



VOLUNTEER
ADVOCATE
HANDBOOK

AN ADVOCATE'S PRAYER



I praise You, God, the Father of all creation.
You are justice and you created me to
reflect who You are to the world.

I praise You, Christ, the Redeemer of creation.
You restore justice and show me its path.

I praise you, Holy Spirit, the great Advocate of all created things.
You empower me for the work of justice and lead me on the journey.

I confess my reluctance to turn my eyes toward those suffering in our world.
I confess my withdrawal from engaging or praying for our nation's leaders.
I confess my reliance on my own strength, to the neglect of my soul.
God of mercy, forgive me.

I pray for life in all its fullness
for children experiencing poverty, who will inherit Your kingdom;
for our nation's leaders, who You have set in authority;
and for our community of advocates, who You have called to this ministry.
God of justice, hear my prayer.

Reveal Yourself, Father, Redeemer, Advocate.
Protect us, strengthen us, guide us, and renew us.
Make Your justice known in and through us.
God of love, be glorified.

Amen.

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WELCOME TO THE WORLD VISION VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE COMMUNITY

Thank you for joining our team! We're compelled by the love of Christ to speak up on behalf of people who are poor and oppressed. We don't believe you're here by accident. We trust God has called you to partner with us and has equipped you uniquely for this work.

You're joining a select group of committed, passionate Volunteer Advocates, backed by the force of the World Vision Online Advocate Network—57,000 voices strong, present in every state and all 435 congressional districts. These online advocates are actively calling, emailing, and influencing their members of Congress on social media to help end extreme poverty. In concert with these online voices, **Volunteer Advocates make an even greater impact through faith-rooted, relational advocacy with our nation's leaders.**

Most of us begin this journey with little advocacy experience and, if we're honest, a little fear. But we share a common story: God gives us courage to step out in faith and find Him on the path of justice. You may not know how to develop relationships with your members of Congress just yet—but you'll learn alongside others in this community, and you may be surprised at how simple it can be.

This handbook will help orient you to World Vision's mission and why faith-rooted, relational advocacy is a vital and valuable way to create sustainable change for children in poverty around the world.

May you feel welcomed, supported, and commissioned for the ministry of advocacy as you explore your new Volunteer Advocate resources. We look forward to getting to know you as we work together to help end extreme poverty—for good.



GETTING STARTED

Focus on these three simple steps to get started with your advocacy:

1 > Join a First Steps call.

On this welcome call, you'll meet your go-to resource for legislative information: your Grassroots Organizer! You may even be joined by other Volunteer Advocates who are starting their journey, too. World Vision staff will walk you through the typical process for meeting with your members of Congress, the resources we provide, and how to schedule your first congressional meeting. If you haven't heard from your Grassroots Organizer yet, introduce yourself at advocate@worldvision.org.

2 > Get oriented.

Whether you're a beginner, an expert, or anything in between, we've created an orientation series on the federal legislative process, foreign assistance, and how the U.S. government can help end poverty. Check it out at worldvisionadvocacy.org/hub/orientation.

THE HUB—your exclusive Volunteer Advocate website—is where you'll find our current advocacy priorities, training resources, and ways to connect with other advocates. After you familiarize yourself with these tools, stay up to date on current advocacy opportunities by reading the monthly email that will arrive in your inbox at the beginning of each month. Bookmark the site in your browser for easy access: worldvisionadvocacy.org/hub.

3 > Schedule your first meeting.

Building relationships with members of Congress is at the core of being a Volunteer Advocate. We believe that through relationship building, we can encourage—and challenge, when necessary—our representatives to make compassionate decisions on behalf of people experiencing poverty. The best way to start a relationship is to meet in-person with their office. We'll help coach you on what to say and how to get on their calendar!

Research by the Congressional Management Foundation shows that in-person visits from constituents (that means you!) have more influence on lawmakers' decisions than any other type of advocacy.

AS A VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE, you can adjust your advocacy style to fit your gifts and schedule. For greatest impact, we recommend meeting with your representatives or their staff twice each year. We also suggest activities and training opportunities to increase your advocacy effectiveness, including:

- > Writing a letter to the editor
- > Involving others
- > Attending a town hall
- > Timely relationship-building activities

Access the current calendar and suggested monthly activities at worldvisionadvocacy.org/hub.





Getting connected

You're not in this alone. Just like Moses, God calls us to engage our leaders in partnership with Him and with others. As a Volunteer Advocate, you're joining an active, supportive community of Christ-followers. We hope you'll engage with us by praying for, learning from, and encouraging others in the advocacy journey!

1 > Connect with your mentor.

When you joined the Volunteer Advocate Community, you were introduced to an experienced Volunteer Advocate as your mentor. We encourage you to ask them any questions you have about the experience. You can even invite your mentor to join your first meeting for some additional support!

