

World Vision®



A Citizen's Guide to Advocacy



Acknowledgements

In creating this handbook, we are deeply indebted to our colleagues in World Vision's nearly 100 offices around the world who work daily to directly serve the needs of the poor and facilitate local advocacy efforts. We are also grateful to the donors and advocates who share the mission of World Vision to serve the poor.

It is our hope and prayer that the tools outlined in this book will support a movement that will help change the conditions of those living with extreme poverty, disease, and exploitation—and that the lives of American communities will be transformed in pursuing this end.

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Dear Friend,

Thank you for your interest in joining World Vision as an advocate for the poor and oppressed.

Scripture calls to us: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Proverbs 31:8-9, NIV).

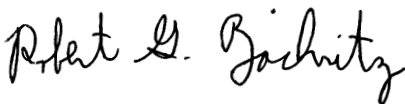
As Christians and Americans, we enjoy great freedom and effectiveness in our ability to influence government policy, legislation, U.S. foreign aid, and public opinion. By partnering with World Vision's advocacy program, you will have opportunities to make a meaningful impact on a range of important issues. From the global water crisis to human trafficking, children need you to advocate for their special needs and protection.

This handbook provides the basic tools and training you will need to get started. Also, when you visit our advocacy website, worldvision.org/advocacy, you'll have access to briefings on specific issues, updates, and online advocacy opportunities.

Whether you are doing this on your own or with your church, school, place of work, or community organization, I am sure you will find your advocacy efforts on behalf of children to be a rewarding experience.

Thank you for partnering with us in this exciting and urgent work.

God bless you,



Robert Zachritz
Vice President, Advocacy
World Vision U.S.



Woodiny, 15, was one of nine young Haitians who traveled to New York to participate in the U.N. High Level Meeting on Youth as part of the Global Movement for Children, a coalition between World Vision, Plan International, and UNICEF. Advocacy begins at the local level and gains momentum as we all work together to bring about change.

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Introduction

Can you imagine a world where political leaders actively address the needs of the world's poor? Where citizens and elected officials work together to achieve change on behalf of the most underrepresented populations around the globe?

You can play an important role in making this a reality.

You can be a voice for millions who are impacted by poverty, war, exploitation, and injustice around the world. You can take meaningful action to influence public officials and help correct these problems.

Our hope is that this handbook will help you identify where and how you can make the greatest difference. It provides an introduction to World Vision's advocacy work and offers practical resources you can use to successfully advocate on behalf of the world's poor and oppressed.

Within these pages you will find both traditional and creative ways to influence policymakers and mobilize your community. The suggestions offered in this handbook are meant to equip you—but not to limit the scope of your own creativity.

Our team is available to work with you and provide some essential resources to help you exercise your rights as a citizen to advocate for the causes you care about. Together, we can seek justice and bring about change for children and families whose suffering is too often overlooked. Thank you for partnering with us. You and your community can make a difference! Now, let's get started.

For up-to-date resources and calls to action, please visit our advocacy website, worldvision.org/advocacy.

What is advocacy?

Simply put, advocacy is a ministry of influence using persuasion, dialogue, and reason to affect change. Advocacy seeks to address the structural and systemic causes of poverty by changing policies, practices, and attitudes that perpetuate inequality and deny justice.



Our vision for every child, life in all its fullness.
Our prayer for every heart, the will to make it so.

—World Vision's vision statement

Our Vision

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. We serve those in need in nearly 100 countries, including the U.S., joining with local people to find lasting ways to improve children's lives. Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people.

World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.



Advocacy is a ministry of influence. Here, participants in World Vision's 2014 H2O:DC water conference and lobby day meet with Congressman Dave Camp in the Capitol building to advocate for clean water. More than 140 meetings with congressional leaders were held in one day through H2O:DC.

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Advocacy

Our history

World Vision's advocacy office in Washington, D.C., was opened in 1985. Our team of policy experts is responsible for working with the U.S. Congress and the Executive Branch to make sure the needs of the world's poor are represented. Our campaigns team informs and equips Americans to partner in this work. Examples of passed legislation and policy change due to these efforts include:

- The Northern Uganda Crisis Response Act
- The U.S. Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act
- The Clean Diamond Trade Act
- The Trafficking Victims Protection Act
- The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act
- The PROTECT Act
- The Sudan Peace Act
- The Child Soldier Prevention Act
- Funding for effective humanitarian programs

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

—Proverbs 31:8-9 (NIV)

Our policy positions and advocacy campaigns are focused on specific issues rooted in World Vision's work with the poor in their own communities.

