

Speak out!

Advocacy mini-guide



BRINGING ABOUT POSITIVE CHANGE

Speak out!

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Contents

Introduction	1
What is advocacy	1
What are the purposes of advocacy?	1
Why should faith-based organisations be involved in advocacy?	2
How do we use Catholic Social Teaching?	4
How can we bring about change?	4
● How can we get educated on an issue?	4
● How do we change attitudes?	5
● How do we speak to decision-makers?	5
● How can we influence lawmakers?	6
Examples of advocacy	9



For a number of years the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) and Catholic schools have been involved in various advocacy processes aimed at bringing about positive change.

This mini-guide provides a clear explanation of what advocacy is, and creates awareness of areas of work that can be called advocacy. It also provides the tools for improving our advocacy efforts.



What is advocacy?

Advocacy is an umbrella term for actions that bring about change. In its basic form, advocacy is about **seeing** a problem, **judging** what can be done and then **acting** towards a solution.

Advocacy is essential for helping individuals, institutions, communities and neglected people to demand action around their rights. In a democracy advocacy is an essential tool to ensure that people, especially the most vulnerable, receive what is due to them. It is also about making the relevant authorities aware of important issues affecting people. Advocacy informs people about which authority is responsible and where and how to approach them.

What are the purposes of advocacy?

The purposes of advocacy are to:

Educate ourselves and others about an issue or problem that needs to be addressed.

There are many negative actions that hinder the development of people, and people do not always feel they are in control. In order to begin to bring about change, an important step is to ensure that everyone owns their human dignity and integrity.

Speak to decision-makers to ensure that efforts for change receive the best support possible. The situations we encounter will often put us in direct contact with someone in authority such as district managers or other department officials. These decision-makers can either be a stumbling block for change or they can speed up the process, depending on whether they support or oppose our action.

Know the facts

The success of advocacy depends upon collecting all the information regarding the issue. The information can include:

- Various laws and regulations related to the problem.
- The documents of government policy concerning the issue.
- The names of officials who have the authority to implement related laws and policies.
- Names of government officials, journalists and eminent people who could be of some help in resolving the problem.
- Other organisations working on the same issue.

Although we must respect authority we must challenge this authority when it is morally right to do so. It is important to remember Jesus' statement on the payment of taxes, 'to give to Caesar what is due to Caesar' (Matthew 22:21).

Build support for the action.

Leaders like Nelson Mandela and others have been able to bring about change through building support. No one can lead without people to lead!

Influence people in authority and lawmakers to ensure that policy supports the realities that people are faced with.

Why should faith-based organisations be involved in advocacy?

There are many arguments made for separating faith from politics. From a Catholic perspective, the Second Vatican Council said that the task of the Church in society is to protect the dignity of the human person. The CIE and Catholic schools should be involved in bringing about change wherever a situation leads to the loss of people's dignity.

People's dignity can be challenged in many ways, for example:

- Learners from poor homes without proper clothing can be bullied and teased at school.
- Schools can have no proper toilets.
- Educators can be redeployed without proper consultation.

We make moral decisions everyday. We experience situations, make judgements based on our values and take action based on our own capabilities and circumstances. However, we need a way of thinking about issues that affect our lives and, preferably, one that encourages us to take action. A form of moral inquiry designed to do this is the **Review of Life**, more commonly known as the See, Judge, Act method.

The **See, Judge, Act** method encourages us to think about the issues, problems and challenges that other people face on a daily basis and, following an assessment, to organise specific actions to bring about positive change:

See

What do I know of this issue? What have I experienced of this? Who are affected most by this and how? How has the issue arisen?

Judge

Why is this happening? Who gains from this situation? Who loses out? Why does this situation continue?

Act

What needs to be done to resolve this situation? What can I/we/my school do? How will your action change those involved? How can you tell if it is successful?

Catholic Social Teaching embraces this method by providing Catholic schools with the opportunity to educate learners to work towards a positive society. It gives learners a chance to respond to injustices where they arise and to engage actively with the public sector for change.



Watch how you live. Your lives may be the only gospel your sisters and brothers will ever read.

Dom Helder Camara

How do we use Catholic Social Teaching?

