IFM·SEI

ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

HANDBOOK FOR EDUCATORS

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INTRODUCTION

✦ Kids Got Rights! ✦

Kids Got Rights! is a two-year project through which children aged 8-13 from Finland, Italy, Catalonia (Spain), Austria, Slovenia, the United Kingdom and Denmark came together in international meetings and national activities to learn and teach about their own rights: Children's rights! The project was implemented by the International Falcon Movement-Socialist Educational International (IFM-SEI) together with its member organisations Nuoret Kotkat, Arciragazzi, Esplais Catalans, Österreichische Kindefreunde, Slovenian Falcons, Woodcraft Folk and DUI-LEG og VIRKE thanks to a grant of the European Union's Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme from 2021-2022.

The children in the project are called "Superheroes" as they have been learning a lot about children's rights through the project, collecting information from other kids and teaching other children and adults about children's rights - making them real heroes for children's rights!

Through the Kids Got Rights project, we wanted to make sure that children are able to raise their voices and have the power to make decisions. Children should have the right to be heard, the right to set up and join groups and the right to access information and to be taken seriously in public decision making in their everyday life. And when their rights are not respected, they should have the power to complain and make sure to gain the respect they rightfully deserve.

✦ Who we are ✦

The **International Falcon Movement – Socialist Educational International** is an international educational movement working to empower children and young people to take an active role in society and fight for their rights. We are an umbrella

organisation for child and youth-led movements all over the world, educating on the basis of our values of equality, democracy, peace, co-operation and friendship. Through our member organisations and our international activities, we aim to ensure that children and young people are well informed about their rights and are empowered to ensure they are respected. To reach this goal, we organise a variety of activities including seminars, training courses, international camps and conferences.

Child participation is one of the basic principles of IFM-SEI. It is our firm belief that children are able to make decisions and have strong opinions on a global level as well as local matters directly affecting them. Children and young people simply need genuine empowerment so that their voices can be heard in society. We promote the participation of children within our member organisations and the international movement, involving them from a very early age in the planning and evaluation of programmes, supporting them to organise their own activities and empowering them to take on leadership roles in the organisation. At the same time, our children's groups participate in the communities they live in to shape decisions affecting them on a broader scale. They organise and take part in demonstrations, analyse the child-friendliness of their cities, take action against child poverty, speak out against racism and much more.

In our activities and groups, children learn about their rights and how they can ensure that they are respected. Being part of a strong group helps them to develop self-confidence to have their say in public, and offers a safe space to start taking responsibility for themselves and others.

✦ What is in this handbook? ✦

With the Kids got Rights project, we have developed two publications to make sure the results of the project live on: A toolkit full of non-formal educational resources that children can use to educate others about children's rights (just like the Superheroes of the project), as well as this handbook for educators. The handbook aims to help you to support children in asking for their rights to be respected!

In this handbook, we will briefly introduce children's rights and more specifically the participation rights. We will explain why child participation is important and what principles of child participation are most important for IFM–SEI.

We will then focus on how children can advocate for their rights, and how you can support them in doing so. We will lead you through the steps of developing a vision, planning, action and evaluation, giving tips on how best to go through these steps with groups of children of all ages.

You can read the handbook from start to end to get an overview, or just look up tips and tools for specific questions you are dealing with, as you like. If you are interested in finding workshop outlines on child participation or children's rights more generally, jump to the Kids Got Rights! toolkit or IFM–SEI's Child Participation Handbook (2015).

PARTICIPATE

✦ What are children's rights? ✦

Children's rights are all the rights that children and young people need in order to make sure that they are safe, have the things they need to survive and develop, and have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

Children also have all of the rights formulated in other universal legal documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, due to children's development process they have specific needs which require special attention. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) guarantees these specific rights recognised for children. As children and youth organisations it is our task not only to inform children about their rights, but also to remind adults of their responsibility and power to ensure they are respected.

The UNCRC was signed in 1989 by all UN member states, except for the USA. It has 54 articles, out of which 42 rights are for children and young people up to 18 years of age.

The others are about how governments and adults should work together to ensure children and young people can access their rights.

✦ **The four main characteristics of human rights also apply to children's rights:**

◇ **Universal:** Human rights apply to each and every individual, independent of their origin, citizenship and background.

◇ **Inalienable:** No one can take human rights away from someone, they belong to each individual, from birth to death.

◇ **Interdependent:** Human rights are interrelated, they depend on each other. Would a person starving be able to make the most of their right to education? Or would the right to have an opinion be possible without the right to education or access to information?

◇ **Indivisible:** Human rights are not divisible. One does not have just part of these rights. They are all equally important.

✦ **Children's rights can be divided into three categories:**

◇ **Protection rights**, guaranteeing the safety of children and covering specific issues such as abuse, neglect and exploitation.

◇ **Provision rights**, covering special needs of children such as education and health care, goods and services.

◇ **Participation rights**, recognising the child's evolving capacity to make decisions and participate in society, to be heard and involved in decision-making.

✦ **These are the rights concerned with participation:**

Article 17

State Parties [...] shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

INFORMATION

Article 13

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

INFORMATION/ EXPRESSION AND EXCHANGE OF OPINIONS

Article 14

State Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

EXPRESSION AND EXCHANGE OF OPINIONS

Article 12

State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

EXPRESSION AND EXCHANGE OF OPINIONS

Article 15

State Parties recognise the rights of the child to freedom of association.