The importance of advocacy

Injustice is a reflection of broken relationships. World Vision bases its advocacy work on the same values that shape our humanitarian work: our Christian commitment. We believe that the person of Jesus Christ provides the model and basis for our advocacy—namely, His identification with the poor, the afflicted, the oppressed, and the marginalized; His special concern for children; His respect for the dignity God bestows on women and men; His willingness to challenge unjust attitudes and systems; His call to share our resources with each other; His love for all people without discrimination or conditions; and His offer of new life through faith in Him. From Jesus we derive our holistic understanding of the gospel of the kingdom of God, which forms the basis of our response to human need.

World Vision's advocacy work is also based on our commitment to the poor. We are called to aid people in great need—to relieve their suffering and to help transform their condition of life.

“How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

—Psalm 82:2-4 (NIV)

We stand in solidarity with the poor in a common search for justice, seeking to understand their situation and working alongside them to experience fullness of life. We strive to facilitate engagement between the poor and the affluent in ways that open both to transformation. We respect the poor as active participants, not passive recipients, in this relationship. They are people from whom others may learn and receive. The need for transformation is common to all. Together we share this quest for justice, peace, reconciliation, and healing in our broken world.

This is accomplished when we represent the interests of the poor to decision makers who then formulate legislation and policy that prioritizes their needs. Our response to poverty and injustice requires us to work for policy change and challenge those who withhold justice. Effective advocacy addresses the root causes—whether with governments, religious institutions, the general public, or all of these.

An essential element of advocacy is building a relationship with the decision makers who work for you and bringing the interests of the poor to the attention of governments, businesses, churches, or the general public in ways that address them effectively. Being a compelling advocate may begin with raising awareness in your household, community, workplace, or local church. As Americans, we have a unique privilege and responsibility to be a voice for those whose voices may otherwise not be heard.

World Vision supports children's parliaments around the world. The sessions are often held in the same national parliamentary chambers that adult representatives use, as shown here in Bolivia. Children's parliaments model responsible citizenship and give children an opportunity to participate in issues that affect their lives.





Panelists at a World Vision–hosted conference in Washington, D.C. (L to R): Mike Hamilton, President of Engagement, Blood:Water Mission; Lucas Koach, Senior Policy Advisor, Food for the Hungry; Amanda Mootz, Advocacy Mobilization Specialist, World Vision; Ray Sanders, Chief Executive Officer, Water4.

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Issues Facing the World's Poor

Statistics on issues like global poverty and health, conflict and disasters, and the various ways children are exploited can be overwhelming. They leave many people upset or paralyzed by their sheer magnitude.

What makes the difference between general awareness and effective action? Part of the answer is rooted in partnership. It is not possible for an individual advocate to be well-versed in all of the issues. However, when you involve your community, family, and social networks, you can begin to have more of an impact. Your collective partnership around our advocacy efforts can truly make a world of difference.

World Vision's advocacy work focuses on the themes outlined in this section. We are committed to keeping you informed and providing substantive ways for you to influence your government and involve your communities. It is our belief that as you advocate for the world's poor, you will experience a process of transformation—one that will change you and those you bring with you.

Global development

World Vision advocates for effective measures that will help eliminate extreme global poverty by 2030, continuing to lead efforts to address this critical issue and working to increase the overall level of humanitarian assistance from the U.S. government.

Critical needs

- Ensuring that the U.S. champions the elimination of extreme poverty by 2030 and provides the financial resources for reaching this goal
- Increase in effective foreign aid and food assistance

Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health

Believing that every child deserves a good start to life, World Vision advocates raise their voices on behalf of vulnerable children under age 5. Thousands of children younger than 5 die every day, many on the day they are born. Advocacy acts as a multiplier, bringing much-needed additional resources to bear on reducing child deaths by providing access to clean water, training and resources for pregnant and new mothers, and improved birthing facilities.

Critical needs

- Increased resources for water and sanitation, health, and hygiene education
- For the U.S. government to bolster its commitment to providing assistance for the poor and strengthening its global leadership to combat the needless deaths of mothers and babies



Schoolchildren in China raise their hands in support of child health during Global Week of Action, an activity of World Vision's global Child Health Now campaign.