Catholic Social Teaching (see Appendix 1) is the body of social wisdom. It is about human individuals in society and the structures of that society that enable humanity to come to its fullness. Catholic Social Teaching can be found in:

- Scripture
- Writings of theologians
- Documents of the Church
- The witness of just people and communities.
- Statements and letters from the Bishops.

The purpose of Catholic Social Teaching is to promote justice by:

- Guiding individual consciences in making fair decisions > **See**
- Shaping the response of the Church to social issues > **Judge**
- Influencing the activities of the public sector > **Act**

How can we bring about change?

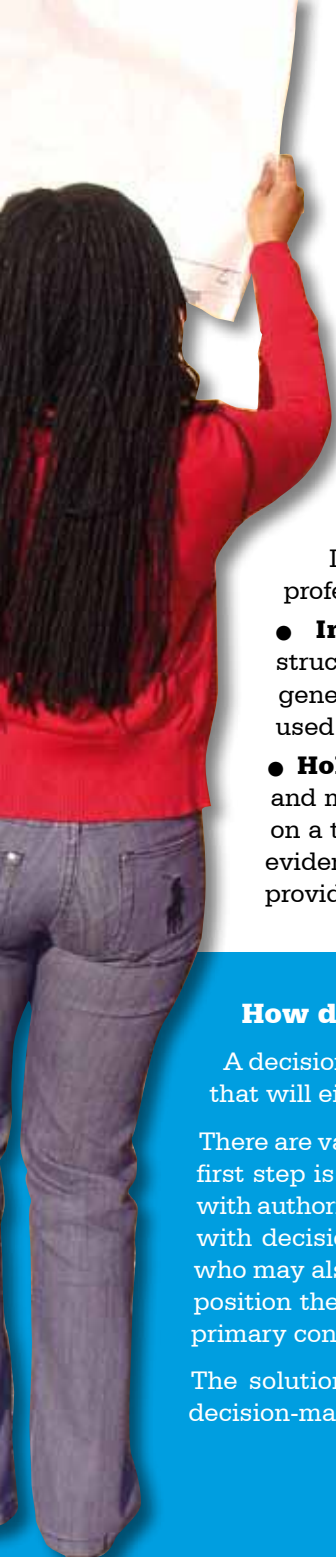
How do we change attitudes?

Sometimes information alone is not enough to change a situation. Changing attitudes requires continuous work and is most successful when good relationships are built.

Some strategies that may help:

- **Courtesy:** It is important to be polite at all times and to remember the position held by the person you are trying to persuade.
- **Conversation:** You must be in conversations with various people in order to build good relationships. This requires you both to listen and to speak and put your position forward.
- **Continuity:** It is important to maintain contact with decision-makers and schools. Regular phone calls or visits go a long way to ensuring that people trust the work you are doing.





How can we get educated on the issue?

In order to bring about change we need to work with the people affected by a problem. This needs to be done to understand fully what the causes of the problem are and to work together towards a solution.

Research into the issue should be carried out. This involves understanding the context of the people involved and their rights. It is important to agree on a solution that is specific to their context.

Research must be shared with the community as it can provide useful learning. This can be done through:

- **Making pamphlets, posters and other resources**

containing information available to the school community.

It is also useful to provide schools with contact numbers of professionals working in the problem area.

- **Information sharing at public meetings.** Existing structures such as School Governing Body meetings or annual general meetings of the Parents Teachers Association can be used to raise an issue and work towards solutions.

- **Holding roundtable discussions** where decision-makers and members of the community are invited to listen to research on a topic. It is useful to invite two speakers – one provides the evidence for the solution and another argues the opposite. This provides a good start for discussing a problem.

How do we speak to decision-makers?

A decision-maker is a person with authority who can make a decision that will either promote your solution or work against it.

There are various ways in which we can speak to decision-makers. The first step is to ensure that we have the confidence to speak to people with authority. It is useful to apply the 'people first' approach to working with decision-makers. Remember that you are speaking to a person, who may also have a family, who might also have had a bad week. The position they hold or their party affiliation is important, but is not the primary concern.

The solution you are trying to put forward needs to be sold to the decision-maker.

Guidelines for meeting with a government decision-maker or a Member of Parliament

Meeting with a decision-maker can be an unnerving experience, but it can also be productive and informative.