MEETING

✦ What is child participation? ✦

We often talk about "genuine" and "meaningful" participation of children, because not everything that is called child participation really takes children seriously. For us - IFM-SEI and its members who were partners in the project - whenever children are forced to participate, asked to participate in something they are not interested in, or asked for their opinions which are not to be taken into consideration, it does not constitute participation.

In a General Comment on Article 12 of the UNCRC, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child states that good quality children's participation has to fulfil nine requirements:

1) PARTICIPATION IS TRANSPARENT AND INFORMATIVE:

✧ Do the children actually know what they participate in and with what goal? Do they have all the information necessary to make decisions?

2) PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY.

✧ Are the children asked whether they want to participate or not? Did they have the opportunity to say no?

3) PARTICIPATION IS RESPECTFUL.

✧ Are the children treated with respect by the adults involved? Do their opinions matter?

4) PARTICIPATION IS RELEVANT.

✧ Does the children's participation make a difference?

5) PARTICIPATION IS CHILD-FRIENDLY.

✧ Are methods used that are suitable for children of a particular age? Is the language used understandable for children?

6) PARTICIPATION IS INCLUSIVE.

◇ Can all children participate equally?

7) PARTICIPATION IS SUPPORTED BY TRAINING FOR ADULTS.

◇ Do the adults involved know what they are doing and how to support children to participate?

8) PARTICIPATION IS SAFE AND SENSITIVE TO RISK.

◇ Is the participation, for example, confidential? Can the follow-up have any negative impact on the children?

9) PARTICIPATION IS ACCOUNTABLE.

◇ Will the children be informed about the outcome and follow-up of their participation?

For participation to be "meaningful", it is essential that it takes into account the individuality of children and is adapted to them. Children have different skills, interests, experiences, needs, levels of privilege and abilities. Some children might be able to invest more time and energy into participation than others - some might be able to digest big chunks of information, some not. Some might be able to do more things on their own, others might need more support.

The "Flower of Participation" shows the different forms child participation can take, in relation to their level of responsibility. It is based on Roger Hart's "Ladder of Participation". With the flower, we show, however, that participation is not a ladder - that there is not one "best" form to participate if we take the different contexts of children into account.

At the lowest level are tokenism, decoration and manipulation – these are forms of "participation" that are not meaningful. The top three leaves show the most meaningful forms of participation:

1. Where children initiate and direct actions themselves;

2. Where children initiate actions and share decision-making with adults;

3. Where adults initiate actions and share decision-making with children.

"THE FLOWER OF PARTICIPATION"
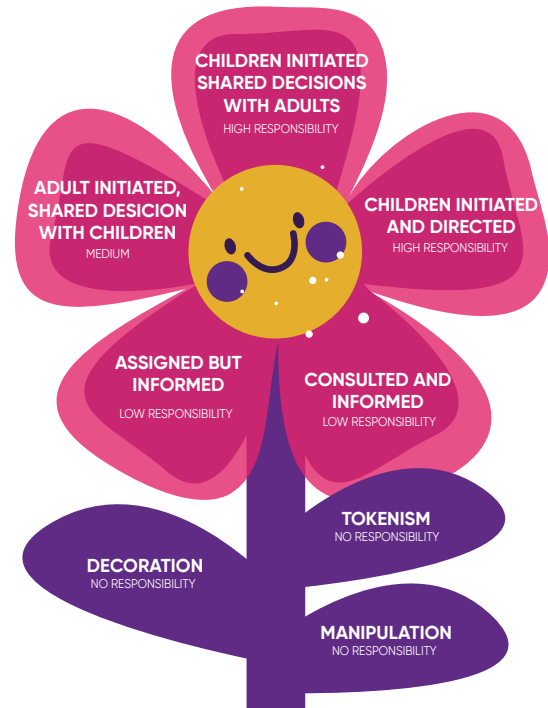
✦ **Participation approaches could also be classified into:**

Consultative participation: where adults maintain the control over their idea and implementation, but ask for children's opinions.

Collaborative participation: where adults initiate something, but children are involved in the development and implementation of the idea and can take stronger ownership and responsibility over time.

Child-led participation: where children initiate, plan and implement something and adults only play a supporting role.

All of these forms are okay! They depend on the context, on the age of the children and their interests and abilities.

✦ Conditions for participation ✦

Competencies: Knowledge, skills and attitudes to participate and take decisions

Motivation: Willingness to take an active role in community life

Opportunities: Means and power to make decisions and resources available

These concerns don't only have to be met by the children and young people, but also by the adults working with them. When we speak about child participation we tend to focus on children, but often forget that participation is mostly based on an educational relationship between adults and children. Therefore there are many things that we, as adults and educators, also need to take into consideration.

✦ Competencies for participation ✦

Below are some examples of competencies that children and young people need to participate:

◇ Active listening

◇ Self-confidence

◇ Discussion skills

◇ Being able to explain their point of view

◇ Group work and cooperation

◇ Being able to critically analyse information

Educators also need to have specific competencies to support participation. They should, for example, be able to develop a child-centred approach, be able to facilitate participatory methods and know how to build trust in a group.

✦ Motivation for participation ✦

One important competence is to know how to motivate young people for participation projects and processes. For many children and young people, passive participation seems to be an easier option; active participation requires a lot of energy and enthusiasm. When we hear that children and young people are not motivated to participate, this is probably because the participation processes are either not challenging enough for them, or are too complicated to understand. Motivation for participation can be developed when the '3Cs' are met: connection, challenge and capacity.