© 2007 Michael Temchine Photography




Conflicts and disasters

Recognizing that conflicts and disasters have a significant impact on children, World Vision advocates for peace in areas of conflict, robust life-saving action in the event of emergencies, and risk mitigation in disaster-prone regions around the world. Conflicts, emergencies, and disasters endanger and impoverish children. Governments and international bodies have a responsibility to protect children and their families, to treat them equitably, and to ensure their access to basic necessities. When these conditions are not met, national governments must be supported or held accountable by the international community and local leaders to restore peace, security, and family livelihoods.

World Vision responds to natural disasters around the world, including in the U.S. Conflict areas of focus include the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Israel and Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, and others.

Critical needs

- U.S. diplomacy encouraging governments in conflict areas to take responsibility for peace arrangements and the equitable treatment of all people groups, including the provision of land and security
- U.S. responsiveness and leadership following major disasters to address the critical humanitarian needs of those affected and rally other nations to respond



Advocacy can bring life-changing help and hope to children in countries like Cambodia and protect vulnerable children from the dangers of exploitation.

Protecting children

World Vision advocates for the protection of children vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence, and for the restoration of survivors. We work with communities to promote an environment in which all children are protected and communities are empowered to prevent and respond to exploitation of and violence against children. We also partner with law enforcement agencies to help identify and prosecute those who abuse children. World Vision is working to strengthen policies that protect children from exploitative child labor, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and conditions of war, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Critical needs

- Protection of vulnerable populations in areas of conflict, poverty, and disease where people may be vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation
- Enforcement of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act, which prohibits providing certain types of U.S. military aid to countries known to exploit children in the armed forces
- Measures that reduce child labor
- Enforcement of laws that prosecute Americans who travel abroad for child sex tourism

TVPRA

Working hand in hand with World Vision, people like you contributed to ending modern-day slavery by sending tens of thousands of messages to the U.S. Congress. This campaign had a direct impact on the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2013 (TVPRA). The Trafficking Victims Protection Act, originally passed in 2000, is the cornerstone of all federal laws addressing the domestic and international dimensions of modern-day slavery. In the 2013 update of the law, advocates ensured the inclusion of a new tool, the Child Protection Compact Act, which allows the U.S. government to assist other countries to fight child trafficking. The TVPRA will ensure that the U.S. remains a leader in the fight to end modern-day slavery, protect victims of trafficking, and protect vulnerable women, children, and men from exploitation.



Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (right) receives thanks from a World Vision organizer for speaking at a clean water rally in Chicago. Affirming members of Congress for their action on critical issues helps assure their continued efforts.

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Ways You Can Advocate

Contact Congress

In this section you will learn more about effective ways to communicate with your member of Congress as well as to engage your community around an issue. Your members of Congress represent you, and it is your responsibility to share with them the issues that matter to you.

The most critical starting point is to become familiar with the issues. Citizen advocates have many tools at their disposal. World Vision provides up-to-date information and news on our advocacy website, worldvision.org/advocacy. You can use the site to identify your member of Congress and send him or her an email. You may also want to visit congress.gov to do some of your own research, learn about the legislative process, identify the status of a bill, or investigate your elected official's voting record.

It is the mandate of elected officials to listen to the concerns of the people they represent. For this reason, elected officials welcome feedback and input from their constituents. It is important to let them know which issues are of particular importance to you. You may not have direct access to the elected official, but you can always leave comments with a staff person who will then take appropriate action.

The four best ways to deliver a message to Congress are tweeting, sending emails, making phone calls, and setting up in-district meetings.

Engaging through social media

Did you know that every member of Congress has a Twitter account? Twitter is a powerful tool for highlighting important issues. Reach out to your members of Congress directly with tweets that:

- **Ask your representatives to cosponsor a bill**

Because no child should be invisible, I am asking @CantwellPress, @PattyMurray, and @RepAdamSmith to cosponsor the #GirlsCount Act.

- **Thank your representative for meeting with you**

Thank you @RepAdamSmith for meeting with us today about the #GirlsCount Act. We look forward to having your support on this important issue.

- **Mention when your member of Congress supports an issue you are passionate about**

Thank you @RepAdamSmith for cosponsoring the #GirlsCount Act! I appreciate what you are doing for vulnerable children everywhere.

Emailing your representative

The website for your member of Congress should include an email address and/or an automated email form you can use to contact them.

