Kayonza November-December 2016.

Participants: 24 children aged 15-17 years who are active in the project from the four project areas as well as all programme staff.

Publications that underpin it all

When the child rights capacity building began, SOS Children's Villages Denmark and Rwanda had yet to develop materials that can help local staff work efficiently with child rights and advocacy. To underpin the training courses and participatory midterm reviews *The advocacy pocket book* and *The advocacy strategy kit* were worked out by the consultant who developed and facilitated the training courses and participatory midterm reviews.

Through the process, she has gathered comprehensive knowledge about main challenges facing the Rwandan staff and programme participants in the advocacy process. The publications take their point of departure in this knowledge and in her extensive experience with advocacy carried out by children and adults in a number of civil society organisations.



The advocacy pocket book

The advocacy pocket book. 17 steps to improve policy and practice for children at risk of losing parental care, and for those who have already lost it is developed to ensure that SOS Children's Villages may achieve positive, sustainable changes in legislation, policy and practice. The pocket book helps staff, volunteers, parents, children and youth with some, but relatively limited, experience in advocacy in succeeding with advocacy.

Some people mistake advocacy for being a one-off activity. However, it is a strategic process involving a number of steps. If you skip one or more steps of the

advocacy process, you are less likely to achieve positive, sustainable changes in legislation, policy and practice. The steps in the pocket book ensure that the user go through the entire advocacy process in a systematic manner.

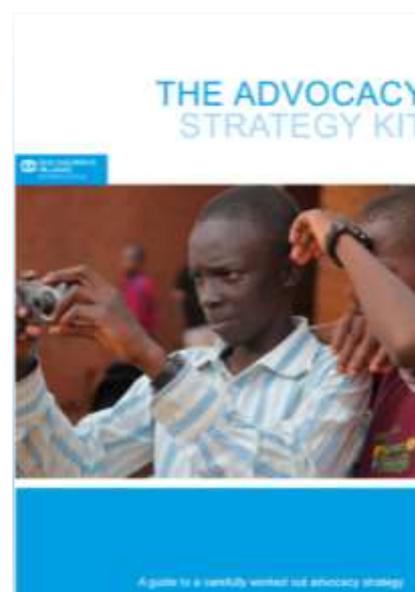
The participants in the *Communication tools for advocacy training workshop* tested and commented on the draft advocacy pocket book before it went to print.

Issued and printed in English and Kinyarwanda in October 2015, the pocket book has also been translated and developed into a Khmer version to be used in Cambodia.

The advocacy strategy kit

Before the implementation of advocacy activities it is necessary to develop a carefully worked out advocacy strategy. An advocacy strategy must be based on a number of important analyses that enable the implementers to understand the context, the advocacy target group, risk and opportunities. *The advocacy strategy kit. A guide to a carefully worked out advocacy strategy* is guiding the user through this process.

The advocacy strategy kit was issued and printed in English in May 2016.



Best practice documentation of the Family Strengthening Programme

Best practice documentation focuses on approaches and processes, methods developed, lessons learned, good practices and how the programmes have brought about changes in the lives of the project participants. From the Family Strengthening Programmes in Rwanda that have grown, diversified and evolved into four, large programmes you may derive a number of best practices.

Quality best practice documentation is becoming ever more important and invaluable in fundraising. The competition for funding is increasing. At the same time, donors demand proofs of impact and of why a specific approach works. Documentation, together with monitoring and evaluation, helps prove this.

Many donors also demand visibility through documentation publications as a part of the funding agreement. At the same time, some donors request that methods developed may be cascaded and used at scale. Hence, best practice documentation is also to inspire, motivate and enable other professionals to learn from and apply the methods developed in a certain programme.

Last, but not least, the documentation may be used to inspire national SOS Children's Villages organisations that still have less focus on or few or no experiences with Family Strengthening Programmes to further develop their own or initiate new programmes.

Best practice documentation also works as an integral part of advocacy efforts to improve policy and practice for children at risk of losing parental care, and for those who have already lost it.

The best practice documentation of the family strengthening programme approach is still awaiting funding.

Funding

Often considered a challenge, funding generally boils down to planning: The Danish programme manager made sure to include at least one training and other capacity building activities into every proposal developed in the capacity-building period. The consultant's CV and a description of the planned activities were included as an annex. This secured most of the funding.

The idea of having *The advocacy strategy kit* developed and a Khmer version of *The advocacy pocket book* came up at a later stage, but funding was found within another budget.

Capacity building activities	Funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic child rights training workshop Children's participation training workshop First participatory midterm review 	<p><i>The Strengthening of families and community in Gasaka sector, Rwanda</i> programme. Funded by Civil Society in Development (CISU)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic advocacy training workshop Children's participation in advocacy training Second participatory midterm review 	<p><i>The Strengthening of vulnerable families and building community response to HIV/AIDS in Nyamirama sector in Rwanda</i> programme. Funded by Civil Society in Development (CISU)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication for advocacy training <i>The advocacy pocket book</i> (English and Kinyarwanda) Third participatory midterm review 	<p><i>The Promoting child rights in 4 districts and the nation of Rwanda</i> programme. Funded by Civil Society in Development (CISU)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The advocacy strategy kit</i> <i>The advocacy pocket book</i> (Khmer) 	<p>The TV Galla funding for the Family Strengthening Programme in Battambang, Cambodia</p>

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