2 > Pray with us.

Our Volunteer Advocate Prayer Team meets monthly and wants to pray for you, your family,

your advocacy, and your members of Congress. You can request prayer and/or join the Prayer Team any time by emailing advocate@worldvision.org.

3 > Join our Facebook Group, "World Vision Volunteer Advocates."

This is where we post legislative and community updates—it's the easiest way to stay in the know! It's also an open space to share your challenges, questions, or encouragement with the community. Need help joining? Contact advocate@worldvision.org.

Getting in touch

Looking for the answer to a specific question? Want to reach out? Our World Vision Advocacy staff are happy to help. You can get in touch with us at advocate@worldvision.org, or find our individual emails on the Hub. We look forward to getting to know you and partnering with you in this ministry!

DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to the Volunteer Advocate Community, World Vision has an online advocate network. Subscribe to our weekly blog updates or monthly newsletter at worldvisionadvocacy.org/join-us. You'll receive urgent action alerts and stories that help keep your advocacy fresh.





OUR ADVOCACY APPROACH

Why we advocate

Advocacy is an essential element of World Vision's work, along with long-term community development and emergency response. As we work alongside communities and governments to build a better world for children, we also empower them to evaluate the policies, systems, practices, and attitudes that drive poverty, ensuring that transformation is sustainable and scalable.

How we do it

Because we see advocacy as a ministry, we approach government leaders as our partners. We develop strategic relationships with elected officials, regardless of political party, on issues that affect vulnerable children. We often act together with other like-minded organizations to maximize our impact. And we highlight the stories from the communities we serve, allowing people in poverty to speak for themselves.



The most beautiful part: Our advocacy here is part of World Vision's work globally. Through World Vision's local presence around the world, we also empower kids and communities to speak up in their own countries for their rights and needs. We give them the tools they need to advocate with their leaders and governments—for themselves and future generations.

Our vision for advocacy

We look forward to a world where every child experiences Jesus' offer of life in all its fullness. Where kids are protected, cared for, and given the opportunities to become all God created them to be. Where they grow strong in communities free of need and full of promise. Where families are valued, creation is preserved, and the most vulnerable live in security and confidence. Where they become responsible citizens of well-led nations. Where peace and justice reign and all have the right to contribute.

*We don't just wait for this world.
We advocate for it.*





Where we focus our efforts

We ask U.S. leaders to help create solutions to end extreme global poverty, so that every child can experience the fullness of life that God intends. These solutions aren't always simple. We'll help you determine which issues are most strategic and timely, so that our collective voice can have the greatest impact.

In alignment with World Vision's development work, we advocate for children everywhere to experience life, hope, and a future.

Life

Every person needs, and deserves, access to clean water and essential healthcare. Despite progress in the last 30 years, there is still a massive gap in basic healthcare in poor, rural communities. Every day, over 14,200 children under the age of 5 die from preventable and treatable causes. We advocate for greater U.S.

investment in interventions and programs that save lives and promote a child's well-being—like healthy pregnancies, safe deliveries, proper nutrition, and access to clean water.

Hope

When we're afraid, in danger, feeling lost, or at the end of our rope, we all need a glimmer of hope. Without it, a better future seems out of reach. Half of the world's children experience some form of violence every year. War, political instability, drought, and natural disasters upend lives—often hitting vulnerable kids the hardest. It is estimated that a record 235 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2021, a near 40 percent increase from 2020. We advocate, urging the U.S. government to holistically fight violence against children and pass legislation that addresses the root causes of gender-based violence, conflict, and fragility. Working together, children can live free from fear and protected from harm.

Future

If we're healthy and hopeful but lack economic opportunity and education, making a decent living is nearly impossible. Of the 711 million people who live in extreme poverty, most are smallholder farmers whose livelihoods are vulnerable to economic uncertainties and extreme weather. Globally, 129 million girls ages 6 to 17 are out of school because of barriers such as child marriage, violence and harassment, and poverty. We advocate for strong U.S. leadership in protecting livelihoods and increasing access to education. World Vision's audacious goal is to help end extreme poverty—we believe this is possible through sustained funding for programs that save lives and give children a better chance at a hope-filled future.

➤ For information about the Volunteer Advocate Community's current advocacy goals, visit worldvisionadvocacy.org/hub/issues.

How we've made an impact

For decades, World Vision has worked to preserve, improve, and influence U.S. foreign assistance policies and programs to positively affect millions of lives around the world. Advocates like you have helped pass important legislation, including:

- The Global Child Thrive Act
- The Global Fragility Act
- The Ending Violence Against Children Resolution
- The READ Act
- The Global Food Security Act
- The Girls Count Act
- The Water for the World Act
- The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act

To learn more about advocates' successes and how this legislation helps improve kids' lives, check out worldvisionadvocacy.org/impact.



