





YOUTH ACTION FOR CHANGE

**A Guide for Youth Participation,
Advocacy and Community Action**



"Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies."



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INSIDE THIS TOOLKIT



INTRODUCTION	4
YOUTH PARTICIPATION & ADVOCACY	5
What is youth participation?	5
Why is youth participation important?	6
Barriers to youth participation	7
What is advocacy?	8
How is advocacy different?	9
Why is advocacy important?	10
Who can be an advocate?	11
STEPS TOWARD CHANGE	12
STEP 1: Reflect on what needs to change	13
STEP 2: Identify who can make that change happen	15
STEP 3: Prepare to influence your advocacy targets	16
STEP 4: Work with other young people	23
STEP 5: Reach out to potential partners	24
STEP 6: Prepare to overcome obstacles and risks	25
STEP 7: Draw up an action plan	27
STEP 8: Mobilise resources	29
STEP 9: Monitor & evaluate progress	30

Do you feel you want to bring about change but don't know where to start?

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Youth Action for Change - A Guide for Youth Participation, Advocacy and Community Action. Do you feel you want to bring about change but don't know where to start? Do you want to make sure that young people's rights are always respected, but are not exactly sure how to go about it? This toolkit is for young activists, volunteers, students and agents of change! It offers a step-by-step guide to help plan, implement or improve advocacy initiatives on young people's participation in decision making and development processes. It can be used by young advocates, programme designers, coordinators and others who work with young people, and will be helpful to build the capacity of young advocates to promote meaningful youth participation for development.

At YOTA-Youth Opportunity and Transformation African welcomes and celebrates young people's meaningful participation at all levels. In pursuing our main aim of supporting young people to exercise and realize their potential as agents of change, we promote a rights-based approach that prioritises the empowerment of young people. This enables young people to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to make informed choices about their well-being.

There is much to be done in the area of youth-led advocacy. We hope that this toolkit is a step in the right direction – and that it will inspire and equip young people to be advocates for change wherever they find themselves.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION & ADVOCACY

What is youth participation?

As there are many types of developmental processes, cultures and unique individuals in the world, participation is not any one phenomenon; there are various definitions of participation. But a basic concept of participation is that people are free to involve themselves in social and developmental processes and that self-involvement is active, voluntary and informed.

Youth participation is the process of involving young people in the decisions that affect their lives. It involves enabling youth to meet genuine needs by challenging those in power in a responsible way. There should be opportunities for youth to be involved in planning or decision-making for activities whose impact extends beyond the youth participants themselves.

Youth participation is about creating an environment where youth work in partnership with adults with mutual respect and understanding. Real youth participation involves recognising and nurturing the strengths, interests, and abilities of young people by providing real opportunities for

youth to become involved in decisions that affect them both at the individual level and within systems that they are part of. Such participation moves beyond tokenism towards a process where youth are meaningfully involved in decisions affecting their welfare. Thus, it involves sharing decision-making and collaborating with adults who can serve as mentors to youth. For young people to actively participate, they need tools and conditions that enable them to design their own world and future.

In terms of spheres of participation, the UN General Assembly has defined youth participation as comprising four components: economic participation, relating to work and development; political participation, relating to local, national, regional, and international decision-making processes; social participation, relating to involvement in community activities; and cultural participation, relating to the arts, cultural values and expression.

Youth participation envisaged by the African Youth Charter aims at creating an environment for young people to be able to actively participate in all spheres of society. It calls upon State Parties to the

Youth participation is the process of involving young people in the decisions that affect their lives.

Charter to undertake several steps that ensure youth participation. These include creating a quota system to ensure youth participation in parliament and other decision-making processes, creating youth focal points in government structures to ensure mainstreaming of youth issues, giving priority to policies and programmes including youth advocacy and peer-to-peer programmes for marginalised youth, providing access to information and education and training for young people to learn their rights and responsibilities, and providing technical and financial support to build the institutional capacity of youth organisations.

As meaningful youth participation increases so too does experience, competence and confidence.



Why is youth participation important?

a. Youth participation improves programme efficiency:

Research into development programming shows that, people of all ages are more likely to commit to a programme when they have been involved in its design and implementation from the outset. Youth have more knowledge than older people about the issues that affect them and as such are integral to achieving effective and sustainable solutions. In particular, youth involvement in all phases of the project cycle enables those responsible for programmes and

services to direct the resources that are available towards finding more successful approaches to issues affecting youth.

b. Participation allows unique youth perspectives in policy-making and decision-making:

Given the opportunity, young people can provide contributions that are extremely beneficial in forcing organisations to look beyond the comfort zone where decisions are taken according to tested approaches. This boosts creativity and can lead to new solutions to policy problems. Youth also bring fresh energy to the issues they address, which can revitalise overworked, cynical government employees.

c. Youth participation has a positive impact on adults:

When adults work collaboratively with young people for an extended period of time, pursuing a common goal, they too derive benefits: their general perceptions about young people and about their ability to make a valuable contribution to organisational decision-making are enhanced. Adults also develop more confidence about working with young people and more effective working relationships; their awareness about young people's needs and youth issues is increased, and a willingness to share their knowledge and connect with the community is developed.

