

POLICY STATEMENT ON ADVOCACY

Date of Implementation: January 2017

Date of Review: January 2018

INTRODUCTION:

This policy statement on advocacy of Caritas Sri Lanka outlines its commitment to advocacy and its embedded, deep rooted apostolic mission of outreach to the marginalized and the vulnerable in the Sri Lankan society towards a positive social change.

Caritas Sri Lanka will use advocacy as tool in advancing our mission to prevent and reduce vulnerability and to achieve our humanitarian goals.

AIM:

This policy, as a tool will **AIM** in advancing the concern of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka for Justice, Peace and Human Development, mandated by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka (CBCSL) towards holistic and sustainable development without distinction of caste, creed or ethnic distinction.

DEFINITION:

“Caritas Sri Lanka will perceive advocacy as an important apostolic process that runs through the veins of the organization which mandates everyone at Caritas Sri Lanka to be involved in changing the policies, practices, ideas and values that will assure equality, tolerance, inclusion and human rights in Sri Lankan society. “

OBJECTIVES:

The core **OBJECTIVES** which Caritas Sri Lanka seeks to achieve in undertaking advocacy include:

- To reach out to the marginalized and vulnerable to gain for them better socio and economic status
- Influencing public policy change for the betterment of people in various sectors, especially the poor and vulnerable
- To promote a society with gender equality
- To empower the less privileged including the people who are at risk of exclusion
- To voice for the voiceless who have particular difficulties in making their views known or expressed
- To achieve greater visibility and understanding of Caritas Sri Lanka humanitarian core values and activities among the decision makers and opinion leaders
- To increase public support for the humanitarian mission of Caritas Sri Lanka
- To achieving a more tolerant society through espousing & defending humanitarian policies & position
- To impart knowledge and values of education particularly among the younger generation
- To harmonize the ethnic communities divided by caste, creed and ethnicity
- To strengthen the community involvement and spirit to achieve common goals of the community
- To deploy Conflict Resolution Processes, assist the victims to minimize damage and to help them to gain their rights and dignity
- To mobilize Caritas Sri Lanka to represent the true interest of people, especially the poor and the marginalized

THE PRINCIPLES OF ADVOCACY OF CARITAS SRI LANKA

Clarity of Purpose

Caritas Sri Lanka will clearly articulate the definition, aim and objectives of this advocacy policy and will demonstrate how it meets the principles contained in this policy. The process will be transparent to anyone especially to those whom we serve, our communities, service providers, funding partners.

Empowerment

Caritas Sri Lanka will utilize advocacy as a diplomatic tool in promoting self-advocacy by those whom we serve – families and communities especially among the poor and marginalized supported by our network of Diocesan Centers. Such empowerment will include necessary training & capacity building to develop their skill and experience to effectively voice their grievances towards ensuring their economic and social rights in a sustainable manner.

Putting People First

This advocacy policy will ensure that the wishes and interests of the communities that Caritas Sri Lanka advocates for, is represented thorough its activities and projects. Our advocacy will be non-judgmental and respectful of peoples' needs, views and experiences.

Equal Opportunity

This advocacy policy will have a special emphasis on the aspects of being proactive in tackling all forms of inequality, discrimination and social exclusion of any activities or projects of Caritas Sri Lanka.

Accessibility

Advocacy process of Caritas Sri Lanka will be available and open to all those whom we serve. However advocacy will draw on organizational knowledge, experience and expertise utilizing rigorous research methodologies with verifiable data and processes.

Accountability

The advocacy policy of Caritas Sri Lanka will have in place systems for the effective monitoring and evaluation of its work. This policy will ensure the accountability of Caritas Sri Lanka advocacy initiatives to all stakeholders including communities, donors and the relevant government authorities. Additionally, Caritas Sri Lanka will ensure the availability of a written complaint handling mechanism for stakeholder input & feedback.

Partnership

Caritas Sri Lanka advocacy initiatives will consider partnerships at all times to ensure maximum impact. Networking and coalition-led initiatives will be pursued with like-minded organizations including other humanitarian organizations and civil society members. In working in coalitions, Caritas Sri Lanka will not in any way compromise its identity as the social arm of the Catholic Church, mission and objectives under any circumstances.

Non-violence

All Caritas Sri Lanka advocacy initiatives undertaken together with all stakeholders, will be based on non-violent, non-confrontational & peaceful means, and will seek not to disrupt normalcy in any given situation, area or locality. Those involved in public advocacy activities will respect the rule of law, human dignity and the protection of life and property.

Confidentiality

Information or any relevant data which are sensitive by nature and application must be regarded with utmost care using the best discretion of Caritas Sri Lanka

according to the Gospel Values. The trust that any individual has for Caritas Sri Lanka should not be compromised or tainted.

Caritas Sri Lanka will ensure the availability of a written complaint handling mechanism to make complaints or give feedback about the advocacy mechanism or any individual advocates.

METHODS OF ADVOCACY

Caritas Sri Lanka will adopt (but not limited to) the following methods of advocacy:

- Policy, Research, Opinion and Position Papers for lobbying and influencing decision makers;
- Non-violent & peaceful Public campaigns – walks, marches, signature campaigns, symbolic activities in coalitions etc.;
- Direct representation to high level authorities and decision makers;
- Joint Civil Society Action;
- Media campaigns including use of print, electronic and social media, performing arts and culture;
- International lobbying through Caritas Internationalis and CI Network of Partners

THE SCOPE OF THE POLICY ON ADVOCACY

As a humanitarian organization, Caritas Sri Lanka will understand its boundaries and limitations of the adopted advocacy policy. At all times, Caritas Sri Lanka will seek to avoid conflicts in its advocacy initiatives.

This advocacy policy will ensure security and well-being of society and will cooperate with the relevant government authorities in meeting the humanitarian objectives outlined by Caritas Sri Lanka.

The level and the stance of any advocacy initiative undertaken should be approved by the Board of Management of Caritas Sri Lanka with a clear understanding of the potential consequences of same to the Organization.

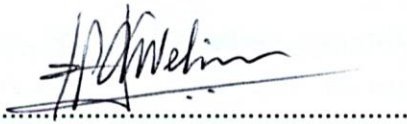
The level of advocacy regarding a specific project or event should be clearly outlined according to this policy document, prior to framing the concept paper.

The structure of the level of advocacy should be defined prior to an event or project in consultation with the Caritas Board of Management especially in allocating duties and responsibilities.

The level of advocacy and lobbying with any other organization should be outlined and defined clearly prior to the implementation of any event or project, in consultation with the Caritas Board of Management. Prior approval on any collaboration should be sought from the Caritas Board of Management.

Other Caritas Sri Lanka Policies related to its mandate, such as the Communications Policy will inform the relevant actions of advocacy undertaken by the organization.

Approved.



Rev. Fr. Shanthi Kumar Weliwita
National Director
Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC



+Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Vianney Fernando
Chairman
Caritas Sri Lanka - SEDEC

Date: November 30, 2016