



PRIMER 1

RELATIONAL ADVOCACY

SUMMARY:

In the ministry of advocacy, people are our priority. Use this guide to explore the core principles behind volunteer advocacy and discover how you can develop a sincere and impactful relationship with your members of Congress over time.



WHY IT MATTERS

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

To achieve this bold vision statement, World Vision advocates with governments around the world, including the U.S. government, to scale our reach and create lasting change for children in need.

In this ministry of advocacy, people remain our priority: the children around the world impacted by U.S. policy, the *leaders* who create those policies, and *you*—our community of advocates. Our focus on people originates from four foundational principles of advocacy:



PRINCIPLE 1

Poverty has spiritual roots that include broken relationships between the powerful and the powerless.

PRINCIPLE 2

Our democracy is a gift from God to steward in the restoration of these broken relationships.

PRINCIPLE 3

God calls us to hold government leaders accountable, while also praying for them, honoring their position, and engaging them respectfully, even if we disagree with some of their perspectives.

PRINCIPLE 4

God equips those He calls and acts in partnership with us to move the hearts of those in power.

Relational engagement with our leaders uplifts the stories of the oppressed, recognizes the burdens of power, and sustains our own souls for the long-term investment advocacy requires. It is not only an effective way to change policy—it also keeps us faithful to Christ's concern for each of us involved in the process.



HOW IT WORKS

Relational advocacy approaches politicians as partners—not targets—recognizing they are created in God’s image with a desire to do good in their public service. Sometimes this means challenging them and holding them accountable; often it means encouraging them—literally, giving them courage to make compassionate decisions on behalf of people experiencing poverty. We do this most effectively by developing sincere relationships with them and their staff over time.

It’s much easier than you might think: Approximately two face-to-face meetings each year, combined with timely personal emails and phone calls, can create a relationship where the office knows you by name, responds to your requests eagerly, and even asks you for help and prayer. You don’t need to understand the nuances of foreign policy to make a difference.

Simply share your heart for people in need and help your representatives take supportive actions—the same way you support or encourage a friend—and you’ll make a meaningful difference in the lives of children around the world.



RELATIONAL ADVOCACY IS:

- » **Gift driven.** Be who you are, and advocate from your strengths. No professional lobbyists needed.
- » **Spirit filled.** Advocate from a place of spiritual health so you can be salt and light (Matthew 5:13–16). Bless, pray for, give courage to, and practically care for your leaders.
- » **Strategic.** Focus on what your representative can realistically do that will make the most impact and how you can best support that response.
- » **People centered.** Policies and facts matter, but the stories of the communities we care about are the most influential tool we have.
- » **Long term.** No quick fixes in Congress—developing champions takes time.

BUILD YOUR SKILLS

To start building a relationship with your members of Congress, learn more about them. Write down what you learn, using these helpful steps.

- 1 Identify your representatives.** We each have three federal legislators who represent us—two U.S. senators and one House representative. Use our handy tool at worldvisionadvocacy.org/congressinfo/ to find out who they are, see committee assignments, and note where their district offices are located.
- 2 Learn more about who they are.** Each member of Congress has their own website where they share their biography, issues they care about, press statements, and their contact information. You can also search online for more of their history and local involvement.
- 3 See if they have supported relevant legislation.** On [the Hub](#), we track the status of priority legislation for our work. By clicking the bill numbers, you can see whether your members of Congress have cosponsored that piece of legislation. When there are votes on the bills, we'll also include a link to the voting record, where you can check whether they voted in support of or against a certain bill.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

- » Personal connections: Did you go to the same college? Live in the same town? Have a similar life experience?
- » What challenges have they faced in life? What drives their service?
- » What issues do they identify as their top priorities?
- » What committees do they serve on? This may direct what type of legislation in which they are interested.
- » Have they received any negative local press? What challenges might they face in their district or state?
- » Have they made public statements about foreign assistance or global poverty?

IDEAS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS OVER TIME:



Send them a small gift (under \$10 keeps you within legal limits) or a handwritten card.



Email your staff contacts to say hello and ask how they are doing.



Drop by their district office—you don't need an appointment to stop in! Take coffee, treats, drawings from your children, or simply thank them for their hard work.