d. Participation strengthens young people's personal development :

Unless youth are given the opportunity to work in partnership with adults to meaningfully determine the course of their lives, their personal development will be restricted. They do not mature by being passive, by simply observing or by being lectured about their development. As meaningful participation increases so too does experience, competence and confidence. This in turn enables them to participate more effectively. These skills provide young people with more opportunity to define their own self-worth in terms of what they can do and their capacity to influence their environment. It also enables them to demonstrate that they are capable of being responsible and caring, and of participating within society.

e. Youth participation contributes to organisational and community development

Participation involves youth in activities that bring people together. It teaches them to prioritise and make decisions, and enables them to plan programmes that can contribute to building the capacity of organisations. In contrast to youth who do not view themselves as part of a community, participants play roles that contribute to collective action and prepare them to facilitate change. Youth participation also contributes to community development. When young people volunteer to formulate strategies for neighbourhood revitalisation, they contribute to developing the community in addition to developing themselves.

Barriers to youth participation

Inequality:

Despite the integral part young people play in families, schools and communities, they are traditionally regarded as having a lower social status than adults. This limits the opportunities young people have to participate in decision-making as equals. Girls and young women are not given the same opportunities as boys and young men, and all the challenges listed apply even more to them. They are discriminated against by adults because they are young, and by boys and young men because of their gender. There are also many cultural barriers, attitudes and expectations, which affect the full participation of girls and young women in decision-making.

Lack of Mutual Respect and Trust

The generation gap between younger and older people leads to a number of challenges, such as mutual lack of understanding and trust, lack of cooperation, misconceptions and prejudices and ignorance of each other's culture, language, interests and way of doing things. Negative, preconceived ideas about the abilities of young people to bring about social change and about their behaviour deter many adults from consulting with them. Many believe outdated notions, or media misinformation, that portrays young people as transient, chaotic and unreliable.

Poor Education and Training

Education systems often fail to prepare young people adequately to participate in decision-making. They do not develop the necessary analytical skills for critical thinking or problem solving through participatory, active learning. In some cases young people are given the opportunity to participate in decision making without ensuring that they receive adequate training or access to the appropriate information that would enable them to make informed decisions.

Weak Infrastructure

Young people lack direct access to institutional systems and structures within governments, the media and the private and civil society sectors. This severely impedes their ability to advocate for their rights. In the rare cases where young people have been able to influence, or even make decisions, barriers within complicated infrastructure have tended to limit implementation. This destroys young people's confidence and trust in such mechanisms.

Lack of Representation

Young people are not a homogenous group. They differ in age, maturity and socio-economic status. Some are heads of households, parents, involved in child labour or employment, etc. It is therefore, important that young people participating in decision making represent the people most affected by the decisions taken. This presents a

Many believe outdated notions, or media misinformation, that portrays young people as transient, chaotic and unreliable.

challenge even for youth organisations trying to reach marginalised children and young people.

The Cost

It is argued, erroneously, that involving young people in decision-making at all levels is more expensive than involving adults. At the same time, without some financial support or resources most young people will be unable to participate beyond a community level. The positive financial repercussions of allowing young people to determine something that may have an impact on their own lives and others, and may be more readily accepted or practical are invariably overlooked.

Advocacy calls for changes in laws, policies, practices and structures in order to improve people's lives.

What is advocacy?

The term 'advocacy' means different things to different people. Basically, advocacy is about calling for change and guiding decision makers towards solutions. It refers to the different ways we can build political, financial or public support to bring about action for change. It involves influencing leaders and decision makers to address the root causes of problems and to generate long-term sustainable solutions.

Change can take place on several levels, such as:

- at local level (for example with local government, police, school system)
- at national level (for example with national governments, ministries)
- at international level (for example with UN agencies, the World Bank)

Advocacy can have many different objectives. For example, we can advocate increasing support for a cause, to influence leaders and decision makers, to build an environment that enables young people to exercise their rights, or to change laws or legislation.

All forms of advocacy aim to influence decision makers in order to bring about change. Change usually happens in at least three different phases:

1. Head (knowledge)

Firstly, your target audience needs to have accurate information and understand the change you are advocating for and why you are proposing it.

2. Heart (attitude)

Secondly, even if your target audience has all the technical information, they might still need to be convinced about the benefits and value of your proposal, to know in their heart that what you are proposing is the right thing to do.

3. Hands (practice/implementation)

Once you have allies for your cause, you may still need to support them to translate the proposed change into action.

This involves monitoring how the change is being implemented to make sure that your strategies are working effectively towards change. Sometimes, it might be necessary to work with others to adjust your strategies to maximize effectiveness.

How is advocacy different?

It can be confusing to understand how advocacy is different from other related strategies, including information, education and communication, comprehensive sexuality education and public relations. The following table lists some of the main differences.