To learn more about our approach to faith-rooted, relational advocacy, check out our primers at worldvisionadvocacy.org/hub/resources.



FAITH-ROOTED, RELATIONAL ADVOCACY

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

We strongly believe that faith-rooted, relational advocacy is the most effective approach to influencing U.S. policy.

For Volunteer Advocates, advocacy is a *ministry*—it is what sets you apart. In all your efforts, we know that you seek to bring God’s renewal into a political environment that is often demanding. You can effect transformative change when you build genuine relationships with members of Congress and their staff:

- You pray for them—and sometimes *with* them, too.
- You speak truth and challenge them when necessary.
- You bless them with care, prayer, and local support.
- You empower them to help create lasting solutions to end extreme poverty.

And through it all, World Vision, you, members of Congress, and communities around the world invite God’s power and trust in His presence to use these relationships to transform lives—both around the world and here at home.

The role of the Volunteer Advocate

As a Volunteer Advocate, you’ll connect directly with your members of Congress and their staff through face-to-face meetings. For greatest impact, we recommend meeting with your representatives twice each year. We’ll also provide other opportunities throughout the year so that, over time, you can build a genuine relationship where the office knows you by name, responds to your requests eagerly, and even asks you for help and prayer.

“At first, I put a lot of pressure on myself to convince my representatives to ‘do something.’ But God totally changed my heart and perspective ... I could show up to the meetings without an agenda to promote but instead with a genuine desire to reflect God’s love and compassion.”

—Anna K., Volunteer Advocate, Arizona



THE POWER OF FAITH-ROOTED ADVOCACY

Advocates in North Carolina shared their passion for justice by tapping into the power of symbols. They met with a staffer from their congresswoman’s local office to discuss U.S. foreign assistance. World Vision supported them with talking points, meeting goals, and handouts, but the advocates drove the message home with some creative gifts: freshly baked bread and a planter of wheatgrass, along with a quote from Nobel Peace Prize winner Norman Borlaug: *“If you desire peace, cultivate justice, but at the same time cultivate the fields to produce more bread; otherwise there will be no peace.”*

These symbols made global hunger a more tangible reality for the congressional aide, exemplifying the power of faith-rooted advocacy. Statistics and talking points are important, but God also moves our hearts through images and symbols. If you approach your advocacy in prayer, God may show you creative ways to move the hearts of your leaders.



SPONSOR A CHILD

If you don't already, we invite you to prayerfully consider sponsoring a child at worldvisionadvocacy.org/sponsor. This meaningful relationship will put a face to the issues for which you advocate. And you'll have concrete, personal stories to share with your representatives.

ABOUT WORLD VISION

Understanding how World Vision works to reduce global poverty will help you prepare for your face-to-face meetings with your representatives.

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people. We serve all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

We serve people in poverty through a multi-faceted approach:

- › Transformational development that is community-based and sustainable, focusing especially on the needs of children
- › Emergency relief that assists people afflicted by conflict or disaster
- › Promotion of justice that seeks to change structures that foster poverty in communities

FAST FACTS



- › One of the largest Christian humanitarian organizations in the world, working in nearly 100 countries
- › The largest implementing partner of the World Food Programme and the 6th largest NGO implementing partner of the U.S. Agency for International Development
- › Public grants make up 35 percent of World Vision's annual revenue and help us reach more children with life-saving support in the name of Christ
- › Over 70 years of experience transforming lives in partnership with communities
- › Over 1,400 program areas around the world—including in the U.S.
- › Nearly 35,000 staff worldwide, with 95 percent working in their home regions

ADVICE FOR THE JOURNEY

Many ancient saints—Moses, Esther, Daniel—have gone before us in the pursuit of justice. They remained faithful to God's calling despite the risks and uncertainties. Human and fearful just like us, they showed up anyway, standing before kings and leaders. Protecting the vulnerable. Trusting in God's promises. And God did remarkable things through these ordinary people.