In your message, state that you are a constituent and talk about the specific action(s) you would like your member of Congress to take. Include links to any information you have found to be helpful, such as articles or videos, and make it personal, including reasons you care about this issue.

Dear Senator Murray:

As your constituent, I am writing to ask you to vote "no" on any cuts to the foreign affairs budget for the upcoming year.

I recently read an article stating that the U.S. foreign assistance budget is less than 1% of the overall federal budget, even though it is responsible for providing clean water, making vaccines available to children, providing international disaster relief, and so much more. You can find a link to the article here: [provide link]

Investment in foreign aid is an investment in global relationships and our shared financial future. As developing nations become more prosperous, they will become less dependent on assistance, and Americans will benefit from our established relationships with these emerging markets.

As your constituent and as a Christian, I feel that it is essential to preserve this funding for those living in extreme poverty.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
Tacoma, WA

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Making a phone call or organizing a call-in day

Did you know that as few as 10 phone calls about an issue during a given day is enough to make your member of Congress take notice of that issue? Every time you make a phone call, someone in the office writes it down.

Making a phone call is easy, effective, and takes less than two minutes of your time.

To generate a persuasive number of phone calls, form a telephone-tree network of activists. Ask every person in your network to leave a message for your Congress member. This flood of calls can help sway an undecided vote or influence a legislator who is unsure of where the public stands on a particular issue.

I am calling to ask Senator/Congress member _____ to cosponsor the Water for the World Act, House bill number HR 2901.


This legislation will improve the global investments that the United States is making in water, sanitation, and hygiene by ensuring that funding reaches those who are most in need.

I strongly support providing access to water, sanitation, and hygiene to stop preventable child deaths, increase school attendance, and improve economic growth in developing countries.

Thank you.

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If you would like, you can ask the office to follow up with you after they deliver your message.



Meeting with a congressional staffer can be just as effective as meeting with the member of Congress. Victoria Hepp, a graduate of Messiah College in Pennsylvania, is shown here with Nathaniel Hurd of World Vision as they meet with Congressman Joseph Pitts' legislative assistant Carson Middleton on Capitol Hill in March 2014 as part of World Vision's H2O:DC conference.



Having in-district meetings

Meeting with your member of Congress or one of his or her staff members can be very effective. Times of year that they are likely to be in your home area include congressional recesses in August, November, December, and May. Schedule your meeting in advance. You do not need a large delegation to have a significant impact. If you have organized a large-scale phone call campaign, bring along your top three spokespeople to discuss your recommendations in person. World Vision can provide suggested talking points to help you prepare for your meeting. You can also find detailed guides for meeting with your member of Congress at beyond5.org/resources.

Scheduling a meeting

- Go to senate.gov or house.gov to find the contact information for your member of Congress.
- Call the office location where you want to meet and ask how to schedule a meeting. Your contact will give you an email address or direct you to an online form.
- If you do not hear back, follow up. Be persistent until your meeting is scheduled.

Preparing for your meeting

- Wherever or whomever you meet, always prepare thoroughly.
- Re-familiarize yourself with the issues you are representing, and consider using our suggested talking points, available at worldvision.org/advocacy.
- Practice what you are going to say beforehand, so you sound natural. You can share a personal story to show why this issue is important to you. Practicing will build your confidence and increase your effectiveness.
- Wear business formal clothing and be on time.

During the meeting

- **Be accurate.** To build a working relationship that leads to action, you need to be a credible source of information. If you don't know something, just say so. Tell the person you will find out and get back to him or her. If you need assistance, feel free to contact World Vision's Advocacy team at advocate@worldvision.org.
- **Be brief.** Members of Congress and their staffs are incredibly busy—and so are you. Most members of Congress represent more than 600,000 people. They appreciate it when you respect their time. Your meeting or call may be interrupted, so be sure to state your request within the first few minutes.
- **Be respectful.** You may have differences with your member of Congress. Be mindful of your attitude and nonverbal communication so you do not miss the opportunity to build common ground on the issues you are discussing.
- **Be specific.** When discussing a particular piece of legislation or policy action with members of Congress, mention the bill by number or the specific action you'd like him or her to take (for example, cosponsoring a bill or contacting the president's administration), give reasons why you support the bill, and be sure to communicate that you are a constituent.
- **Be persistent.** Follow up with a phone call or email to see if your member of Congress has considered your request. If they have not, you can ask why and offer follow-up materials. Remember, in order for an issue to get noticed it must often be raised several times.
- **Share online.** Ask if you can take a photo with your representative to document the meeting; then share with your social networks, tagging the member of Congress and thanking them publicly.

