This policy represents the commitment of DMCDD (Board, members and secretariat) to work towards advocacy in our development work. DMCDD 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 DMCDD’s advocacy policy is to secure an advocacy focus. DMCDD supported interventions should, to the widest extent possible, promote sustainable structural change in favour of the poor and marginalised.

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

In development and advocacy work the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Conventions of Human Rights are tools to express basic conditions that all men and women are entitled to. Thereby churches and Christian organisations have a language in common with other NGOs, states and multilateral institutions which is highly useful in negotiations regarding regulating and distributing resources and promoting equal access to decision-making processes.

THE DMCDD, THE POLICY FOR DANISH SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY AND ADVOCACY
Since the 1970s and 1980s, DMCDD members and partners have, along with other NGOs, moved towards empowerment in their development approach. The Danish government’s Policy for Danish Support for Civil Society encourages DMCDD, 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, DMCDD members and partners work with political structures at local, regional and national levels.

Advocacy has been undertaken using different approaches. DMCDD regards the right-based approach to be central when engaging in advocacy. Another approach has been to develop and demonstrate good models in education and health work. And yet other approaches have been to raise concerns through empowerment of marginalised groups and/or through raising sensitive issues via the church network.

Where DMCDD 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), DMCDD wishes to extend our activities so that we are active in global initiatives such as Jubilee. Moreover, DMCDD, members and South Partners are actively supporting the effort of reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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. DMCDD encourages its member organisations to consider incorporating elements of the advocacy approaches outlined here and adapt according to the national context. DMCDD will consistently consider implementation of advocacy in Denmark.

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 or beliefs. In different parts of the world religious minorities have little local influence and are even marginalised to the point of suffering discrimination, harassment or even persecution from residents and authorities. In such contexts, advocacy at local and national level regarding freedom of religion or beliefs 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.

DEFINITION
DMCDD 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.
CHARACTERISTICS OF DMCDD ADVOCACY WORK

Experience 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.

DMCDD acknowledges that churches and Christian organisations have comparative advantages in relations to speaking out on issues facing marginalised and vulnerable people. They have a prophetic and testifying role to play and have the potentials to call for justice by promoting equal rights for all people. The churches and particularly the church leaders represent a certain authority and have thereby the opportunity to influence people to change behaviours and values. Based on Christian teaching, the churches can raise awareness of the rights of all people to be treated with respect.

DMCDD therefore 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.

OPERATIONAL APPROACHES

As a point of departure DMCDD members and partners works with four different operational approaches.

Strategic service: Modelling to advocate for better service

DMCDD 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.

DMCDD partners have many years of experience in health, education and social work often aimed at serving the poorest parts of society. In Sub Saharan Africa 70-80% of social services are delivered by Faith Based Organisations. This service gives DMCDD 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 lead to reflection: how can vital services such as health and education be done better and more efficiently, how can health work 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
DMCDD 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.

Advocacy through the church structure and beyond

DMCDD 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 etc. 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 DMCDD network innovative advocacy work has been carried out with messages transmitted via church networks and thereby be appropriated to local contexts. 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.

**Advocacy with people as the fruit of empowerment**

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

DMCDD 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 DMCDD partner.

**Linking as advocacy strategy**

DMCDD 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 DMCDD members and partners are in contexts, where they are able carry out advocacy work. It is possible for a DMCDD 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 DMCDD 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. 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 DMCDD supported interventions are placed along the continuum line. Capacity development of the partners in question should be an integrated part of the Advocacy Process.

More information, tools and resources can be found on www.dmcdd.org