



EUROPE

Working to support policy change through an advocacy coalition in Israel

Case study summary

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Working for policy change through an advocacy coalition

The Coalition for Education from Birth played a key role in the passing of legislation in 2017 and 2018 that were critical to the development and well-being of 0-3 year-old children in Israel

In July 2018 the Israeli Knesset¹ passed a bill improving the supervision of daycare services for children under 3 years old (the Supervision Law).² This bill had been discussed for decades but, for a number of reasons, had not been passed into law. The Coalition for Education from Birth played a key role in the passing of this bill.

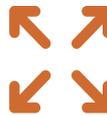
The Coalition was set up two-and-a-half years earlier, at a time when there was no government agency responsible for both public and private daycare services for children under 3 in Israel.³ This lack of coordinated government oversight meant that there were no regularised standards relating to staff training or the physical environment in daycares, which posed a risk to the health and safety of children. Recognising this, the Bernard van Leer Foundation joined forces with ANU,⁴ a non-profit organisation offering campaigning and organising tools for social change, and a group of passionate activists and organisations working in the field of early childhood development who had already started to collaborate. In 2015 an agreement was struck between the Bernard van Leer Foundation, ANU and the group of activists to collaborate formally as the Coalition.

The Coalition's aim and objectives

The Coalition set its aim as addressing ***“quality and affordability of care for children under three through a regulatory framework, increased investments and expansion of services”***.⁵ To meet this aim, the Coalition developed three goals⁶:



Regulation: Implementing government regulation for educational facilities for children under 3.



Expansion: Expanding the scope of daycare facilities to accommodate all children in need of daycare, with these facilities being guided and supervised by trained staff.



Delegation: Transferring jurisdiction for education for children under 3 from the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services to the Ministry of Education.

In the short time since its creation, the Coalition has successfully advocated for a number of policy changes, aside from the Supervision Law, in particular a law passed in July 2017 that created the Council for Early Childhood, ***“a new body that aims to take overall responsibility for government services for young children”***.⁷ The Coalition has also supported other initiatives, including a law requiring (in all but a few exceptions) daycares to be fitted with security cameras

to help protect children, which was passed in December 2018.⁸

Valuable insights can be gained by looking at the Coalition's efforts towards these legal breakthroughs

The Coalition worked in different ways to contribute to these legal breakthroughs. The Bernard van Leer Foundation commissioned RAND Europe to prepare a case study to investigate these legislative breakthroughs and to document the efforts of the Coalition to promote and inform the conversation

on introducing the new laws. The research team studied the work of the Coalition by undertaking in-country interviews with key stakeholders in the field of early childhood in Israel, including current and former Members of Knesset, and through a review of documentary sources. These data were analysed to produce an open access case study⁹ that explores the Coalition's approach, key characteristics and tactics. This summary outlines the main points from the case study.

Key characteristics of the Coalition's approach

The concept of an advocacy coalition

The Coalition follows the concept of an advocacy coalition, the principal idea of which is to bring together different stakeholders to deliver a more powerful joint message. The approach emphasises building a partnership, empowering activists, giving local actors ownership of solutions, and engaging with its grassroots membership of passionate and interested activists, including parent organisations, healthcare and education professionals, advocacy organisations, daycare staff, and teachers and academics.

The Coalition's membership is central to its success



Diverse membership. As of March 2019 the Coalition had approximately 250 members.¹⁰ The members' respective networks – such as parents' and carers' groups and contacts – are estimated at over 300,000 people.¹¹ The Coalition has engaged the full spectrum of the population in an effort to be as inclusive

and representative as possible. As a result, it is diverse in three complementary ways: first, it has diverse voices, including individuals and groups with a range of preferred approaches to advocacy and campaigning; second, its membership includes a variety of ethnic backgrounds representing different populations in the country;¹² and third, it has diversity in its members' expertise, including topic expertise, academic analytical abilities, organisational consulting and legal expertise.¹³



Navigating the challenges of a diverse membership has clear benefits.

The Coalition must often find common ground regarding the tactics it uses. Its former chief operating officer explained that this was about making careful, strategic decisions on when to curb certain ideas and when to give others freedom. The ability to navigate these challenges has allowed the Coalition to include among its members individuals and groups who have previously opposed its work. Bringing on board a previously opposing organisation

was a landmark addition to the Coalition’s campaign, and crucial for making a compelling case to policymakers.