✧ **Connection:** young people need to feel connected to the issue to meaningfully participate: they need to be interested and have the willingness to change something. At the same time, they also need to feel a connection to the other people in the group and to the educator to be motivated to work with them.

✧ **Challenge:** The participation project needs to be interesting and challenging – if change seems too easy, it is unlikely that young people will get creative and feel compelled to participate. If it is compelling and challenging, the group will feel proud to be able to participate.

✧ **Capacity:** young people need to feel connected to the issue to meaningfully participate: This includes time, space and sufficient support.

✦ Opportunities for participation ✦

Finally, we also need opportunities that allow us to support children and young people to participate. This includes tangible things like resources – we might need money to pay for the young people to travel to spaces for participation, a meeting room where they can work together and enough time to spare from other regular activities. Opportunities also include, for example, the power to change something in the organisation. If the group wants to improve something inside the organisation – are you in a position to influence change? What are the internal regulations of the organisation? And finally, opportunities can arise externally, for example during election periods, the announcement of official consultations or the freeing up of a public space for which new possibilities are sought.

✦ Complaining about children's rights violations ✦

One specific form of child participation is when children make official complaints about their rights not being respected! Children's rights are not just a set of "nice to have" guidelines. The United Nations Convention on the Rights

of the Child is a legal document that has been ratified by almost all UN Member States (except the United States). Children all around the world have the LEGAL right to everything in the Convention. This means that, when children's rights are not respected, people – including children themselves – can sue their governments!

Some countries – 48 to be exact – have also signed something called "Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure" (in short: OPIC). This protocol allows children from these 48 countries to complain directly to the United Nations, if violations cannot be addressed effectively in their countries. Even though this procedure is very complicated and children will definitely need the help of lawyers to go through all the necessary steps, it is a very important legal instrument to uphold children's rights.

If your country has not ratified the OPIC, you should ask them to do so! **HERE** you can find resources to help you.

You find a list of all countries who have ratified the OPIC **HERE**.

No matter whether your country has ratified this Protocol, or whether you want to or have resources to take legal action against your country: Children should be aware that they can complain about child right violations to anyone they like! They can talk to their school board, their local mayor, their parents, their youth organisation or anyone else who might either be responsible for violations, or who can help them address those responsible.

ADVOCATE

✦ What is advocacy? ✦

So far we have spoken about children's rights and child participation. We now want to dive further into something that is called "advocacy". What is it?

The term "advocacy" defines all activities that aim to influence people who have the power to make decisions - politicians in councils, parliaments and governments, leadership of schools or associations etc. When we talk about advocacy for children's rights, this can include for example: asking for a higher budget for children and youth organisations, or asking for the voting age to be lowered to 16, asking for more support to refugee children etc.

✦ Advocacy includes: ✦

✧ Changing attitudes, behaviour and knowledge;

✧ Changing or shaping policy;

✧ Changing how people do things.

Advocacy can be done by speaking directly to decision-makers or asking the support of the general public for a cause. Advocacy done by children is therefore a specific form of child participation - here children don't participate in the planning of a programme or initiate their own projects, but participate by asking others to make changes.

Children have an excellent instinct for unfairness in society, and when they know their rights, they will also know where their rights or the rights of other children are not respected. Through advocacy, they can try to do something about unfair situations and policies and fight for children's rights to be upheld everywhere and always.

✦ Planning an advocacy journey ✦

An advocacy journey can be very exciting and empowering for children – it is a great feeling when you get up and fight for something you believe in, motivate others to join your cause and actually convince others of your viewpoint. This journey, however, can also be very complicated and even disappointing, when you start with big hopes and don't get things done like you imagined. We have therefore designed the next chapters of this handbook to help you support children through this journey. Advocacy requires a lot of planning and creative thinking, and hopefully through the following chapters we can make this process a little bit easier for you, and therefore for the children you work with.

> For advocacy, everything we said above about participation is of course still valid – the intensity with which children participate depends on their needs, interests and capacities! Children should not be burdened by their advocacy journey, but empowered by it! You as their educator or facilitator should lift the burden off their shoulders and give the children the opportunity to shape their journey in a way appropriate for them!

✧ **THE JOURNEY OF ADVOCACY CAN BE DIVIDED INTO FOUR BIG STEPS:**

1. Creating your vision: What is not working? What do you want to change? What do you want to happen? In this step, the children should find out more about the issue they want to address.

2. Planning: Once the children have their vision, you should think together about the steps that need to happen to achieve this – what are smaller changes on the way that they want to ask for? Who has the power to change these things? Who do they need to address?

3. Action: Action includes working on your messages – what do you need to say to convince people?, and on your tactics – what do you need to do to convince people? With messages and tactics you can put together an advocacy plan.

4. Evaluation: It is always worth it to take a little bit of time to evaluate – what worked well, what didn't, how to move on from there?

VISION

When starting your advocacy journey, the children will already have some idea about the problem they want to tackle, but often it is a difficult first step to describe the problem in concrete terms, and to define the solution they want to see.

You can start by discussing some basic questions with the group:

- **What is the problem?** (Example: "The youth club is only open 3 days a week".

- **Why is it a problem?** ("We don't know where to spend time with our friends on the other days").

- **Is this the actual problem, or rather the symptom of another problem?** (It might be a symptom of the problem "There are not enough municipal youth workers who can open the club more often").