Following up

After meeting with a member of Congress or an aide from his or her office, it's important to follow up. Here are several suggestions, with the aim of helping you build positive, long-term relationships.

- **Thank** your members of Congress for listening to your concerns, especially if they take action.
- **Praise** them publicly through social media, including Twitter and Facebook. Remember that publicly praising your elected officials when they are helpful is positive reinforcement that can yield more good results in the future.
- **Provide** information as needed. Be prepared to email information to your elected official's office. If you do send something, call immediately to make sure they've received it.
- **Contact** World Vision's Advocacy team so we can stay connected to your work and follow up with an elected official's office if needed. Let us know about your experience by emailing advocate@worldvision.org.



Personal interest stories appeal to local media; a regular citizen's personal connection to a humanitarian situation can bring attention to issues that might otherwise be overlooked.

Local Newspaper Coverage

Depending on how you want to express your message, writing an op-ed or a letter to the editor to be published in your local newspaper can be an effective way to reach people in your community. Newspapers are often looking for content and will publish stories in print, online, or both. Read on to decide what kind of piece you want to write, and visit the website of your local newspaper to review their submission guidelines. If you would like help with your piece, or want to share your published piece with World Vision, email us at advocate@worldvision.org.

Op-ed pieces

Write an op-ed to draw the attention of your community and congressional representative to important issues that impact the world's poor and inform them about how they can help make a difference. Newspapers will often run pieces written by grassroots activists, especially if the article is well-written, timely, and has a local angle. However, you should check with your newspaper before submitting your editorial, as different papers often have different guidelines for editorial submissions from community members.

Here are a few tips for writing your editorial:

- **Keep it short.** Op-eds should be 600-800 words.
- **Make it locally relevant.** The more you connect your editorial to a community event or recent development on the issue, the better. Newspapers publish information they believe is pertinent to their readers, so your op-ed is more likely to be published when it is tied to a current, local event or targets local leaders (for example, when it responds to the actions—or lack thereof—of your member of Congress). Often lobbying efforts, legislative developments, or breakthroughs in peace talks are interesting to newspapers only if there is a local connection to the issue.
- **Make it personal.** While your op-ed should include facts about the issue, it should also reflect your personality. The best editorials explain why the subject is relevant to both the writer and the reader. Tell your own story and why you care about the issue you are campaigning for.
- **Make it action-oriented.** Include information on how readers can get involved. If you're writing an op-ed near the time that you have local lobbying visits planned, make sure your editorial includes information on how readers can join your efforts. Editors are unlikely to include a website or call to action in the body of your article. However, you should include a website in your biography at the end of your op-ed. You can also encourage your readers to write their member of Congress.

Don't forget to include your contact information. Newspapers need to know how to reach you if they're going to run your editorial.



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No bullhorn required—simply writing an op-ed for your local newspaper can spread the word in your community about a poverty-related issue that's important to you.

It Could Be Worse: Access to Clean Water Beyond Central Texas

The U.S. government spends \$365 million each year on global water, sanitation and hygiene programs—but it's not reaching those who need it most

By Cathy White, Lora Williams, and Fiona McNally
The Austin Statesman

As Central Texans, we know about water scarcity. Thankfully, we're not fighting to obtain clean water--we just need more water. When we walk a few feet in our homes to turn on a faucet or use our modern appliances to cook, wash, or flush, we rarely have to worry about the effects of waterborne diseases. As the drought persists and lake levels continue to drop, Austin City Council is grappling with how to conserve and access new water sources. Yet we in Central Texas are not at risk of chronically missing school, work, or possibly dying because of the water we drink. It could be worse: our situation could be like that of nearly 748 million people around the world who go without clean water, many of them children.

The past two summers, Women of Vision Austin, a local group of women committed to reducing global poverty, has traveled to rural Kenya with World Vision to see the situation for ourselves. To understand what it is like to walk in the shoes of people who don't have easy access to water, Lora volunteered to carry water for a family. Another time, she struggled to walk two miles on a muddy dirt road while the native Kenyan women tried to help her not fall down. In both cases, the struggle for water left Lora exhausted and despairing. Not just because of the heavy load and long walk, but because the water was from an unprotected water source. It was not clean. Lora knew this water might cause the family's children to miss school or contract preventable--yet deadly--diseases. Diarrhea is the most serious waterborne disease, killing more than 1,600 children each day. It's the second biggest cause of death in children under five in the developing world.