Supporting the membership.

The Coalition provides direct services to its members, making itself available to listen and respond to individual requests for

information and support. There is a sense that this individual support has facilitated the active engagement and participation of members – with the Coalition becoming a ‘go-to’ place for parents of children under 3 years old. This is seen as a contributory factor to the Coalition’s success.¹⁴



Keeping members engaged.

The Coalition has also kept members engaged by allowing them to use its resources to advance their own agendas,¹⁵ and by making them feel

appreciated in different ways, such as through hosting teambuilding events.

Four aspects of the Coalition’s strategy have been key to its success:



Identifying clear, feasible but ambitious goals.

The Coalition began by formulating a shared cause that all members could agree on. It designed

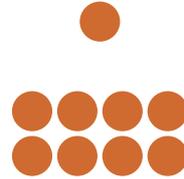
the abovementioned aim and goals to be ambitious¹⁶ but practically achievable.¹⁷



Putting the child at the centre.

A common element across the Coalition’s strategy has been ‘putting the child at the centre’. This focus ensures that the well-being of children, rather than support for parents, is the priority, and has been important in

positioning the Coalition as politically neutral (which in turn helped gain wide-ranging support).



Representativeness and independence.

The diverse membership is bound together by the passion of different members for the

same cause, which helps it to be seen as representing the ‘grass-roots’. Policymakers have seen this representativeness as important, in part because it indicates that the Coalition – through its membership – understands the subject matter.¹⁸ In addition, it has been particularly important for the Coalition to be perceived as financially and politically independent. This helped them to gain support for challenging the government’s policies as they were not perceived as having a political agenda. As one policymaker explained, the Coalition “do it for a higher purpose. It’s very easy to agree with them.”¹⁹



Trade-offs and compromises.

In an effort to be pragmatic the Coalition has made difficult trade-offs and compromises. For example, when campaigning for

legislation it agreed to laws that were narrower in scope than it would have ideally liked in the interest of achieving at least some of the desired changes. Other forms of compromise have related to decisions about prioritising different policy objectives. For instance, the main outstanding Coalition goal that has not yet been achieved is the transfer of responsibility for the early years to the Ministry of Education. This strategic objective was purposefully deprioritised following early engagements with the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services. This was a pragmatic decision taken so that the Coalition could focus on those goals that were most likely to be achieved in the short term.

Key elements of creating public pressure

The Coalition understood that the ground had to be “ripe” before legislative change could take place. Members of Knesset with whom the Coalition worked closely attested to the importance of such ‘ripening’, through the Coalition’s use of public pressure, seeing it as a prerequisite for them to progress legislation in the Knesset. The Coalition’s approach to creating public pressure is to “flood the topic”,²⁰ meaning to raise it in the public discourse to a point where it becomes a part of the agenda. It has done this by using public demonstrations and the media, launching petitions, organising online activities, and effectively leveraging conferences. In employing these tactics, the Coalition has identified three learning points for maximising the impact of its work:



Persistence and ongoing attendance at meetings have been noticed by policymakers. One

characteristic of the Coalition when employing these tactics is ‘persistence and consistency, motivation and will to succeed’.²¹ Individuals from a range of stakeholder groups agreed that the Coalition’s persistent presence at

committee meetings has been instrumental to it being seen as representative of society.²²



Effective working relationships with government. A key aspect of the Coalition’s success

has been its ability to form

relationships with government. It has worked in close coordination with bill-promoting Members of Knesset and representatives of government bodies including the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services and the Ministry of Education. The Coalition has worked hard to develop these relationships, which have been mutually beneficial.



