

Exploring education advocacy in challenging contexts of conflict and closing civic space

Discussion guide for use with video

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Introduction:

This discussion guide accompanies a video developed by a group of Education Out Loud grantees who took part in an action research project in 2023 on 'Exploring education advocacy in challenging contexts of conflict and closing civic space'. Implemented by Oxfam Denmark and financed by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), **Education Out Loud** supports civil society to become more active and influential in shaping education policy to better meet the needs of communities, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized.

The project involved a total of 19 EOL grantees in Africa, Asia - Pacific, and Latin America and Caribbean regions. This video aims to share the key learning from the process with other advocacy practitioners working in similar contexts. It is 23 minutes long.

The video can be viewed online subtitled in each of the following languages:

English: <https://youtu.be/ladeEVXMpGU>

Spanish: <https://youtu.be/EMqYof90Z1k>

French: https://youtu.be/Sp_WRegYAAE

Portuguese: <https://youtu.be/pEixKde1Y-o>

The video and this discussion guide were produced by the Institute of Development Studies with the financial support of Education Out Loud. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the Institute of Development Studies and do not necessarily reflect the views of funding partners Oxfam Denmark and GPE.

Objectives of this discussion guide:

Broadly speaking, the guide is intended to support EOL grantees in using the video effectively to share learning from the action research process with others.

More specifically, it aims to:

- Maximise the use of the video - among other EOL grantees, members of National Education Committees and others involved in advocacy on education and other services in challenging contexts
- Contribute to strengthening strategy development and implementation by grantees and NEC members, though stimulating them to reflect and analyse the challenges their context poses for their advocacy efforts, leading to more effective, safe advocacy practices.

The guide is a tool for EOL GMU and RMU staff and OC1 grantees to use in settings such as:

- a gathering of NEC members convened by the NEC Secretariat
- a workshop or session at a regional event, involving EOL grantees from countries that are challenging contexts for advocacy

The guide offers advice for facilitating a session of around 90 minutes consisting of a group viewing of the video followed by facilitated discussion around a series of questions grouped in three parts. But you are free to pick and choose from the guide's various suggestions, adapting it to the time available and to the needs and

interests of the specific audience. Ideally a session would include between 8-20 participants, although you can accommodate much higher numbers if you divide them into breakout groups for discussion and get individuals within the groups to share key insights with the plenary group after each topic has been discussed.

Part 1 – Context (around 15-30 minutes, depending on numbers of participants):

Before the session, consider: How similar are the contexts in which your participants work? Do they work in countries that share similar difficulties of fragile governance, violent conflict, weak relationships between citizens and government, etc, or is the nature of the difficulties quite different from country to country? Are there sub-national differences within the country/any of the countries represented in the group?

If there are similarities between the contexts in which all participants work, you can work with the whole group in plenary (or in breakout groups if your numbers are too large) posing as warm-up questions:

- What are the challenges that your context poses for your advocacy work?
- Share ways you have dealt with these challenges in the past, and what you learnt from using these tactics and approaches.

If participants come from range of quite different contexts, divide participants into breakout groups (ideally of 4-8 participants). Invite each group to identify 3 similarities and 3 differences between the contexts represented in the group and to briefly write these down on a flipchart, for sharing afterwards with the plenary group. These should be similarities and differences that are relevant to doing education advocacy in these contexts.

Part 2 - The video's key messages (around 25-40 minutes, depending on numbers)

Either in plenary or in breakout groups if your total numbers are large, invite participants to react to the key messages, using as prompt questions:

- Which of these messages seems most relevant to you in your context?
- Did you hear in these messages any new suggestions or insights as to strategies and ways of working?
- All of us here probably do some of each of these 5 things the messages talk about. Are our organisations focusing on the right things? Given what we know about how our context is evolving, is the way we've done things until now going to be the best way to do things in future?

Part 3 - Survival strategies (around 10-20 minutes depending on numbers)

Explain to your participants that the ten 'survival strategies' listed at the end of the video emerged from a brainstorm among EOL grantees. Ask your participants:

- Would you add any survival strategies to the ten they identified? Which other ways do you use to keep yourself and your organization safe? Are some of these survival strategies more relevant in some of your contexts than others?
- There are trade-offs between some of these strategies. For example:
 - 'Stand your ground – be convincing' might point in a different direction from 'Self-censorship'
 - 'Proactive and maximum transparency' might be at odds with 'Use other organizations and actors as your protective umbrella'
 - 'Communicate a neutral position' might conflict with 'Be evidence-based'.
- So how should you and your organization navigate through these trade-offs – how should you decide whether to do X or Y?

Wrapping up (around 10-15 minutes depending on numbers)

State (or show again) the question at start of video:

"If your job is convincing authorities to deliver quality education to all your country's children and young people, yet your government is precarious, or doesn't like criticism, or is involved in violent conflict, or has clamped down on civil society advocacy - then how do you do your job effectively?"

Invite participants to contribute to a round of closing comments by stating what each of them has got out of this session in relation to this question.

Close by encouraging them to access and use the video among their networks and contacts, as relevant.



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