Perhaps our own water shortage enables us to understand more than most the critical value of clean water in a community--and to act with compassion. While the solution at home still needs discussion, improving access globally needs no debate. Please join us in asking our federal Representatives--Williams (R-25), Doggett (D-35), Smith

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(R-21), Flores (R-17), and Carter--to help save and improve lives by co-sponsoring the Water for the World Act (HR 2901), a bill that is currently before Congress. We thank Representative McCaul (R-10) for cosponsoring HR2901 and ask him to urge Congressman Ed Royce (R-CA), the Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, to schedule the bill for a markup as soon as possible.

The Water for the World Act is bipartisan legislation that strengthens the Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, voted into law in 2005. It does NOT require new spending. Rather, it ensures the federal funds already allocated for clean water access are spent with one criterion in mind: greatest need. It also demands greater transparency for allocation of these funds, which ensures that our tax dollars are being spent appropriately. Research has found that safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs offer a return of \$4 in increased economic productivity for every \$1 invested. The goal is not to play politics with foreign clean water aid because, when lives are at stake, our limited funds need to be spent as effectively and transparently as possible.

However, time is running out to pass this bill before the 113th session of Congress closes. This bill is not just about being fiscally responsible, it's about saving lives. Just as we are able to raise our voices in the Austin City Council debate about alternative water sources for Central Texans, let us also lend our voice to the voiceless--those 748 million people around the world who go without clean water. Call your representatives. Ask them to cosponsor HR2901 Water for the World Act. If we don't act now, an opportunity for bipartisan success will be squandered. More importantly, it will get worse for the children who most need the help.

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor are another great way to raise awareness in your community about the issue at hand and to let people know how they can advocate for change. The key to getting your letter printed is to make it relevant to your local community, whether that means letting readers know about local lobbying visits or asking your paper's editor to run more stories on a specific issue.

Here are a few more tips for getting your letter published:

- **Keep it short.** Most letters to the editor run no more than 150-200 words.
- **Keep it focused.** Unlike op-eds, letters to the editor only allow space to make one or two key points. Focus on what you think is the most important thing for people in your community to know about the issue and what they can do to help.
- **Make it relevant.** Respond to coverage the publication has already produced. If possible, praise the publication when it provides good reporting on these issues. Publications are less likely to print letters that do not pertain to their coverage.

As with op-ed pieces, don't forget to include your contact information when you submit a letter to the editor:

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Girls Count Act will protect vulnerable children from exploitation

June 6, 2014

Millions of children remain invisible to their government and unable to fully participate in their communities each year.

They are denied education and health services and are at risk for exploitation, violence, abuse, and underage recruitment into armed forces, all because they do not have a simple piece of paper we take for granted—a birth certificate. 230 million children under the age of 5 were not registered at birth. Birth registration is a foundation for protecting children. The list of things a child without a birth certificate is denied reads like a checklist for human traffickers, who often seek out the vulnerable and marginalized: unable to attend school, unable to access healthcare, unable to open a bank account, separated from family and unable to reunite, unable to prove age and therefore more easily forced into early marriage—the list goes on.

The Girls Count Act, introduced by Representative Chabot, elevates birth registration as a priority in U.S. foreign assistance and policy. It authorizes the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to support programs that promote sustainable registration systems to ensure all children are able to access social services. This bipartisan legislation does not call for new spending. It ensures that the simple step of birth registration is not overlooked amid all the other efforts of the U.S. government to protect children.

At a time when the international community is working to empower women and girls socially, economically, and politically, a lack of birth registration remains an obstacle to girls (and boys) experiencing life in all its fullness.



Social Media

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Social Media |

Online forums are another great way to lend your voice to promote change. You can use your blog, Twitter account, or Facebook profile to inform your friends, followers, and networks and invite them to join you in advocating on behalf of the poor. Blogs are a perfect forum to invite people into a conversation about issues that are important to you. You can also encourage other bloggers to link to your post.

YouTube is another great resource. Offbeat and funny videos preside here, but more serious ones are featured as well. Consider posting videos of your church's youth group, your small group, or you and your friends advocating on behalf of the world's poor. Be sure to post the video links to your other social networking sites for maximum exposure.



