



NURTURING CARE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Advocacyⁱ

Advocacy means telling people why ECD is important and persuading them of the need for change. It needs to go on constantly, no matter where you are in the programme cycle. Advocacy not only changes the minds of the public and decision-makers, but also helps unite the stakeholders working for ECD.

In 2015, Research for Development (R4D) reviewed 21 national and global campaigns to find out what works. It collected the results in a report: [What can the early childhood field learn from leading advocacy initiatives?](#)ⁱⁱ Here are some of the most useful lessons.

Link your advocacy to political commitments, like the SDGs

In the past decade, the science around early childhood development has converged with political commitment to it. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been a big incentive for governments and partners to increase investment.

Tailor your message to where you are

Try to link your advocacy to what other organizations are saying – supporting national shifts in policy, for example. This gives other people reasons to support and include you. Carefully package the evidence, focusing on early childhood development as a human issue.

Help local organizations run campaigns

No national or international advocacy group can succeed without local buy-in and support, so your approach cannot only be top-down. Give local organizations financial and technical support for their own advocacy campaigns. And help them with implementation, so that there are models for larger-scale action.

Have a single place to share ECD information

Set up a knowledge-sharing platform, such as a virtual SharePoint or a newsletter. Make sure it contains peer-reviewed and easily digestible evidence. Policy briefs on research are a good source for this. This will help partners agree on critical issues, and allow policy-makers and programme managers know what needs to be done.

Use case studies to convince decision-makers

Case studies, even from other countries, can demonstrate how successful local programmes can be scaled up to work across a whole country. Pair them with evidence about the economic benefits of investing in ECD. This will convince policy-makers and donors their investments will yield results.

Set up local communities of practice, and connect to global ones

A community of practice is a place – real or online – where people who care about something can interact with, learn from and support each other. It also allows them to connect to experts in the field.

Learn from colleagues in places that have made progress

Visit these places – in your country and beyond. This is especially useful for policy- and decision-makers to see how governance, planning and implementation can be done well.

Find allies to champion the issue, and teach them how

Find allies in government, civil society, academia and elsewhere, and encourage them to advocate for ECD. Help them to use a variety of approaches – including editorials, press releases, letters and calls to influential people – and to select the right issues for the audience.

Agree on the local ECD interventions you are asking for

It is important for the ECD community to agree on the actions they are calling for. Base this on evidence and local knowledge.

Keep going

You need to constantly engage with the public and the media, which means having the right team of people – specialists in the subject and in communications.

View the nurturing care advocacy toolkit

<https://nurturing-care.org/advocacy-toolkit>

ⁱ Extract from the Nurturing Care Framework Handbook (in preparation).

ⁱⁱ What can the early childhood field learn from leading advocacy initiatives? Washington: Results for Development; 2015 (r4d.org/resources/can-early-childhood-field-learn-leading-advocacy-initiatives/, accessed 1 August 2020).