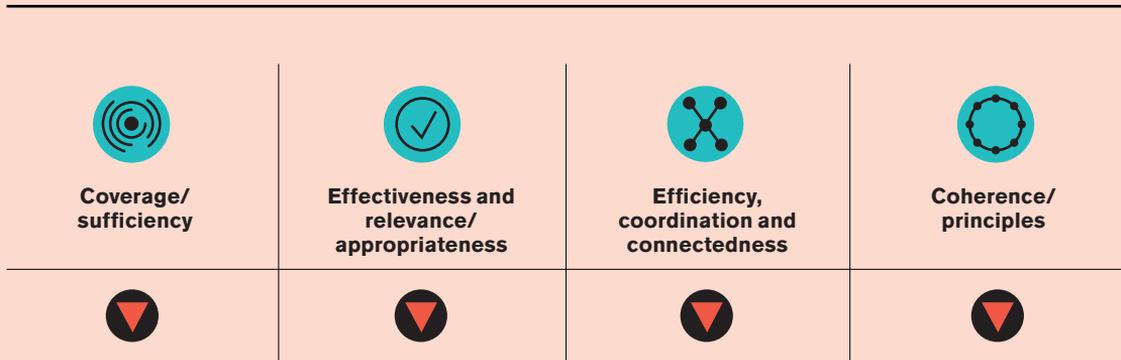


FUNCTION 4: ADVOCATING FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND ACCESS



Humanitarian actors engage in advocacy with a broad range of objectives – from enabling and increasing humanitarian assistance, to encouraging actors to uphold international humanitarian law, to seeking broader solutions to crises. When civilian populations are suffering as a result of war and the humanitarian action designed to help them is severely constrained by political and/or security impediments, as in Syria, the role of advocacy can take on added importance. It can become both a moral imperative and a function of last resort for humanitarian actors.

Advocacy can take place in the public realm or through private dialogue. Its objectives can be small-scale and local, as when pushing for armed actors to allow humanitarian aid to proceed through certain routes, or large-scale and global, for instance lobbying the UN Security Council to call for respect for international humanitarian law. Different aid organisations have very different stances on the types of advocacy they are willing to engage in, and at what level of investment. Advocacy is not only the most variable but also the least tangible humanitarian activity, and perhaps one of the most difficult to measure, and limited documentation is available on its evaluation. Applying the evaluation criteria used in the rest of this study to the advocacy function is thus in more difficult.

This study’s assessment of humanitarian advocacy draws mainly on findings related to the civil war in Syria but also on material from CAR, South Sudan, and other contexts. It looks at what humanitarian actors seek to accomplish through advocacy and analyses the difficulties and prospects for future efforts. Overall, while some organisations have invested considerably, global humanitarian advocacy efforts are still limited in scope and coordination, and their effectiveness has been hampered by the lack of clear targets and a coherent strategy. Advocacy on behalf of CAR and South Sudan did not succeed in mobilising sufficient international response to the unfolding crises there. In the case of Syria, although advocacy contributed to the passing of UN Security Council resolutions endorsing cross-border relief operations, these have had little meaningful effect on the protection of Syrian civilians or their access to humanitarian aid, which raises important questions about the meaning and role of advocacy.