Rev. Alexia Salvatierra leads a biblical advocacy training course for Michigan-area churches.

Involving Your Community and Church

Advocates who partner with World Vision include high school youth, college students, young professionals, parents of young children, and seasoned professionals in various fields. Advocacy on behalf of the poor is a movement that brings together people from many different backgrounds.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

—Attributed to Margaret Mead

Consider ways that your church, small group, professional association, community, or family can get involved. You can choose to organize large events, or you can start with those closest to you. More often than not, social movements exist because a small group of committed people set out to do something. The goal for your community organizing efforts is to educate people and inspire action.

One of the challenges for an organizer is to direct the desire for change into effective action. Consider some of the options in this guide, and visit worldvision.org/advocacy to access more resources, including suggestions for speakers, events, and ways your church can take action and pray.

World Vision has resources for pastors and church leaders looking to engage their congregations in advocacy and prayer for justice. Corporate prayer is one way that churches can actively learn about the issues that affect the poor and intercede for them. Effective advocacy goes hand in hand with intercession and other spiritual disciplines.

You can involve others in advocacy by collecting signatures on advocacy postcards to be sent to your representatives, hosting a biblical advocacy training at your church, or setting up an advocacy-focused table at a ministry fair. You may also engage your community by hosting a town hall meeting to discuss issues facing the poor with your elected officials.

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.”

—Isaiah 58:6-10 (NIV)

Advocate Profile: Scott and Ashley Phillips

As a student of intercultural studies at Fuller Theological Seminary specializing in children at risk, Ashley Phillips examined the AIDS crisis in Uganda for a research paper. She read in a World Vision publication about the dark spiritual dimensions and bloody history of the war in northern Uganda, and learned about the atrocities



Scott and Ashley Phillips, who as post-graduate students felt called to be agents of social change, with Awichu Akwanya, a former Ugandan child soldier. *Photo courtesy of Scott and Ashley Phillips.*

inflicted upon Ugandan children and families by the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

Ashley shared the report with her husband, Scott, also a Fuller student. "It brought us to a difficult conversation with God," says Scott. "We had become passionate in our desire for change [in Uganda], but weren't sure how to become engaged."

Then Scott and Ashley learned about a local GuluWalk event, a walk organized to raise awareness about child soldiers. They decided to participate, and Scott agreed to chair the event.

"When you realize the size of the problem, it is overwhelming; but knowing there is an opportunity to take part in what God is already doing—that's a privilege," says Scott.

Scott was one of an estimated 800 participants at the Lobby Day for Northern Uganda in Washington, D.C. "I really want to learn more about how to unify groups around a movement—how to help make inroads to bring other people along and make them feel a connection with the issue," says Scott.

Scott and Ashley have found a shared and unique call to care for the children of northern Uganda. They continue to prayerfully seek out tools to help them be a voice for these children and broaden the base of Americans who care about them.



Women of Vision, a volunteer group of World Vision, host a Walk for Water in Seattle, Washington, to raise awareness about water, sanitation, and hygiene issues in their community.

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Involving Your Networks

Find out if your professional network, association, or local faith and culture series is looking for new speakers. If you would like to invite a World Vision spokesperson, send a request to our Speakers Bureau at worldvision.org/request-speaker.

If you are already a member of a social justice network and would like to partner with World Vision in our advocacy efforts, please email advocate@worldvision.org.



Students at Cornerstone University raise awareness around malaria at their annual "Night of Nets" soccer game.

Involving Your College or University

As a college student, you have the opportunity to educate your peers on global issues of poverty and inspire them to make a real-world difference.

Did you know that just 10 phone calls about an issue can bring something to a legislator's attention? Rally your friends, clubs, and campus and have a "call-in day," where students call their representatives to ask them to act on a particular issue or bill.

You can also raise awareness among your other peers on campus about an issue that's important to you, like ending human trafficking. Gather some friends and come up with a creative way to publicly share what's going on around this issue: host a film screening, create an experiential story for people to walk through, post stickers or posters around campus to get people talking—put your passion and creativity to work!

For more ideas, tools, and to learn about the most critical issues in our world today, visit www.worldvision.org/advocacy.