Setting up the meeting

- Send the person a written invitation with a request for a meeting.
- Follow-up with a phone call to make sure he/she received your correspondence.
- Establish your authority. Tell him/her which organisation you are from.
- Specify which issues you wish to discuss.
- Arrange a time to meet that is convenient for both of you, and then find other members of your organisation who are able to support you. Ideally, you should take two additional members, one to support you with the arguments and field questions, and one to take notes and keep track of time.
- Confirm the meeting time and venue the day before the meeting.

Preparation

- Know your arguments and refer to the legislation.
- Know your audience: what issues are important to them? What is the best tool to persuade your audience – personal stories or statistics?
- Arrange a time to meet with your delegation to go over the agenda and roles (chair, support, scribe) and prepare other material before the meeting.

- Agree on what you want from the meeting, and how you are going to handle it.

During the meeting

- Be on time.
- The chair should introduce and welcome everyone.
- Run through the agenda and confirm the time available.
- Start to talk about the main issues. Keep it simple and outline the arguments and check everyone's understanding.
- Tick off which key points you have presented if you are struggling to keep the person focused. If a person talks over you, interrupt him/her by using his/her name, for example 'Mike, if I could just stop you there, we are here to discuss the project'.
- Give the others a chance to ask questions, particularly if they want clarification of the issues raised.
- Get a commitment of support, for example a promise to talk to other members, to raise questions in committee meetings or to vote for a particular clause.
- If they have questions you can't answer don't worry, tell them you will check it out and call them back.



After the meeting

- The scribe will write up notes from the meeting, highlighting any difficult issues and including suggestions for possible next steps. Distribute the notes to all members of the group.
- Follow-up with the person with whom you originally set up the meeting, thank him/her for meeting with you, repeat your understanding of any commitments made and deal with any arguments you were unable to counter during the meeting. Send any additional information they requested immediately.

How do we influence lawmakers?

The Constitution requires the lawmakers in South Africa to listen to the public. This applies to National Parliament, Provincial Legislatures and Municipal Councils. The public must comment on every piece of law that is passed. There are a few simple steps for participating:

- Read the local papers and listen to the radio to find out when lawmakers are inviting the public to make comments.
- Comments can then be made in writing or can be made through an oral presentation. Usually these comments have to be made in writing. This process is called a submission.
- Write to lawmakers when the law is being implemented to report on how this is happening.
- Invite lawmakers to visit your school to experience the effects of the law on the school.

HOW TO WRITE A SUBMISSION

- A submission is an individual's or an organisation's comments on a draft law.
 - A submission expresses support for, or opposition to, the Bill (or parts of a law). It may also propose changes.
 - A submission can be a very simple document, like a letter or a short statement. It can also be much longer. It depends on the writer and what she or he wants to say.
 - Submissions are one of the ways that the public can make its voice heard in the law-making process. Lawmakers need to know if the public supports a law. They also need suggestions from the public about how to improve laws.
 - Schools can work with other schools to prepare joint submissions. This is important because if several groups make similar points and propose similar amendments, you are more likely to make an impact.
- There is no set format for a submission. The important thing is to say what you want to say clearly – remember the shorter and simpler the better. However, make sure your submission has the following:
 - Say who you are. Put the logo of your school or organisation on your submission or write the submission on your organisation's letterhead.
 - Write a summary with the main points.
 - Explain your point of view.
 - Give full contact details including a cell number where you can be reached at any time.

How do we build support?

Think of Jesus at the beginning of his Ministry. One of the first steps he took was to visit various fishermen and to persuade them to become his disciples. As his Ministry developed, more people joined and followed him.

- **Find your core support:** Like the disciples, you need to put together a team. This team is involved with the everyday work that is agreed upon. Members of this team will draft letters, make phone calls, arrange meetings etc.
- **Share with supporters:** Provide supporters with all available information. When public meetings are held provide refreshments in appreciation of people's support.
- **Use the media:** Write to newspapers, call radio stations, appear on television.

Examples of advocacy

The following are examples of advocacy at work. Example 1 outlines actions taken to improve school feeding schemes and Example 2 is a flow chart on actions taken to change a school quintile.