Bringing together different policymakers to overcome an impasse. A decisive moment

in the Coalition’s journey came at a conference they had

funded which provided an opportunity to bring together two previously opposing Members of Knesset. The resulting meeting, in which a solution was agreed by the policymakers, is seen as one of the key achievements of the Coalition.²³

Looking ahead

The Coalition has shown that it can contribute to landmark policy changes, and its ongoing work includes ensuring that these legislative achievements are fully implemented. It

continues to be supported by all parties, despite an environment of political and election uncertainty.²⁴

Notes

- 1 The Knesset is the Israeli parliament.
- 2 The Supervision Law was passed at the first reading in the Knesset in July 2018. See Knesset webpage on the Daycare Supervision Law. As of 13 May 2020: <https://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Legislation/Laws/Pages/LawBill.aspx?t=lawsuggestionssearch&lawitemid=2073729>. It then completed its second and third readings in October 2018 – see Zieve, T. (2018) Bill to provide daycare center oversight passes into law. *The Jerusalem Post*. As of 13 May 2020: <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Bill-to-provide-daycare-center-oversight-passes-into-law-570031> Knesset website confirmation of the law's passing. As of 13 May 2020: <https://m.knesset.gov.il/News/PressReleases/Pages/press22.10.18hs.aspx>
- 3 The Coalition for Education from Birth (2016) Policy statement: Government responsibility for children from birth to age three.
- 4 ANU website. As of 14 May 2020: <https://anu.org.il>
- 5 Bernard van Leer Foundation internal document (2018) Birth to 3 Cluster Report, 2018. See also the Coalition's Policy Statement in which it defined an overarching aim to address "the challenge of care for children aged three and under" (internal document: Birth to 3 Coalition Overview).
- 6 The Coalition for Education from Birth (2016) Policy statement: Government responsibility for children from birth to age three.
- 7 Bernard van Leer Foundation (2017) Advocacy leads to new legal framework in Israel. As of 13 May 2020: <https://bernardvanleer.org/cases/advocacy-leads-to-new-legal-framework-in-israel/>
- 8 Knesset press release – Final passing: Obligation to install cameras in daycare centres. As of 13 May 2020: <https://m.knesset.gov.il/News/PressReleases/pages/press24.12.18ec.aspx>
- 9 See <http://www.randeurope.org/bvlfcasestudies>
- 10 Figure based on number of members of a WhatsApp group, the principal tool used to organise the Coalition (Interview with Coalition Coordinator).
- 11 Interview with Coalition Coordinator.
- 12 Interviews with Coalition member number 8, interview with Coalition Coordinator, interview with Coalition's Arab Society Coordinator and Coalition member number 7, interview with Coalition member numbers 3 and 4, consultation with BvLF.
- 13 Interviews with Coalition members, non-Coalition members and the Journalist.
- 14 Based on interviews: 4 out of 13 Coalition members, and 1 out of 3 policymakers.
- 15 Based on interviews: 1 out of 13 Coalition members, 1 out of 3 non-Coalition members.
- 16 Interview with Coalition's former chief executive officer.
- 17 Based on interviews: 4 out of 13 Coalition members.
- 18 Interview with the Senior Advisor to the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services.
- 19 Interview with the Senior Advisor to the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services
- 20 Based on interviews: 2 out of 13 Coalition members.
- 21 Based on interviews: 2 out of 13 Coalition members, 1 out of 3 non-Coalition members, 1 out of 3 policymakers, and the Journalist.
- 22 Based on interviews: 3 out of 13 Coalition members, 2 out of 3 non-Coalition members, and 3 out of 3 policymakers.
- 23 Based on interviews: 5 out of 13 Coalition members, 1 out of 3 non-Coalition members, and 1 out of 3 policymakers.
- 24 See, for instance, a July 2019 media item on the current approach to be taken by Prime Minister Netanyahu: Livnat, O. and Begano, Y. (2019) Netanyahu: The responsibility for daycares will transfer to the minister for education. *Maariv* online. As of 13 May 2020: <https://www.maariv.co.il/news/Education/Article-707287>

The 2019-2020 case studies and the Bernard van Leer Foundation's focus on early childhood education

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is an independent foundation working globally to inform and inspire large-scale action to support the health and well-being of babies, toddlers and the people who care for them. In 2019, they commissioned RAND Europe to deliver a set of case studies to document learning about implementing early childhood development programmes at scale. The objective of these case studies is to ensure that lessons on 'what works' in operating at scale were systematically captured, assessed and made available for other governments, practitioners and foundations to use. In particular, the Foundation was interested in learning about the critical conditions for achieving sustainable impact at scale in early childhood development.