- **What is causing the problem? What are the underlying structures that support the cause?** (Not enough state budget to pay the youth workers. Youth is not a priority in the budget).

- **Who are the people affected by the problem?** (Children aged 12-18).

- **What would the ideal situation look like for these people?** (Youth centre open every day after school until 7pm, Fridays longer).

These questions may seem simple, but you should encourage the children to think about them critically, and not always be satisfied with the first answer that comes to their mind. In our world, we are taught to see many things in a certain way, and it takes some courage to think outside of the box and also ask more critical questions and go deeper into the "why" questions of what causes a problem.
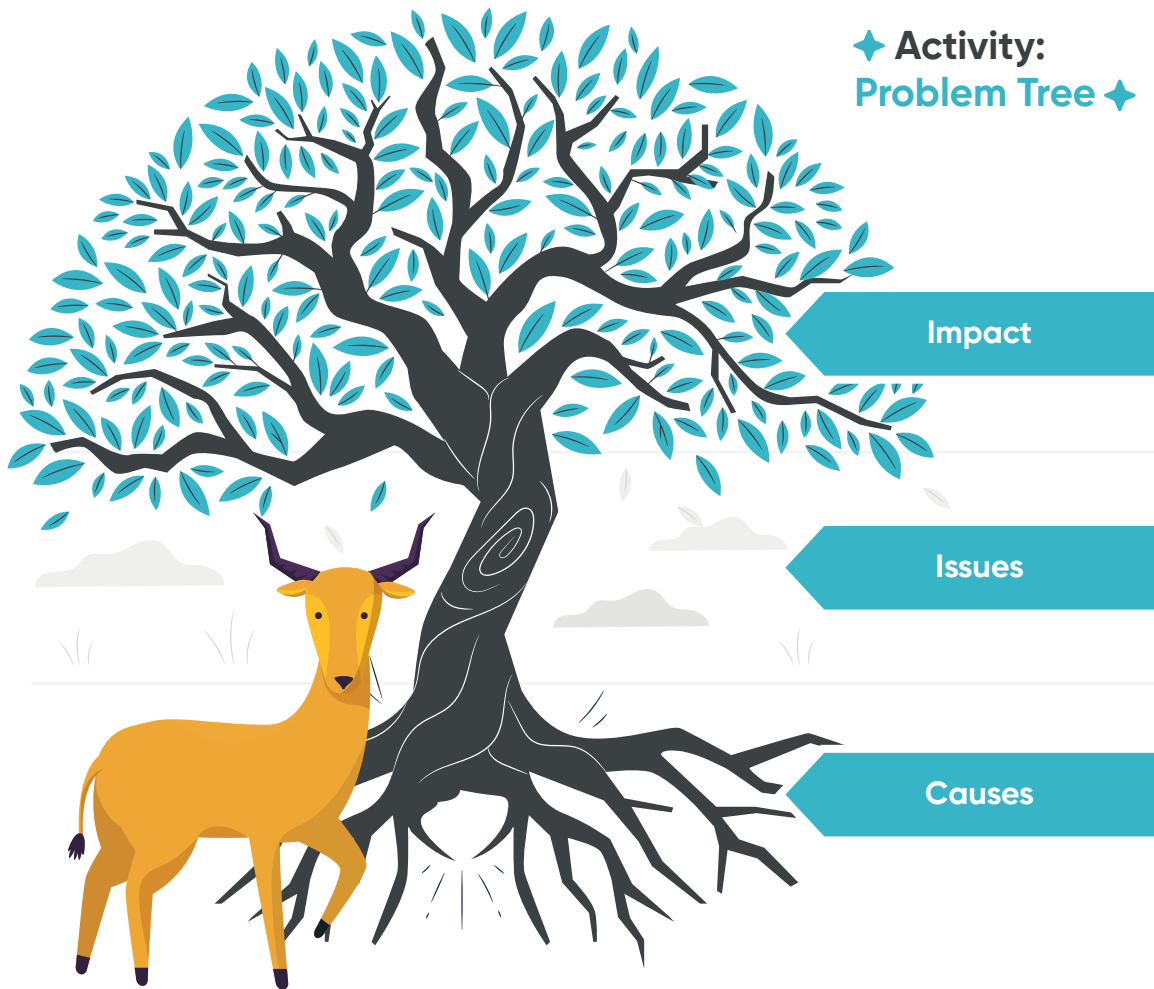
✦ Activity:
Problem Tree ✦

Impact

Issues

Causes

Either in small groups or all together, fill in the "Problem Tree" to gain clarity of the problem for yourselves. You can either copy this one, draw your own or let the children draw theirs on a flipchart.

Begin at the **centre of the tree:** this is **the problem** or the issue you have decided to advocate to change.

The roots of the tree are the causes. Figuring out the root causes is an important part of the problem-solving process because it helps you understand why the problem has developed in the first place and then come up with the right ways to tackle it!

The leaves of the tree represent what happens as a result of the problem. Try to think about multilayered effects, or 'the effects of effects' – so when you

come up with a result, ask yourself 'then what happens'?

The "problem tree" will be full of negative statements. In the next chapter, you can design a "solution tree" together, where all these negative things can be turned into positive changes.

✦ Activity: Child Rights news ✦

To research more about the problems identified, ask them to design the front page of a newspaper called "Child Right News" (or maybe an Instagram story, or a TikTok video).

✦ **They can break into smaller groups, with each group developing:**

◇ One headline, text and image (or a TikTok video) describing the problem of today.