Having doubts about the role you can play through advocacy? Here are some thoughts frequently expressed by new advocates and some advice in response:

- › **"I'm intimidated by the process."** Your member of Congress doesn't expect you to be an expert. Plus, we're here to support, encourage, and coach you every step of the way. You don't need to have all the answers. Just share your heart and the stories of people you care about, and we'll help you engage at the right times to make the biggest influence.
- › **"I'm too busy."** The best part about being a Volunteer Advocate is that you'll have flexibility to advocate when it works for your schedule. World Vision staff are also here to provide guidance and resources to make it as easy as possible.
- › **"Caring for the poor is the church's responsibility, not the government's."** Did you know that if U.S. foreign assistance were cut today, every single church in America would have to raise an additional \$84,000 each year to make up for the gap? Part of our responsibility as the church is to reduce the need for charity by making sure the systems that govern us protect the well-being of all.
- › **"My representative belongs to a different political party than I do."** Nearly 90% of Congress publicly claims faith in Christ. This means that even if you disagree with their political views, you can find common ground and encourage them to use their power for good.
- › **"I can't go to D.C. to meet with them."** You don't need to go to Capitol Hill to connect with your member of Congress. They have offices throughout your state and congressional district, with staff eager to meet with you—in-person, virtually, or even over the phone! And the members themselves have "district work periods" where they travel home specifically to meet with constituents like you.





Sung-Ae L. from Georgia, third from left (quoted below)

Rev. Paul C. from Georgia, left (quoted below)

Mike L. from Maryland, left (quoted below)

Advice from Advocates

Don't just take it from us! We asked current Volunteer Advocates what advice they had for new advocates, and here's what they had to say:

"I was in high school when I joined the Community—and I was terrified! But the good thing is that it doesn't depend on how knowledgeable or qualified you are. It is God's power working through you that makes the real difference. Trust him to work through you and he will accomplish more than you can imagine! Lean into the AMAZING community of volunteer advocates who are so ready to support and pour into you."

—Isabel M. from Ohio

"The best thing about being part of the Volunteer Advocate Community is that the staff and other Volunteer Advocates are there for you, to walk through each step with you, to train and equip you, and to encourage you along the way. We are a team and we work together as a team so no one is left alone. Welcome!"

—Sung-Ae L. from Georgia

"My biggest advice is to collaborate with someone else or a fellow advocate. It's very helpful to review the talking points prior to the meeting and to back each other up during the meeting—and the congressional office always seems to appreciate multiple perspectives."

—Mike L. from Maryland

"Be patient with yourself as you strive to do your best as a Volunteer Advocate! Your own words will certainly be smoother as you gain experience. Remember that when God calls us to serve, He equips us with the talents and resources we need to do His will. So, lean on the wonderful World Vision resources, staff, and this community ... and always, at every step, ask the Lord to guide you! May the glory be His and may you will grow in this experience."

—Carol K. from Massachusetts

"It's incredible that we live in a country where someone like you and I can have access to some of the most powerful people on the globe, where we can help facilitate world change for the betterment of God's people. In what seems like such a daunting task, impacting the world for God's good can seem easy with the support of this community."

—Rev. Paul C. from Georgia

"I feel God's hand in the process and realize He just needs me to show up and be willing."

—Cheryl R. from Pennsylvania

As you embark on this journey, more than anything else we want you to know and believe that **you can do this**. God has led you to this opportunity, and we'll support you all along the way.

You matter to members of Congress—so don't be afraid to let them know what matters to you.

OUR COMMUNITY PLEDGE

Keep this pledge somewhere visible to remind yourself of your commitment to this ministry—and of God's promises to you.

I commit to keep my eyes and heart open to the suffering in our world and to respond with compassion rather than cynicism, denial, or defeat.

I affirm that God's redemptive work in the world includes the restoration of broken relationships between the powerful and powerless, and the systems that govern us all.

I accept God's call to advocate for the vulnerable and oppressed, and I will use my influence in this democracy to work for a world where all are free from poverty and invited to experience fullness of life.

I believe God has gifted me uniquely for the work of advocacy, and pledge to discover and use those gifts for the purposes of justice.

I will respect my members of Congress as partners, not as targets. I acknowledge they are made in the image of God, appointed by Him for public service—even if I disagree with their perspectives. I will engage them with kindness, courage, and respect.

I will amplify the voices of the poor and lead with their stories. I will not speak for them.

I pledge to pray before I act, and with humble expectation, I will look for God to transform the hearts of my elected officials, as well as my own.

I will contribute to the Volunteer Advocate Community. I will share my experiences of success and challenge, seek to learn from others, and invite help when needed.

I commit to care for my own well-being and spiritual health, remembering that apart from Christ I can do nothing (John 15:5).

I will invite others to walk this journey with me—to pray for me, to add their voices, and to give me courage and guidance.

I will persevere when faced with setbacks, keeping my faith in things not yet seen. I will celebrate and share our community's victories, however small, so others within and outside the body of Christ may witness God's redemptive work in our world, and be drawn to join His kingdom.

Signature

Our vision for every child, life in all its fullness. Our prayer for every heart, the will to make it so.
—World Vision's vision statement

... The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

—Galatians 5:6 (NIV)



 @worldvisionusa
 World Vision Volunteer Advocates
 advocate@worldvision.org

World Vision
P.O. Box 9716
Federal Way, WA 98063

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