Example 1: Actions taken to improve school feeding schemes

Process		Issue : school feeding
SEE	<p>Define the issue</p> <p>Actions to bring about change begin with an issue or problem.</p>	<p>Children at school are hungry. The National Schools Nutrition programme currently feeds about five million learners. While this is an achievement, learners in secondary schools do not receive feeding and schools are limited on how many feeding days they can provide.</p>
JUDGE	<p>Set goals and objectives A goal is a general statement of what is hoped to be achieved.</p> <p>Identify targets Identify the audience you need to influence.</p>	<p>Find out if your school qualifies for a feeding scheme. Most schools have noted that feeding schemes improve attendance. Schools should strive to offer school feeding where necessary.</p> <p>The Department of Education is identified as the decision-maker that you need to influence. The Department of Agriculture food security unit also offers schools assistance with starting gardens.</p>
ACT	<p>Develop a message</p> <p>There are three important considerations: Who are you trying to reach with the message? What do you want to achieve with the message? What do you want the recipient of the message to do as a result of the message (the action you want taken)?</p>	<p>As there are two departments involved, schools may need to develop two messages.</p> <p>A letter can be sent to the Department of Education seeking funding and using local distributors to improve the amount of food available.</p> <p>A second letter can be written to the Department of Agriculture to get support with seeds, implements and workshops that can get food gardens started.</p>

ACT

Raise funds Raise funds to develop resources and pay for activities. The network develops a strategy at the outset of the campaign to identify potential contributors of financial or other resources and to build support.

Build support Bringing about change successfully requires that as many people as possible receive the message and actions.

If the National Schools Nutrition programme does not have enough funds to increase the feeding programme then schools can raise funds by approaching local businesses. Currently the programme funds R1.20 per learner per day.

Some schools get volunteers from overseas to help and most schools can rely on unemployed members of the community to help in the kitchens. Gardens also require attention and involving local members of the community in the planting. Watering and harvesting of crops is an excellent way to build support.

It is important to involve the community around the school to avoid theft. If more food is produced than is needed, schools can allow volunteers to start a soup kitchen.

Example 2: Action taken to change a school quintile

Process

Issue : quintile classification

SEE

Define the issue
Actions to bring about change begin with an issue or problem.

Schools are ranked according to the poverty of the surrounding community. This is done using data from Statistics South Africa. The quintiles do not reflect the poverty of the learners, but the location of the school.

JUDGE

Set goals and objectives A goal is a general statement of what is hoped to be achieved.

Identify targets
Identify the audience you need to influence.

Schools that have many poor learners can change their quintile and receive more funding from the Department of Education.

The Department of Education is identified as the decision-maker that we need to influence.

Develop a message

There are three important considerations: *Who* are you trying to reach with the message? *What* do you want to achieve with the message? *What* do you want the recipient of the message **to do** as a result of the message (the action you want taken)?

Raise funds Raise funds to develop resources and pay for activities. The network develops a strategy at the outset of the campaign to identify potential contributors of financial or other resources.

Build support Bringing about change successfully requires that as many people as possible receive the message and actions.

Schools write a letter to the MEC for Education in their province stating that in terms of s103 of the norms, the quintile can be changed to reflect the poverty of the learners. Schools research the income level of learners' parents and use this as evidence for requesting the change.

This process may involve costs. The school may have to send some representatives to see the MEC or people in the Department. Schools can use a variety of methods to raise funds. It is good to select representatives from the school community who are not employees of the Department of Education. The School Governing Body representatives can be involved.

Changing a quintile can improve the finances of the school. The school will have to show that its learners come from poorer communities. It is important that the school community is aware of this to avoid creating ill feeling within the school. In order to convince the MEC that the quintile should change, the school can invite the MEC or Department officials to visit and see for themselves. It is useful to collect as much information as possible that can help.



What happens when the formal processes followed don't work?

When all else fails it may be necessary to use your constitutional rights: Section 17 states that "Everyone has the right, peacefully and unarmed, to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket and to present petitions".

Protest action can be public and disruptive, and can involve a large or small group of people. Protest activists are most effective when carefully planned and when they focus public attention on injustice, and when other avenues for change have been exhausted.

Before a group engages in protest action it needs to carefully consider:

- Will the action advance or set back the cause?
- Will there be broad support for the cause?
- Can others be convinced that the action is necessary?
- Is there a readiness to handle the difficulties of any backlash?
- Is there enough funds to do it? (e.g. transport, food etc)

Types of protest include:

Marches – march to a building where senior decision-makers work eg, Parliament, Provincial government, municipality. (This is a strategy for large groups.)