◇ A headline, short text and image (or a TikTok video) illustrating the success and what the ideal future looks like, one year from now.

Encourage them to research about the problem to add statistics and other information relevant to the problem.

If you have more time, they can also each develop a whole front page with several articles.

Once the groups are done, they present their results to each other and you can discuss which headlines best portray what the group wants to achieve.

✦ Activity: Time machine ✦

Once the children have identified the problem, you can create and travel in your very own time machine to visit the world where their vision has been achieved.

You will need 3 separate spaces and sufficient preparation time for this activity.

1. **Create a "problem space" – the time now.** You can be as creative as you want and do this either with the children, or you prepare it before the session (for the bigger surprise and imagination of the group we advise to do it beforehand, if you have the time). The problem space should look gloomy and have images of the problem the children want to tackle, maybe newspaper headings, statistics etc.

2. **Create a "solutions space".** This should be a very comfy, light space, with cushions, some happy music, some snacks.... On the walls and/or on the floor, put big papers and markers/pens. The papers should be in an order and have the titles prepared by you "1 year from now", "3 years from now" and "10 years from now".

3. **Provide different craft materials** - e.g. cardboard, silver foil, glitter, masking tape, paint etc. to build your time machine together. You can either build one time machine for the whole group, or divide into small groups, so that each small group can travel in their own time machine.

4. **Now the time travel begins:** Ask the whole group to come with their time machine to the problem space. Tell them, in your words, about the problem, and give them some time to walk around in case you put information to read on the walls. After 5 minutes, ask the children to gather with their time machine. You can put on some exciting music and then start a count-down from 20. Once counted down, run with them to the "solutions space".

5. **Start the happy music and invite them to sit down.** Explain that they are now in the future – they can decide whether they travelled one year, three years or 10 years into the future. They should go to the according paper and start drawing or writing how they see the situation they want to change in the future. If they like, they can also travel between the three futures and contribute to the other two images. This should be a relaxed time, where they can also just sit, have a snack and chat before they might get another idea to add to the posters.

6. After 30 minutes, invite the children to take the images to their time machine. Then start another countdown in order to travel back to the current time.

7. Sit in a circle and look at the images together. Discuss:

◇ Are they happy with what they have seen in the future?

◇ Are the images realistic to achieve? What will be most difficult to achieve?

◇ What from the images is most important to them?

TIP FOR EDUCATORS:

Make sure the children understand that their "vision" might not be something that can be easily achieved in the foreseeable future. It is important to have a vision for the world they want to live in, but do not make them believe that a big change can be achieved easily. That is why, in the next chapter, we will think of smaller steps that are actually needed to get closer to their vision.

Think about the right balance between planning time and implementing time for your group! Planning is really important for any meaningful advocacy and you should not leave out this step, but sometimes youth advocacy "projects" spend so much time on planning that by the time they are moving on to action, interest of the group might have already faded or circumstances already changed.

PLAN

✦ Activity: Solutions Tree ✦

We already designed a **"problem tree"** in the last chapter. Now we can continue with a more positive **"solutions tree"**.
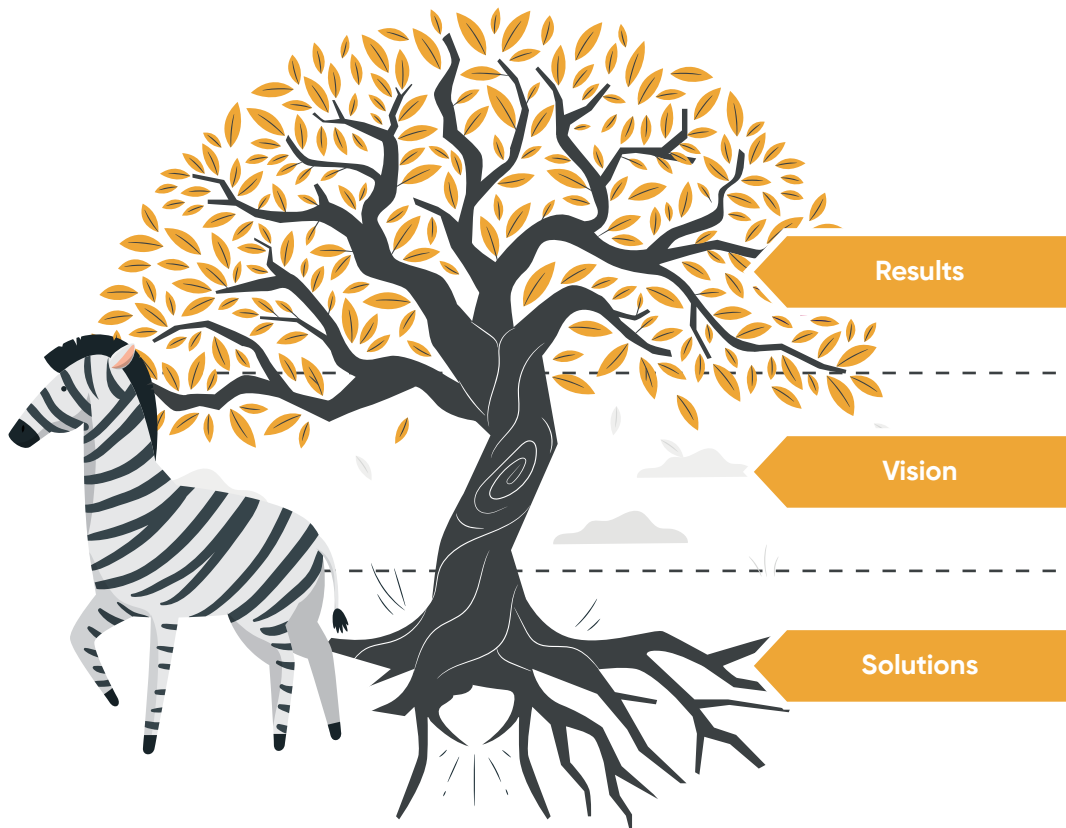
Begin at **the centre** of the tree and write your **vision** here.

