

UNICEF YOUTH ADVOCACY GUIDE



HISTORY OF THE YOUTH ADVOCACY GUIDE

This guide was born in 2018 during a series of workshops and remote engagements with young people across the African continent. UNICEF Africa Services Unit (ASU) and partner Youth@SAIIA held workshops in Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mozambique and Uganda, bringing together approximately 60 young people from these countries to discuss meaningful youth engagement and work towards the creation of the guide. An online call for stories was shared widely, asking young people from across Africa and the diaspora to reflect upon and share their stories of public advocacy and youth engagement. Selected participants took on editorial roles and joined as co-creators, assisting Youth@SAIIA and ASU in analysing and writing content for the guide.

In 2020, UNICEF's Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) team in UNICEF HQ partnered with ASU to adapt the guide, with support from AstraZeneca's Young Health Programme, to ensure it was relevant to young people from around the world. A global survey was launched to gather input on what young people worldwide wanted from a resource to support their advocacy journeys. Building upon the strong foundation of the 2018 Guide, youth advocates from Antigua, Barbados, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, India, Indonesia, State of Palestine, St. Lucia and Venezuela joined together to revise and add content, including expanded information on digital advocacy and social media and new content on mental wellness and self-care.

This 2022 Youth Advocacy Guide is the updated version of the 2018 Youth Advocacy Guide, and it is intended for a global audience. It contains general content about advocacy, useful tips to help you along your journey, and stories to inspire you. If your team is already using the 2018 guide, we suggest you continue using that version, but review the updated content of this 2022 adaptation to see if there are additional chapters and resources that may be useful for your context.

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INTRODUCTION

Dear reader,

This is normally where people list their impressive biographies, but the truth is we – the authors, contributors and editors of this guide – are just like you. We are young, with different lived experiences, and we come from various parts of the world. We are united by the idea that we can, and must, make positive changes for a better future.

But how do we do it?

Here are some truths you already know: Our communities, and the world, face huge challenges. While most of these were not caused by us, they've been left for us to deal with. Many of us experience these challenges daily. Poverty isn't something we just read about, education isn't guaranteed, inequality is something we constantly experience, and climate change is real and already making our taps run dry.

Now here's something you might not know: The world today is home to the largest generation of young people in history – 1.8 billion.

This Youth Advocacy Guide is intended to help YOU navigate and advocate for change. Think of this guide as your ally as you work to leave your mark on the world. It aims to lead you through the process of advocacy, combining clear 'how to' steps with inspirational stories from other young people who are striving to bring about change. When you read these stories of triumph and challenge, ranging from preventing child marriage to inspiring environmental activism, you'll be reminded that you are not alone.

Rather, you belong to a growing community of young people who slowly and systematically are changing the world.

So, dive in and read on. Change has to start somewhere – and we believe it begins with you, today.

From the creators of the 2018 YAG

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This Youth Advocacy Guide belongs to you. How you use the resource is up to you as a young advocate. The guide will support you along your advocacy journey, but

it is important to remember that each journey is different. That's what makes advocacy so special!

Here are a few tips on how to use this resource:

- You can use this guide in any order you want. While the resource is set up to be read from front to back, we also know that advocacy is messy and never quite happens exactly as you have planned. You will experience ups and downs, and that's OK! We suggest you take some time to read the entire document, but also feel free to jump around to different sections as you see fit. We have flagged connections between sections with this  icon.
- You will also see this icon referring you to the **Voices of Youth website**.  This website contains more resources for when you want additional, in-depth content on various advocacy subjects. Here, you will find four categories:
 - **Strengthening your advocacy**
 - **Being a better communicator**
 - **Selfcare as an advocate**
 - **Advocating together**
- The different sections of the YAG are designed to help you plan your advocacy work into the future. An accompanying workplan document is yours to write in. It contains space for you to reflect on key questions and document your decisions. You'll notice reminders (indicated by this icon on the right of the page) to complete your workplan.

Plan your work



UNDERSTANDING THE TERMS: YOUTH PARTICIPATION, ADVOCACY AND POLICY



YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Think of **youth participation** as a giant umbrella that covers many ways of being involved. All forms of advocacy done by young people can be defined as youth participation, but not all forms of youth participation are considered advocacy. Confused? Let's break it down.

Definition

Youth participation refers to how young people can get involved in processes, institutions and decisions that affect their lives. Since children and youth make up the majority of the global population, we believe these groups should participate in all areas related to social, political and economic life.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION CAN BE ACTIVE OR PASSIVE

- ➔ **Active youth participation** means you are engaging or ready to engage.
- ➔ **Passive youth participation** means you are willing to allow whatever happens to happen and you are not changing or controlling the situation.

For example, you can participate passively by listening to someone speak at an event, with no intention of getting involved in the issue or making any changes in your life. By contrast, you can participate actively by researching a topic, finding actions you can take, and raising awareness with the goal of changing the behaviour of others.



Both types of youth participation have a time and place – sometimes it is necessary to remain passively involved in an issue. Other times it is necessary to become actively involved by taking a definite stand. Learn to distinguish

between the two types and how they fit into your unique situation in terms of your own advocacy, how you want others to become involved, and how decision makers offer to engage with you.