Picketing – similar to protesting ensuring that no-one else can go into the building. Display banners and posters. (This is a strategy for large groups.)

Sit ins – enter the office of a decision-maker and refuse to move until you are heard. (This is a strategy for smaller groups.)

Stunts – using eye catching movements to draw attention. Once you have the attention, deliver the message of protest. e.g. using choir, band, actors performing to assemble a crowd and then speaking to the crowd. This is very useful if there isn't mass support already. (Can be done with small group of 2 to 3 people.)

Before carrying out protest action, talk to experienced activists. Let everyone talk about their ideas, fears, and past experiences. If there is agreement that protest action is needed, then here are a few guidelines to follow:

- **Focus the action** – What aspect of your issue do you want to highlight? On whom do you wish to focus public attention?
- **Timing an action** – Don't carry out actions that aren't timed right for maximum effectiveness. You may want to spend your time building a strong enough base for a successful action later. If you are in negotiations, this isn't a time for direct action, unless negotiators are stalling on your requests and giving you problems.
- **Know your rights** – It is imperative to know your legal rights and possible penalties. Consult a sympathetic lawyer. Find out if you need to have a permit.
- **Event planning and preparation** – Talk about your goals, how long to stay, and whether to disburse or risk arrest once authorities arrive. Pick a date, time, location, and location for your action (Prepare chant sheets, get a megaphone, and ask people to speak, bring banners, signs, flyers and food, drinks and blankets to keep warm).
- **Network** – Talk to organizations who support your work and who may join your action. Ask progressive media to cover the event.
- **Media promotion** – Send a press release to the media. Do not tell the press your complete plan; give them enough information to interest them in covering it.





- **Stay focused** – Once you have organized a plan, stick to it! If you must make changes to the initial plan, inform everyone at one time.
- **Problems that may arise** – Even though your action may be legal there may be police action. Be prepared for this. If you have a permit, have it ready.
- **Keep it peaceful** – Encourage people to avoid hecklers, doing anything illegal or hitting anyone. Tempers may flare but stay unified. Remind people they will be photographed and may be in the news. Ensure that you appoint some marshals and consider getting protestors to sign a pledge similar to the one below:

The pledge of nonviolence written by Martin Luther King Jr., and signed by his marchers, 1963

1. As you prepare to march meditate on the life and teachings of Jesus.
2. Remember the nonviolent movement seeks justice and reconciliation - not victory.
3. Walk and talk in the manner of love; for God is love.
4. Pray daily to be used by God that all men and women might be free.
5. Sacrifice personal wishes that all might be free.
6. Observe with friend and foes the ordinary rules of courtesy.
7. Perform regular service for others and the world.
8. Refrain from violence of fist, tongue and heart.
9. Strive to be in good spiritual and bodily health.
10. Follow the directions of the movement leaders and of the captains on demonstrations.

Print Name _____

Signature _____

When we are dreaming alone it is only a dream. When we are dreaming with others, it is the beginning of reality.

Dom Helder Camara

Appendix 1

Key principles of Catholic Social Teaching

The Dignity of the Human Person

Human beings are created in the image of God and, therefore, are with dignity. This inborn dignity carries with it certain basic rights and responsibilities, which are lived in society.

The Common Good

While the dignity of the human person is affirmed, individuals live in common with others and the rights of individuals must be balanced with the wider common good of all. The rights and needs of others must always be respected.

Solidarity

Human beings are social by nature and do not just exist as individuals. When considering the human community it must be remembered that it consists of both individual and social concerns. Solidarity is standing with others and seeing their needs and problems as being as important as our own.

Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity recognises that society is based on organisations or communities of people ranging from small groups or families right through to national and international institutions. Subsidiarity affirms the right of individuals and social groups to make their own decisions and accomplish what they can by their own initiative and actions.

The Purpose of the Social Order

The social order must uphold the dignity of the human person.

The Purpose of Government

The purpose of government is the promotion of the common good. Governments are required actively to participate in society to promote and ensure social justice and equity.

Participation

Individuals and groups must be enabled to participate in society.

The Universal Purpose of Goods

The world's goods are meant for all. Although the Church upholds the right to private property this is secondary to the right to common use and the overall common good.