The roots of the tree can now be turned into **solutions**. These are the actions needed to solve the problem and help you achieve your vision. Look back at your problem tree – can you turn the causes into positive statements? For example, the cause "youth is not a priority in the municipal budget" can be turned into the solution "show local councillors why young people matter for the city", followed by: Local councillors prioritise youth in the budget after a successful campaign of young people).

The leaves of the tree are **the results**. Try to think of the long-term effect of the problem. In our example, it can be: "Young people feel empowered after organising their own activities during longer opening hours of the youth centre".

✦ Defining objectives

Now that the children know the problem they want to tackle, their "big vision" and possible solutions, it is important to define what smaller things need to be achieved on the way to their vision. These are the "objectives". The objectives are based on the solutions that you put in the roots of the tree.

You will have heard this already many times, but it is important to repeat: Objectives need to be SMART:

◇ **Specific:** Be clear: who needs to do what?

◇ **Measurable:** How can you track progress?

◇ **Achievable:** Is it possible? Be realistic.

◇ **Results-based:** Will your objective help you achieve your vision? How?

◇ **Time-bound:** What's your deadline?

It does not make sense to have vague objectives without any idea when they should be achieved - it would just discourage the children if they do not know if they actually achieved something, and it would make the further planning very difficult, if you don't exactly know what you want to achieve.

Try to be realistic, but don't be afraid to aim high. One of your objectives may not be achieved, but you might have started a conversation with people about these issues which can lead to success in the long-term.

✦ Example:

◇ **Vision:** Every child in my neighbourhood has space to play."

◇ **Solution:** "to create more places without cars in my neighbourhood."

◇ **Objective:** "1 car park should be turned into a playground within 12 months from now".

✦ Defining your target group

Many different (groups of) people will, or should be, concerned in different ways by your advocacy goal. These are called the "stakeholders". Among the stakeholders will be, for example, the people whose opinions or decisions you want to change, or people who share your opinions and who can support you in your advocacy, or those who will be affected by the changes you advocate for.

Before deciding on your messages and tactics, you need to know exactly who these people, or groups of people, are, and how they relate to the problem and solution that your group has identified.

✦ Activity: Mindmap ✦

Ask the children to think about all the kinds of people who are affected by the problem and the solution. Give the group cards or post-it notes and ask them to write one person/group on each post-it and share them afterwards, or you ask them to shout out and you write them down on cards and put them randomly on the wall.

Then, ask the children to come to the wall and, together, order the cards. Which groups/people are connected in a similar way?

✦ Discuss with the group:

◇ Who are they? Are they decision-makers or influencers?

◇ Do they support your issue or are against it?

◇ Who can help you to get in contact with them? Who do they listen to?

◇ What else do they care about?

◇ What do you need them to do?

◇ How can you convince them to do it?

Now, you can go one step further and analyse them. A popular tool for this is the following stakeholder analysis:

High influence and low stake (low impact on themselves): Handle with care and meet their needs

Reach out to these people and try to find ways to get their attention to eventually move them to "key players", but keep in mind it may not be easy.

These could be for example influential business owners in the city, who have a large influence over local councillors because they can financially support municipal projects.

High influence and high stake (decision would have high impact on themselves): Top priority/ Key player

Manage closely and involve them in projects and decisions.

Focus on these people! They are your main target.

These could be local councillors, who will vote on the municipal budget that influences the situation of the local youth centre.

Low influence and low stake:
Low priority

Remember these people in case they become easy to influence or more powerful in the future but don't focus on them for now.

These could involve parents of children and young people.

Low influence and high stake:
Keep informed

They may be able to help you reach your targets or give you important information for your campaign. Consider them your "ambassadors".

Other youth organisations or in general children and young people in your city who are on your side and can lobby with you.

TIPS FOR EDUCATORS:

Often, advocacy groups without much experience focus on the groups that have high interest, but don't have much influence – they preach to those who are already convinced, simply because it is easier. It is of course important to have supporters but focus on those you identified as having high influence, because they can make the change happen!

Remember, you can't reach everyone so you'll need to decide on two or three targets who you really think you could influence and where your influence will make a difference!

ACT

Now that your group knows the issue they want to tackle, the solution they want to see and who they need to target, they can focus on the most exciting bit: Formulating their messages, deciding on the actual activities and, of course, implementing them!

Your message(s) will drive your advocacy campaign - they need to be so convincing that decision-makers are actually making the decisions you want to see! You can have different messages for the different audiences you have identified before - you will speak differently to a politician than to other children, for example.

✦ Activity: Brainstorming successful messages ✦

Ask the children to think about campaign messages that they have seen, in the news, on social media, at school. Ask them to share which they think have worked well and which were very convincing, have any of them actually changed their minds about a topic/issue?. You can either just do a quick brainstorm, or ask them to collect images of these messages from the internet and make collages with the ones they like most. Examples you can give them are "Black Lives Matter", or "Pro-choice" vs "Pro-life" from the US, but they don't only have to look for short slogans such as these, messages can also be a whole sentence!