Advocacy and related strategies

Strategies	Messengers	Objectives	Target audiences	Methods and activities
Information, education and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service providers • Non-governmental organizations • Social workers • Public health agents • Peer educators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To inform, educate or communicate on a specific topic • To raise awareness and trigger interest in a particular topic • Can include behavioural change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals • Specific population groups (such as young people, people living with HIV etc) • General public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamphlets or flyers • Posters or billboards • Websites • Social networking sites • Newspapers • Text messaging • Theatre
Comprehensive sexuality education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Sex educators • Peer educators • Parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide comprehensive and in depth information about sexuality and gender • To increase knowledge and understanding of diverse aspects of sexuality and gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Children and young people (both in and out of school) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal education curricula • Informal educational programmes
Public relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses • Commercial agencies • Manufacturers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote a product, service, company or organization • To increase sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large-scale advertising (TV, radio, print media, internet) • Public events
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-governmental organizations • Service providers • Research institutions • Universities • Advocates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To generate political, public or financial support for a particular issue • To change laws or policies • To influence the allocation of public resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy makers • Decision makers • Governments • Religious leaders • Community leaders • Donor agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaigns • Petitions or letter writing • High level meetings with decision makers, such as parliamentarians • Public debates • Factsheets, policy briefings reports • Press conferences • E-advocacy

Advocacy is important because it addresses the root causes of problems, leading to long-term sustainable benefits for young people and their communities.

Why is advocacy important?

Advocacy is important because it can:

Influence changes in policies and mindsets.

Generating commitment and buy-in from leaders and decision makers is vital for ensuring youth-inclusive development and respect for the rights of all. Advocacy can help generate this commitment. It can influence the creation, implementation and improvement of laws and policies.

Secure funds and resources.

For change to come about, commitments to youth participation must be backed by financial, human and technical resources. Advocacy can ensure that sufficient resources are allocated for youth-inclusive programme implementation and service delivery.

Build a movement.

The most powerful social movements are those that unite commitment and activism from all levels: local, national, regional and international. Advocacy plays a key role in generating support on each level, creating a stronger movement.

Safeguard and protect previous achievements.

A lot of progress has already been made towards ensuring recognising youth as active partners in

the development process. However, political, economic and cultural landscapes are constantly changing so it's important for us to protect the gains we have already won. Advocacy allows us to do this by acting as a watchdog to make sure that governments and leaders uphold their commitments to youth participation at all levels.

Who can be an advocate?

Anyone with a passion for an issue or cause can be an advocate.

Young people can be some of the best advocates for youth participation because they have the best understanding of their own needs, realities, desires and capacities. In fact, it is a human right for young people to participate in decision making that affects their lives and to have their voices heard by decision makers. This right is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by almost every country in the world.

But, what does it take to be an effective advocate?

The recipe is quite simple. You need:

- passion and dedication to an issue or cause
- a clear vision of what change needs to happen
- the ability to collaborate with others
- time and commitment to prepare and follow up with advocacy interventions
- strong communication skills
- the persistence to keep going

You can lead change in your immediate surroundings or the world at large

Being an agent of change in your immediate surroundings can be very powerful. Never underestimate the 'ripple effect': you inspire someone who inspires someone else who inspires someone else, and so on, until the ripples from a drop of rain transform into ocean waves. We can also be agents of change at a higher level, such as at national, regional or international levels. Advocacy at these levels has the potential to affect an even larger group of people, but change might happen at a slower pace than local level advocacy.

What do advocates do?

As an advocate you can play many different roles.

For example, you can:

- raise awareness about youth issues among leaders and decision makers to make specific changes to legislation, policies and/or their implementation
- collaborate with other young people and advocates in campaigns to promote youth rights and development issues

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can be an advocate.

- ensure that leaders (your government, religious leaders, school etc) respect, protect and fulfil young people's participation
- write and distribute factsheets, reports or other materials to provide evidence about the importance of prioritizing young people's participation

But, remember, you don't have to do this alone. Other organisations and people may have different skills, and access to different knowledge or target audiences that can be useful for your advocacy goals. Collaborative advocacy can often generate stronger voices that reach wider audiences and lead to lasting change. Change is possible! There is always something you can do, no matter how large or small.

STEP 1: Reflect on what needs to change

STEP 2: Identify who can make that change happen

STEP 3: Prepare a plan for influencing your advocacy targets

STEP 4: Work with other young people

STEP 5: Reach out to potential partners

STEP 6: Prepare to overcome obstacles and risks

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STEP 9: Monitor & evaluate progress



STEPS TOWARD CHANGE

STEP 1: Reflect on what needs to change

Advocacy is about identifying and calling for change, so we need to be very clear about exactly what it is that we are trying to change. Before starting out on an advocacy initiative, make sure you identify accurately what it is that you are trying to change. It is best to do this with input from as many stakeholders as possible, especially young people themselves. It's really important to identify clearly what needs to change to make sure your advocacy efforts don't go off in too many different directions.