The Option for the Poor

The option for the Poor is seeing the world through the eyes of the poor and standing in solidarity with the poor. This should lead to action for justice with and on behalf of those who are marginalised.

The Care of Creation

The Earth is God's gift and all species have a rightful place in it. Humans share this habitat with other kinds and have a special duty to care for the Earth.

Further reading

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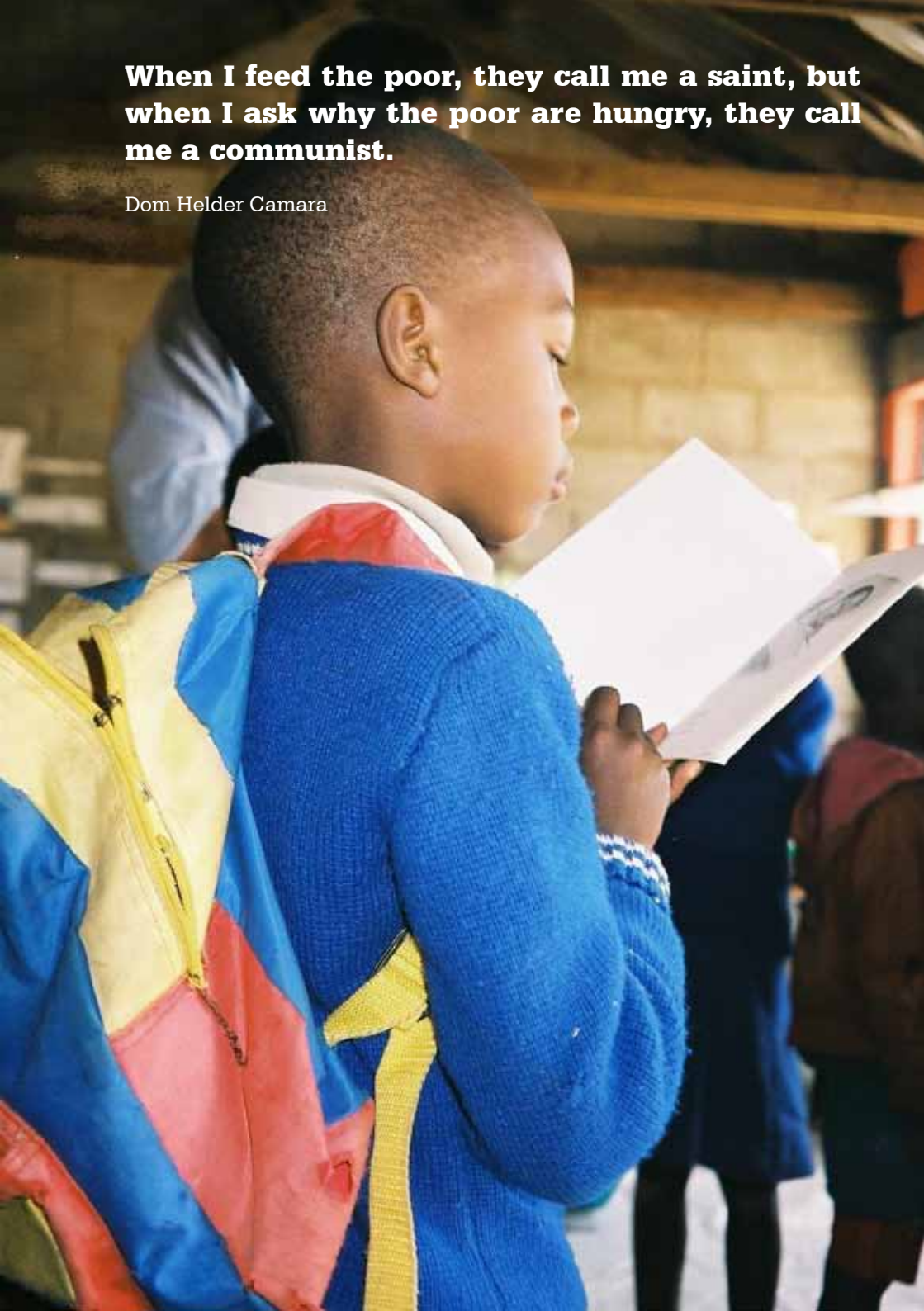
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**When I feed the poor, they call me a saint, but
when I ask why the poor are hungry, they call
me a communist.**

Dom Helder Camara



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