Once you have collected a few, discuss:

◇ Why do you like these messages?

◇ What makes them successful?

◇ Who do they target?

✦ Activity: Hand, heart, head ✦

Messages should appeal to the hand, the heart and the head – they should convince people to do something, to feel something and to think something!

Prepare three big flipcharts, with each showing either the image of a hand, a heart or a head. Then ask the children to fill them in together:

◇ **Head:** What do you want people to know?

◇ **Hand:** What do you want people to do?

◇ **Heart:** What do you want people to feel?
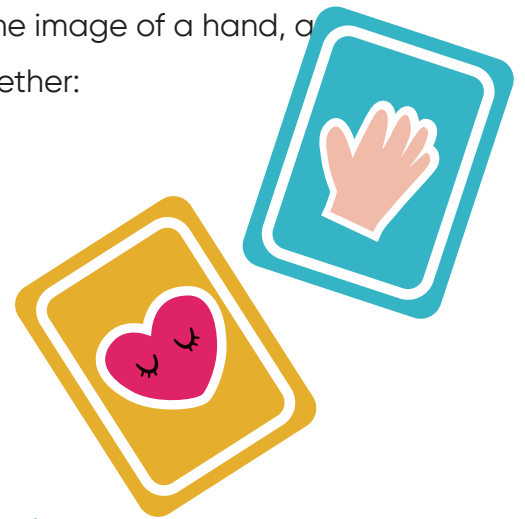
✦Activity: Craft your message✦

With all this above, you should now craft your messages for the different target groups. Take one target group at a time!

An interactive way to do this is to ask the children to write down their message in a pair. Once every pair has written something, they meet with another pair, share their messages and then either decide on one, or come up with something that captures the best of both of them. Then each group of 4 meets another group. Again they share what they have written, and then come up with one message for their whole group. You can do this until the whole group is back together.

Then, you can repeat the process for the next target group.

Another way is to form smaller groups, one for each target group. Once all groups have crafted their message, they share them and receive feedback from the others.

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS:

Don't lose sight of the goal! Always keep in mind what the children want people to do.

Think about why the issue is important.

Ask for feedback! Talk to people who are not involved in the campaign at all - parents, siblings etc. and check with them how they understand your message, how it makes them feel and how or if it makes them act.

In its **Youth Advocacy Toolkit**, the European Youth Forum has identified the following useful methods to craft successful messages:

1. Killer facts

Oxfam is pretty good at these, however, there are only a few good ones - and to be successful they need to connect primarily with your emotions. Perhaps one of the best ever: "eight men own as much as half the world". It works not because it is eight, or ten, or 42. No one ever remembers the actual numbers. That doesn't matter. What they do remember is the feeling of shock and anger at the scale of inequality.

2. Stories

Stories are very powerful at shifting opinions. Not least because it is how we remember things. How often would you share a story with your family, versus sharing a fact? 'Women poultry workers in the United States work in such terrible conditions they have to wear nappies/ diapers because they are not allowed time to go to the toilet'.

3. Phrases

Instead of inheritance tax, death tax. Foreign aid versus life-saving aid. A Financial Transaction Tax or a Robin Hood Tax? The rich or the wealthy? Words matter.

4. Simple arguments that are seemingly self-evident

"Immigration is out of control, the country can't cope". It is wrong that billionaires pay lower rates of tax than their secretaries.

5. Humor

Ridicule is a great way of belittling opponents and changing common sense. By making you laugh at the absurdity, it engages again with your emotions.

6. Images

Karina, a poultry worker in the US, is unable to hold her children's hands because

of a permanent injury sustained from many hours of repetitive work.

(Taken from: European Youth Forum Advocacy Handbook, 2022)

DECIDE

✧ Decide on your tactics ✧

In the last steps, your group has decided what you want to change, who can help you change it, and what your message to these people is. Now you have to decide how you will reach them and convey your message.

When deciding on your tactics, keep these things in mind:

✧ What would your target group find interesting and engaging? In which format will they listen to you?

✧ Do we have the skills and resources that we need for a certain tactic?

✧ Has anyone else tried this before? Did it work?

✧ What would your group enjoy doing?

It does not make sense to run a social media campaign if your target audience is not on social media, even if your group likes doing it. And it does not make sense to try to arrange a personal meeting with a high-level politician if our group does not enjoy doing this or doesn't have the capacity to organise it.

✦ Activity: Deciding on advocacy actions ✦

Discuss with the children what kind of advocacy actions they are aware of. Brainstorm together and put all ideas on a wall. This can include:

✧ Organising a public protest

✧ Meeting directly with politicians (visiting them or inviting them to you)

✧ Writing articles for newspapers, talking to journalists

✧ Organising a social media campaign

✧ Setting up an (online) petition

✧ Sharing your views in events of others

✧ Organising your own conference

✧ Setting up an information stand at a public place

Then, cluster them in the following circles. The overlap should be actions that you can consider!

✧ What can reach our target group?

✧ What do we like to do?

✧ What are we able to do?

✦ Activity: Risk analysis ✦

You might want to dive straight into your actions now, but it is useful to conduct a risk analysis first to make sure you are well prepared!