Be as specific as possible. For example:

Problem	Causes	What needs to change?
Young girls are taken out of school	High rates of teenage pregnancy	Legislation to ensure better access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information, education and services for girls
	Family poverty	Improved income generation options for girls and their families

ACTIONS

- **Identify the key problems or concerns** related to young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights in your region, community or country.
- **Gather information** to investigate the causes of these problems or concerns. Be sure to seek the perspectives of as many young people as possible who are most affected by these issues. Find out how people are affected by the problem, what the most serious consequences are, what factors contribute to the problem, and which of these factors is easiest or most important to address.
- Once you have identified the causes of the problems, **work out exactly what needs to change** in terms of public policy or laws in order to solve these problems.
- A useful exercise to refine the focus of your advocacy work is to analyse the public policies and laws that are relevant to the issue you have identified. Try to classify them in four categories:
 1. Acceptable laws and policies – both in wording and content – that work, respond to the population's needs, and are in agreement with your views on the advocacy issue.

We need to be very clear about exactly what it is that we are trying to change.

2. Existing laws where content must be modified somewhat to address the challenges faced by young people related to your advocacy issue.
 3. Existing laws that support your position, but are not implemented adequately.
 4. Laws that should be created in order to supplement, promote or support action in relation to your advocacy issue.
- Focus on one or a few specific change(s) that must take place to address the problem you have identified. Next, define a clear **goal**, a set of **objectives** and a main **advocacy expected result** based on the change(s) you wish to see.

Objectives should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART).

When identifying the problem, ask yourself:

1. Am I targeting the most relevant or important changes?
2. Is this change realistic?
3. Whose perspective am I basing my work on (young men, young women, non-governmental organizations, governments, media, donors etc)?
4. What would the people who will be most affected by this change say about my plan? Am I basing my work on their experiences? Am I working with them (at all stages: research, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation)?
5. Am I comfortable working on this topic? If not, try to find out more about it. (It is good to constantly challenge ourselves and our own attitudes. If you are still uncomfortable, then move onto the next biggest problem and so on until you come to something you do feel comfortable with.)
6. Have I prioritized the changes (if more than one)? Do I have enough data to support my advocacy?
7. Sources can include reports, academic studies, publications from non-governmental organizations, government statistics etc.
8. Do I know when important decisions will be made and can I ensure that my initiatives are timed to affect that decision?

Goal	A goal is a long-term general aim that will be achieved if the change you advocate for takes place. Goals are 'big picture' statements designed to resolve problems. It is usually best to define only one or two goals.
Objective	An objective is a specific element or action that is required to achieve your goal. Objectives should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART).
Expected result	This is the specific result that you expect your advocacy to lead to. It is important to define an advocacy expected result as early as possible, since it will guide your entire advocacy strategy. Be specific and realistic when developing the advocacy expected result. Consider the timeframe it will take to achieve your advocacy expected result, the basic principles or components that should be included in the result, the geographic scope, the specific population(s) and the resources necessary to achieve your expected result.

STEP 2: Identify who can make that change happen

Once we have correctly identified what needs to change, we must look at who can make this change happen – in other words, who are we targeting?

There are a lot of people you may want or need to convince: your peers, family, school, community leaders or parliamentarians. Keep in mind that the goal of advocacy is to influence policies, laws or structural change. When deciding who to target, think about who is most able to influence these changes.

Targets can be primary or secondary:

- **Primary targets** are decision makers with the power to directly influence the change you are seeking and your advocacy expected result.
- **Secondary targets** are individuals or groups that can influence the primary decision makers.

Primary targets may include community leaders, religious leaders, parliamentarians or other elected officials, legislators, international agencies, influential civil society organizations and legal professionals. Secondary targets may include schools, women's groups, youth organizations, health and social services

professionals, celebrities, public figures, media representatives and non-governmental organizations. Remember that some people will support you, others won't know a lot about the things you want to fight for, others may be undecided how they feel about the issues and some may have very strong opinions against your ideas.

ACTIONS

- **Identify your target audience.** Based on the change(s) you identified in step 1, brainstorm a list of individuals and institutions that can influence those changes. Try to think as broadly as possible.
- **Analyze and map your target audience.** Looking at the list of target audiences you developed, identify who is:
 - o supportive of your position and helpful for your cause (potential allies)
 - o obstructive of your position (potential opponents)
 - o neutral or undecided on your position
- **Prioritize your targets.** Which targets should you approach first? Remember you have limited time and resources. Choose wisely and have specific goals in mind. Ask yourself: Who can have the greatest impact (either positive or

Think about who is most able to influence these changes.

negative)? Who is easy to work with? Who is closest to this issue? Is there anyone that I absolutely can't ignore? Is their position too high, too low or too temporary to have any effect? Can I approach them one after another, or will the change only happen if I target them all at the same time?

- **Know when to switch targets.** Keep reassessing the situation in light of your overall goal and objectives. If you are not making much progress, be prepared to switch targets. Being flexible is vital for a successful advocacy strategy.
- **Monitor target audiences.** A person or institution's influence, position or level of interest in your advocacy goal can change over time. It is important to monitor potential target audiences regularly. You might find new allies or opponents at different phases of your advocacy efforts.

How much noise do you have to make for your message to be heard?