Creative Advocacy

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.” —Desmond Tutu

You probably have more tools than you realize to use your voice for the poor. Think of your talents, and put them to use! Create a Vine or YouTube video, design a T-shirt that expresses your message, write a song and perform it at an open mic night, or create a mural in a public space. The possibilities are endless.



“Artists are storytellers. What we create illuminates a narrative of our own personal journey, articulates the circumstances in the human passage, and [validates] the attempt to step into the shoes of another. It is my assumption that orphans and vulnerable children need storytellers to translate their situation in a manner that opens up viewers’ hearts and moves them to compassionate action.

“Paintings can become memorials for the stories of others. The visual

process helps break through these walls around the human heart as we come to grips with a tragic reality. One of my goals as an artist and advocate is to open the human heart to the need of children impacted by AIDS. Collaborating with World Vision has opened my own eyes, expanded my art, and engaged a broader community in becoming advocates for children in crisis.”

—**Scott Erickson**, artist



Youth beneficiaries of World Vision Armenia have participated three times in the TEDxKids talks in Armenia's capital city of Yerevan. In the June 2014 event, 13 young speakers from World Vision Armenia and five from World Vision Georgia shared their achievements and ideas with hundreds of their peers. "Everything has its own meaning in this life," says Razmik (left), who shared about the role of theater in inclusive education. "We might think that a simple fly has no meaning for us ... But the same simple fly can be a good example when one needs to learn to fly."

Advocacy and Children

When children learn about injustice, they often have the same reaction as adults—they want to do something! Consider including children who want to be involved as participants and even spokespeople for your local advocacy events. Encourage their ideas—from hosting a local bake sale to creating multimedia presentations that reach their peers. There are many ways to include children and youth in advocacy efforts. Remember, the best ideas for their involvement often come from them.

It is important to educate children about global issues and encourage them to take meaningful action. You may want to begin with one of the following options:

- Start a club at your children's school that is committed to advocating for an issue that impacts children globally. Participants may want to create their own campaign to raise awareness about child labor or provide more children with bed nets to protect them from malaria.
- Create a public rally or event to highlight the plight of children in crisis. Don't forget to inform the media, and consider collecting petition signatures to present to key legislators. Invite the child or youth leaders of your event to meet their senator or member of Congress. This can have a lasting impact on their commitment to advocacy.
- Teach your child about the same justice issues you learn about, and invite them to advocate with you, creating drawings or other pieces of art to communicate their message. Then hand-deliver them together to your congressional representative's district office.

Advocacy and Athletes

Incorporating advocacy into athletic training is a very effective way to raise awareness of global needs. Team World Vision “helps make the impossible possible” by empowering people to take on challenges they once felt were unimaginable. When people step through fear by pledging to fundraise and train for an endurance race, they begin a journey that allows them to reach new physical heights while realizing their ability to make an impact on global poverty.



Team World Vision runners energize one another with a rousing rally clap at a transition zone at the Los Angeles Marathon Relay.

During the process, these athletes experience trials and triumph, not just physically but also mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Amid the challenges, they begin to identify with the suffering of others as they endure the struggles that come with training. Their need for water on a long run, for example, compels them to keep running, knowing that they are helping to provide clean water for others.

Team World Vision athletes are often empowered by their newfound status as change maker. From non-runners to seasoned athletes, this journey creates new meaning for why they run, bike, swim, and sweat.

Originating with a focus on marathons raising money for World Vision's water projects in Africa, the team continues to innovate through diversifying endurance race types and distances, while expanding to support additional causes such as child protection, microfinance, and more.

To join the team, visit teamworldvision.org.

Malefetsane, age 13, and World Vision U.S. staff member Millie Vanderpool after a food distribution in Lesotho. “World Vision is our friend,” shares Malefetsane, who has cared for his four siblings since their parents’ death.



Making Change a Reality

This handbook and our website, worldvision.org/advocacy, provide you with the information and advocacy tools you need. Now the question is, how will you respond? There are plenty of reasons we can give ourselves to do nothing. It takes time. It can take financial resources. But once you take the first step, you will find advocacy to be an exciting and fulfilling experience.

Ultimately, as an advocate you choose to partner with those in impoverished communities. Their priorities become, in a real way, your own. This is an invitation to experience transformation in your own life and in the lives of those you bring with you.

Thank you for responding to the invitation. There is no doubt that as you speak out and lead your own community, you will help bring life in all its fullness to many others.

—The World Vision Advocacy Team



Building a better world for children

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World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.

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