Risks can include that you are not able to get in contact with the people you wanted to contact, that it takes too long to achieve a change, or even that you put the children involved in danger because you campaign about a risky topic and there are people who might want to stop you!

Fill in the table below with the group:

*Risks and challenges	*Rating (low, medium, high)	*What can we do to Lower the risk or overcome the challenge?

YOUR FINAL ADVOCACY PLAN

Now it is time to plan your actions step by step and implement them!

You can use the following template to summarise everything you know so far, and what you plan to do.

✦ **What is the problem What needs to change?**	
✦ **Our vision**	
✦ **Our objectives**	
✦ **Our target groups**	
✦ **Our messages**	
✦ **Our tactics**	◇ **To do** ◇ **Who will do it** ◇ **Until when**
✦ **What are the risks and challenges?**	
✦ **How will we overcome them?**	
✦ **What will success look like?**	
✦ **Date for first evaluation**	

EVALUATION

If you look back at defining your objectives, you will remember that they were supposed to be SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, results-based and time-bound. All these characteristics make it possible to achieve how far the objectives have been achieved.

When planning your advocacy strategy, you should have already set a date for (a first) evaluation. This could be one month later, or six months later, depending on what your actions are. This will help you to not just let your campaign "trickle out", but to check how far you have come, and also what you might need to adjust if your campaign still continues, or how you want to follow it up.

✦ Activity: Objectives barometer ✦

Prepare a barometer on the floor with masking tape and put signs on each side, from "totally achieved" to "not achieved at all".

Ask the group to stand around you and read out the first objective of your strategy. You can also display it on a poster. Then ask everyone to place themselves on the barometer depending on how far they feel the objective has been achieved.

Once everyone has taken a position, ask some people to share their views.

✦ Activity: Speed dating ✦

Play some music and ask the children to dance or walk around the room. Stop the music after one minute and shout a number. They should get together in groups of this many people. Then ask them one of the questions below. After 2-3 minutes, start playing music again for one minute before making new groups.

✦ Questions:

◇ What did you enjoy most during the advocacy campaign?

◇ What do you think did not go well?

◇ What can we improve next time?

◇ Can you describe what we achieved in one sentence?

◇ What did you learn for yourself from the campaign?

◇ What do you think others have learned from you?

◇ What should we do next?
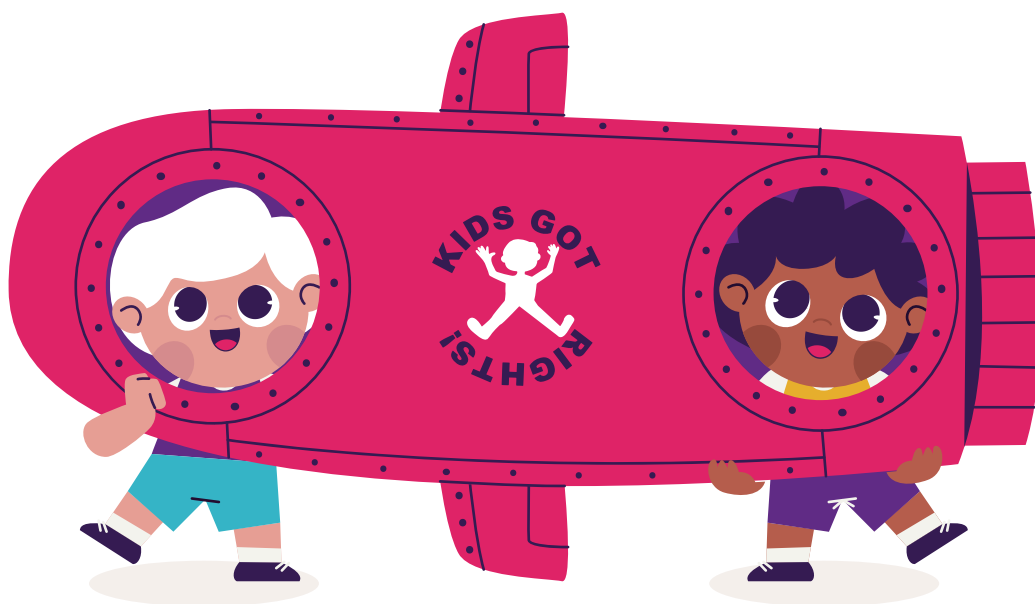
REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

In this section there is a list of publications that have helped to create this **handbook**

✦ Children's Rights Education Toolkit

IFM-SEI, Kallio, N. (2022). Toolkit for Children's Rights Education

✦ Child Participation Handbook

IFM-SEI, Sudbrock, C., Marsh, F. & Diez Villagrasa, E. (Eds.). (2015). Child Participation Handbook: Partnerships for participation

✦ The Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNICEF . The Convention on the Rights of the Child: The child-friendly version

✦ Ladder of Children's Participation

Ladder of Children's Participation [online]

✦ Advocacy Handbook

Dupouey, V. & Pool of Experts of the European Youth Forum (2022). European Youth Forum Advocacy Handbook

✦ OPIC Ratification Status

Child Rights Connect. Ratification Status of Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure (OPIC)

✦ Rainbow resources

IFM-SEI, Hailsworth, A., Lehner, A. & Sudbrock, C. (Eds.). (2014). Rainbow resources: Compasito Companion on Sexuality and Gender. (2nd ed.)

✦ Ratification Toolkit (OPIC resources)

Child Rights Connect (2020). Ratification Toolkit: Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure (OPIC)