STEP 3:

Prepare to influence your advocacy targets

We have correctly identified the essential change, and identified who can make the change happen. The next step is to look at how we can influence these people to make the change happen. For this, we need to develop the right approach and the right tools to reach the identified targets effectively.

Approach

There are several different approaches to advocacy. For example, you can approach advocacy targets as an ally, you can name and shame, or you can incite competition between two targets to bring about change. When deciding what approach to use, we can apply the 'door test' to our list of targets. See the table on the opposite page. Imagine that the path towards change is a door. Is the door wide open, half open or closed? Is the door glass? Can it be opened by just one person or will it require a team effort? The 'door test' will help to determine timing, targets and strategy for advocacy.

ACTIONS

- **Decide whether you need to 'shout' or 'whisper'.**
- How friendly can your approach be? (It is usually better to start off friendly.) How much noise do you have to make for your message to be heard? (This will depend a lot on how close you are to your targets.)
- **Find out where the common ground is.** Focus initially on things that you and your targets agree on. Emphasize the things you have in common before highlighting differences.
- **Anticipate and prepare for the arguments.** How will you deal with the opposition? For every good thing that you advocate, be reminded of your opponent's opposition to it.

Be prepared for unexpected opposition!

Type of door	How do you approach it?
Open door (welcoming)	Go ahead; feel free to express your concerns and ideas openly! These are the people you should engage in your advocacy work.
Half open door (willing to listen)	Use more persuasive techniques – try to keep a foot in the door. For those who are interested in your issue, but not fully aligned with your position, you should try to convince them by increasing their knowledge on the issue and demonstrating that your advocacy expected result is the best way to address it. For those who only have a medium level of interest in your issue, but are favourable to your position, you should try to persuade them that your issue is a priority that aligns with your common position.
Closed door (not willing to listen)	<p>These are the people who are interested in your advocacy issue, but fully against your proposed solution (advocacy expected result). You will need to try to counteract their arguments and neutralize their influence. This is a highly delicate task. You must avoid using unethical practices or victimizing your opponents at all cost. Even though neutralization strategies are important, they should not become the focus of the advocacy project because they will promote actions that are reactive rather than proactive.</p> <p>Find different ways to reach the target (slip flyers under the door, find someone on the inside to open the door, etc), continue for a while, but know when to give up. You might also find it useful to see who is supporting you from behind closed doors before you try to get through a difficult door.</p>
Glass door (seems open, but you accidentally bump into it – the unwillingness is not obvious)	Be prepared for unexpected opposition! The level of interest in issues and the groups that support or oppose a particular solution change over time. It is important to monitor as many stakeholders as possible and to be prepared if their position changes.

Tools

Tools are essential components of any advocacy strategy. They help to communicate your messages and influence decision making. A vast array of tools can be used in advocacy efforts. These include factsheets, detailed reports, the media, demonstrations, meetings, petitions, public events and electronic social media, among others. Each tool has a different impact, so it is important to select tools that are most appropriate to reach your particular target(s).

Decide which tool(s) will be most effective for your specific advocacy goal and objectives.

ACTIONS

- **Make a list of all the 'tools' you can use to reach your targets.** Think about what tools or tactics have been used successfully in the past (by you or others). Why were these methods successful? How have you been persuaded in the past?
- **Make a list of the pros and cons of each tool you have identified.** Draw on your own experience and get advice from those who have used different tools.
- **Match tools with the targets you identified in step 2.** There is no such thing as the 'best tool' by itself – only 'the best tool in relation to the target, the aim of the advocacy, resources available and the cultural context'. Many tools will be suitable for many different targets. Ask yourself: What tools are most appropriate to reach my specific targets? What tools are more effective for use in the specific circumstances under which I am advocating? What tools are within budget?
- **Decide which tool(s) will be most effective for your specific advocacy goal and**

objectives. Don't get so carried away with the tool that you forget the purpose of it. A tool is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Plan when to use your tools.

- Think about the 'door test'. If the opposition at a particular point in time is too great, think carefully and consider leaving the issue temporarily and coming back to it later. In the meantime, you can continue doing simple activities to 'keep a foot in the door'.
- Map out special dates and public events that you can capitalize or 'piggyback' on (for International Youth Day, Human Rights Day, International Volunteer Day etc).
- Be flexible: be prepared to take advantage of unexpected opportunities that arise.

Working with the media

Working with the media has many advantages. The media can reach the masses and it has the power to change the attitudes of large numbers of people. It can legitimize action on other levels too, such as creating public support or interest for your advocacy issue. It can raise public consciousness about issues and it can correct misinformation.

However, there are also some limitations. Mass media is not ideal to convey complex information. In addition, mass media may have a limited ability to reach marginalized groups. When working with the media for advocacy, make sure that you choose media partners who are best suited and most able to help you reach your specific targets.



ACTIONS

- **Build a list of contacts and relationships with reporters and other media representatives. Find out who works on issues related to your advocacy.**
- Prepare press releases about your planned events and activities.
- Find opportunities to write articles, comment pieces or letters to the editor.
- Create your own media – using posters, social media and so on.

When working with the media for advocacy, make sure that you choose media partners who are best suited and most able to help you reach your specific targets.



Present solid evidence and get it right. Come prepared with solid facts and figures.

Working with policy makers

Policy makers may be willing to take up your cause, especially if it contributes to their political goals. Policy makers, such as parliamentarians, can help you achieve your advocacy goals in a number of ways, including:

- voting to pass or block a new law related to your advocacy issue
- raising your issue by tabling questions in parliament
- lobbying other parliamentarians and policy makers to support or become involved in your advocacy issue
- giving your issue greater visibility in parliament, their party, their constituency and/or the media
- acting as a figurehead, spokesperson or supporter of your campaign

However, one challenge of working with elected officials is their relatively short time in office. Most elected officials hold their positions for a few years at most. This means there is an ongoing need to build relationships and inform parliamentarians about your issues. It also means that building relationships with bureaucrats and civil servants (and other non-elected government representatives) is helpful to establish trustworthy rapport in the longer term.

ACTIONS

- **Establish a rapport.** It is important to establish a rapport with politicians and their staff and be seen by them to be a provider of accurate and reliable information. Remaining in contact with policy makers in-between key advocacy events can be a good way to keep in touch.
- **Find out what they want.** The best kind of negotiation is when both sides win. Find out what issues are important to the policy maker you speak with and tailor your pitch to match their interests. Talking in terms of another person's interests is the best way to keep their attention. Also, think about what you can offer policy makers in return for their support of your issue. Ideas include providing information, free technically sound advice, publicity, acknowledgement etc.
- **Present solid evidence and get it right.** Come prepared with solid facts and

figures. Be aware of data that might contradict your evidence and prepare counter-arguments to address them. Don't over-exaggerate evidence – policy decisions should be based on facts, not exaggerations. If you exaggerate, you also run the risk of policy makers discovering that you are over-embellishing your data, which might reduce your credibility.

- **Speak clearly and concisely.** Avoid jargon, but don't be afraid to use some technical terms once you have stated what you want in clear language.
- **Always leave an aide-memoire.** Prepare a one-page document that summarizes your key points, main asks, some relevant facts and your contact details. You can also include links to more in-depth reports or resources that support your position. Leave this one-page summary with every policy maker you speak to. Remember that policy makers are constantly approached by different advocates and lobbyists. They

don't have time to read a novel, so keep your aide-memoire short and attractive.

- **Present a solution for every problem.** Policy makers are not interested in problems. They are interested in solutions and they need solutions that are technically feasible, achievable in reasonable timeframes, backed by solid evidence and will win favour with the public or their constituencies.
- **Be friendly.** People are generally more open to listening when they are approached in a friendly way. Show respect for the opinions of policy makers – never say “you're wrong”. Give praise where praise is due – everyone likes to feel acknowledged and appreciated. Always thank policy makers for taking the time to speak to you.

Accurate, simple,
positive messages are
vital for successful
advocacy.

Messaging Tips

What you advocate on is the next most important area to think about. Here are a few points to remember about effective messages:

- Accurate, simple, positive messages are vital for successful advocacy.
- Effective messages have five important components: content that is relevant and accurate; language that is clear and appropriate for your audience; messaging that is credible and motivating; format and channels of communication that are appropriate for your audience; and delivery at an appropriate time and place.
- Make sure that you take into account what the opposition might say.
- Most importantly, as advocates, we need to feel comfortable and confident with our messages.

STEP 4:

Work with other young people

Young people's meaningful participation in decision making that affects their lives is a human right. When advocating for young people's participation, it's important that they are involved as equal partners throughout the entire process. For example, it is critical to involve young people in identifying key problems relating to their education and health challenges, devising solutions to address these problems, developing advocacy messages, and speaking in their own right to decision makers and other advocacy targets. It is also vital for young people to be involved in monitoring and evaluating advocacy efforts.

Meaningful youth participation doesn't just happen organically. It should be planned and formalized in advocacy strategies. This means including young people in designing advocacy strategies.

ACTIONS

- **Reach out to diverse young people.** Focus especially on those who are most affected by the issue you are advocating for.
- **Ensure meaningful youth participation in designing your advocacy strategy.** This might require scheduling meetings at times that are convenient for young people (such as after school hours or at weekends).
- **Participate in advocacy trainings when possible.**
- Find out if any non-governmental organizations or associations in your area offer capacity building opportunities to develop young people's advocacy skills.
- Regular capacity building will help strengthen your ability to be an effective advocate and will also allow you to meet other young advocates.

Meaningful youth participation doesn't just happen organically. It should be planned and formalized in advocacy strategies.

Successful advocacy generally relies on the support of a number of individuals and organizations.

STEP 5: Reach out to potential partners

Successful advocacy generally relies on the support of a number of individuals and organizations. To create support for your issue, it is important to be able to network, participate in coalitions, and influence as many individuals and organizations as possible to join in. In essence, a coalition is a group of like-minded people or organizations working together to achieve common goals. The good thing about coalitions is that by working together with like-minded groups, you will have combined intelligence and resources. It also avoids duplication of work. In addition, different groups often have access to different audiences and this can help you reach out and establish contacts where they didn't exist previously.

But remember that it is not always easy to find like-minded people to work with. Mapping can help identify potential allies and partners. It is also an important exercise to undertake to ensure that you are not duplicating the efforts of other groups.

ACTIONS

- **Think about what kind of support you need.** Ask yourself: What is my sphere of influence? What is the most that I can do? Can somebody else help me or do more? It is useful to know who to go to for support and advice, and who can help you voice your views so you can reach as wide an audience as possible.
- **Map out potential partners, allies and opponents.** Think about who else might be working on your issue or related issues. Who has access to your advocacy targets? Who else stands to gain something if your advocacy goals and objectives are achieved? Who has technical expertise or information that would be helpful for your advocacy?
- **Reach out to potential partners.** Present the goals, objectives and rationale of your advocacy to potential partners. Leave room for flexibility in your proposed strategy to accommodate the goals and objectives of potential partners.
- **Don't compromise your core values.** As mentioned earlier, it is not always easy to find like-minded partners. So, while flexibility is important, do not change your main ideals to suit someone else.

STEP 6:

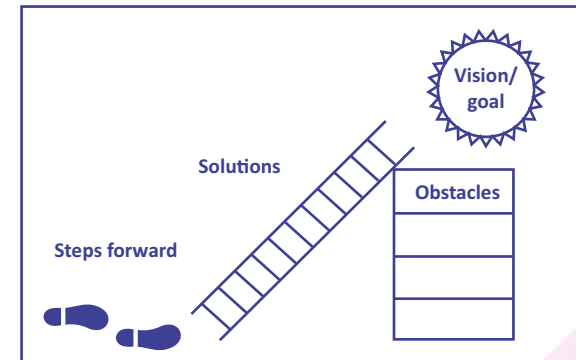
Prepare to overcome obstacles and risks

Next we need to identify **potential** obstacles or risk factors we might face. Not only will this help us to be prepared in case something goes wrong, but it might also stop us from wasting valuable time on something that is too risky to attempt in the first place. Of course, once we have identified these obstacles, we also need to come up with solutions to overcome them so that we can move forward on our journey to changing the world!

ACTIONS

- **Imagine you are going on a journey towards your advocacy goal.** This is represented by the sun. Draw this on a piece of paper and write your vision inside the sun – in other words, what are you aiming for?
- **Identify the steps you are already taking forward towards this goal.** This includes all the good things you are doing so far, such as planning your advocacy campaign, identifying targets and so on. Draw in some footsteps on your picture and write down your steps forward.
- **Identify the obstacles that might block your path on your journey towards your advocacy goal.** Write these in the form of a brick wall between your footsteps and the sun.
- **Identify how you will overcome each of these obstacles.** Write in your answers in the form of a ladder to help you climb over the wall. If some obstacles are too difficult to overcome, and if they represent risk factors that are so dangerous that they could ruin your project, is there a way you can change your plans? Can you take a different route to the same goal?

What obstacles might I face? How can I overcome obstacles and risks?



Tips for Dealing with opposition

An important obstacle you may face is dealing with those who do not agree with your ideas on youth participation. Being aware of who your opposition is, what their main goals are, what their main messages are, what tactics they use and who their allies are will help you prepare a more effective advocacy strategy. It's important to map out who your possible opponents are so that you can prepare for any attempts they might make to block your advocacy.

Here are some tips:

- Identify supportive members of the community, including the faith-based community, to work with you and promote your messages. Don't allow the extremists to take over what is 'morally right', leaving you to appear 'morally wrong'.
- Remember that some opposition groups resort to personal attacks and violence. Even though this could be rare, make sure you are prepared and that you are safe (get support from the authorities if necessary).
- Draw strength from the fact that you are working for a worthy cause. Do not resort to similar tactics.

Prepare! Prepare! Prepare!

- **Know yourself.** Before you can talk about an issue you must know how you feel about it yourself. If you are unsure or confused it will show.
- **Don't be afraid.** The most sensitive issues are often those that need change most urgently.
- Know what you are willing to **compromise** on and what is **non-negotiable**.
- **Create allies** to make your voice stronger. Get support from those who agree with your position. The more people who speak out on an issue, the louder, stronger and more convincing the voices of change will be.
- Have up to **three main points** you want to convey – keep the language simple, and use accurate and positive statements.
- If you're demanding change, **show** clearly what it looks like and how it works so much better. Back up all your arguments with **solid evidence**.
- Listen to, and take account of **voices of opposition**. Read opposition materials, sign up for their email bulletins and know what they are saying so you don't get caught off guard.
- Counter **myths** with facts.
- You can ask **difficult questions** too. For example, you could ask: "If you are against young people having abortions, why are you not actively promoting contraception?"
- **Choose your battles.** Don't spend all your time responding to the opposition but, at the same time, try not to give them a platform to air their views.

STEP 7:

Draw up an action plan

Now that you have completed much of the background work needed for your advocacy strategy, you can plan exactly what you are going to do, when, and who should lead it, and then compile your work into one implementation plan to guide you through your advocacy work.

Your analysis of the policy process will help you decide where to focus your advocacy in order to influence decision-making. The targets you identified – decision-makers – will determine your most effective approach at different stages of the decision-making process.

Your plan should be based on what sort of messages you need to give, to whom, and how they should be delivered. It will also detail who you want to work with, what coalitions or alliances, and how you intend to involve other young people. If you will be mobilising public pressure, your plan should say how and when. You will also need to consider what resources you need, what you have available and what you might be able to access. When you have done all these, consider any forthcoming opportunities for you to do advocacy work, and how to take advantage of them as fully as possible.

In developing your action plan:

- Identify different stages of the decision making process and when they take place, as well as which targets are most important at different stages.
- Revisit your list of advocacy opportunities and consider how these opportunities affect your timeline.
- Consider how other young people will be involved at different stages.
- Decide on the most effective approach and tactics for each target.
- Think of the most effective way to deliver your message to each audience.

You can now compile your work into one implementation plan to guide you through your advocacy work.

You now need to put together something that shows practically who will do what, and when. You can use your own tools, but a simple template might look like this.

EXAMPLE				
Goal:				
.....				
Objective(s):				
.....				
Output	Activities	By when	Who will do it	What resources are needed

STEP 8:

Mobilize resources

Most advocacy projects need some money to pay for materials, equipment, travel and other expenses. People can support you in many different ways.

People can give you:

- Money
- Time, as a volunteer
- Expertise or advice
- Materials or equipment – a gift in kind
- Facilities, such as the use of an office or a photocopier
- An endorsement or letter of support
- Their support by signing a petition or becoming a member
- Their contacts, by providing you with an introduction
- Their influence, by trying to persuade someone on your behalf

The first thing is to make a list of everything you need, based on your action plan, and then to put a cost against each item. You can now try to get cash support to pay for it. Or you can ask for the item to be donated or lent to you, which will save you having to buy it.

10 tips for raising money

1. Ask. If you don't nobody will know that you want something.
2. Tell them why their support is important, and what it will help you achieve.
3. Tell them about your future plans: and highlight your success so far.
4. Be specific about what you need – and ask for that.
5. If it's money you're asking for, say exactly what you will spend it on. If it's an in-kind gift, say how it will be used.
6. Include an explanatory leaflet about what you are doing.
7. Say thank you, promptly and nicely.
8. Don't be put off by refusals; the next person may say “Yes”.
9. Keep records of all the support you have received. And keep your supporters in touch with progress.
10. If you need to, don't be shy of going back and asking for more.

We need to think about monitoring and evaluating our advocacy work.

STEP 9: Monitor & evaluate progress

Monitoring is an ongoing and systematic activity used to track whether activities are carried out according to plan. Monitoring provides project managers with important information on progress, or lack of progress, in relation to project objectives. Monitoring helps to answer questions such as:

- How well are we doing?
 - Are we doing the activities we planned to do?
 - Are we following the designated timeline?
 - Are we over-spending or under-spending?
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses in the project?
- How relevant was our work in relation to the primary stakeholders and beneficiaries?
 - To what extent were the advocacy objectives achieved?
 - What contributed to and/or hindered these achievements?
 - Were the available resources (human, financial) utilized as planned and used in an effective way?
 - What are the key results, including intended and unintended results? What evidence is there that the advocacy has changed the lives of individuals and communities?

Evaluation is an assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, performance and sustainability of a project. Evaluation requires an in-depth review at specific points in the life of the project, usually at the mid-point or end of a project. Evaluation verifies whether project objectives have been achieved or not. It is a management tool that can assist in evidence-based decision making, and that provides valuable lessons for implementing organizations and their partners. Evaluation helps to answer questions such as:

It is not always easy to evaluate the effectiveness of an advocacy campaign, particularly because it is not easy to attribute change in a particular policy, for example, to one campaign. However, reviewing each step of the advocacy process is a useful way to track progress and assess gradual impact.

ACTIONS


- **Follow your action plan.** Based on the steps you have gone through so far, work out exactly what you need to do in order to move forward. For each action point, ask yourself: Who will do this? Who should they consult with? When? How? What materials and methods are needed? **Keep your actions simple!**
- **Add monitoring and evaluation into your action plan.** Use the following questions to guide your monitoring and evaluation plan:
 - o Who will check that the planned actions have been done?
 - o How will they check? (What indicators or evidence will show this?)
 - o How will I know if they've been done well or effectively? (What is the impact? Have I managed to change the thing I wanted to change? If not, why not?)
- o Has there been a negative, rather than a positive impact?
- o How can I improve the work? What would I do differently next time?
- o Who else needs to know my 'lessons learned'? Colleagues? Other organizations?
- **Take a regular look at how your action plan is going.** At regular intervals, sit with your team and discuss the activities you have done and talk through what went well, what didn't, what you have learned and what needs to be improved.
- **Document everything.** This means not just successes, but challenges too. No event is too small to be written up.


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