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has some resources to help you learn more about key youth advocacy terms? You will find this in the **strengthening your advocacy** section! Check out the [website](#)

ADVOCACY

Definition

Advocacy focuses on doing something to support, recommend or implement actions linked to an idea or cause you care about. All people, including children and young people, are entitled to a say in the decisions that affect them. When you advocate for an issue, you hold those in charge accountable to ensure that your rights are protected and upheld. You are not asking for favours. Advocacy also means making your voices heard, as often the ideas or practices you want to change affect the most vulnerable people in society. Advocacy uses youth's collective voice to defend and protect rights or to support different initiatives or causes. Your advocacy can bring about changes in policies, programmes, actions, behaviours, institutions and investments.

Youth advocacy
is not about asking
for favours



People often associate **advocacy** with a dramatic event or impassioned cause and tend to think of advocacy on large scales, such as the rise of youth movements like #FeesMustFall to address university access in South Africa, the #FridaysForFuture global climate strike movement, and #BlackLivesMatter against police violence and racism. In many ways this is true. Advocacy can become something big, and it does involve collective action. But this only tells part of the story.

Advocacy can also be a small act, such as telling a friend not to bully someone and encouraging your friends to do the same. It can be more independent, such as researching and providing health information to a community leader to help promote healthy lifestyles. Or it can focus on communicating ideas, such as writing a blog or sharing your experiences. Advocacy can also concentrate on changing rules or laws and organizing legal demonstrations or rallies to support this cause.



The world is filled with inspiring youth advocates, each doing their bit to transform their societies. Now that you know more about advocacy and the many forms it can take, do you think you are a youth advocate? Or could you become one?

POLICY

Most institutions or organizations have **policies** that provide a guide for how to make decisions. At the highest level are global policies – agreements between countries on how to engage in certain areas, such as trade or the environment. National policies outline a country's objectives and its plans to achieve those. Company policies detail how employees should behave in a work environment, and school policies outline appropriate behaviour for students and staff.

If you can use your advocacy work to influence the fundamental principles that guide decisions, you will have a better chance of effecting sustainable change. This is why advocacy always links back to policy. We will focus on policy engagement in a later section in this guide.

Definition

A policy is a set of principles, ideas or plans that guide decisions to achieve a certain outcome. Policies are important because they determine how we behave and affect how we experience our everyday lives.



If you still feel a bit uncertain about some of these ideas, that's OK. As you begin your advocacy journey, you will start to see how everything is interconnected. There is no perfect time to start. Find an entry point and jump in!



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STARTING WITH YOU



Before you can start any advocacy process, you need to start with yourself. Think a little bit about what you want to do and why. Also think about what you bring to the discussion and where you might be able to make a difference. Remember that advocacy is not always immediate and sometimes your efforts need to continue long-term.

It is also important to identify areas that you need to develop and become better at. Advocacy is a constant process of learning and understanding. Reflecting on these areas will also help you identify other people you need to work with. Some of the main roles of people involved in the advocacy process include researchers, speakers, writers or implementers.



RESEARCHER

Research is all about investigation, finding out why things are a certain way, how they came to be that way, and how they might be able to change.



SPEAKER

Speaking with people is a powerful way to share ideas. Good speakers connect with their audience and can inspire people to take action in different ways.



WRITER

Good writing connects things – ideas, concepts, realities – and helps to tell a story that people can connect to.



IMPLEMENTER

An implementer likes to get things done, be involved in activities and get their hands dirty. They have an important role to play throughout the advocacy process, helping to move activities along in a systematic way.



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has resources to help you learn more about the different roles involved in the advocacy process? You will find this in the **strengthening your advocacy** section! Check out the [website](#)

Advocacy has a place for everyone. Each individual brings a unique set of skills and abilities that play a role in the process. This is why teamwork is so important. You can gather a group of people who collectively provide all the skills and abilities needed to effectively achieve your advocacy goals.

The advocacy process includes fact-finding, planning, engaging with policy, building momentum and making individual lifestyle choices. In some ways, these components are linear – you gather information and become knowledgeable before you develop a plan. In other ways they are circular – the more you engage with policy, the more you may identify activities to include in your plan or issues you need to research further.



As a youth advocate, you can advocate on issues you are passionate about at the community, national, regional, continental or international level.

#MyStory

DIDO, BULGARIA

Being a blind person in a post-communist country is a challenging experience. For 45 years we were only allowed to go to two schools in Western or Eastern Bulgaria, and we had to live on the outer edges of the cities. My parents had to fight with mainstream schools so I could attend them. My teachers were not prepared to work with me.

My dedication to becoming an actor allowed me to meet other active blind people. A group of us founded Vizioner Foundation in 2016 and quickly started to give back to the blind community. We started organizing projects ranging from job interview preparation to storytelling, music production and mastering, and photography for the blind.

When I started working with partner NGOs from the Balkans and Europe, I realized that young people with visual disabilities feel isolated and excluded everywhere. As a blind photographer I have encountered many blind people who are hesitant to try photography, for example. I decided to get involved with the United Nations and UNICEF.

As an advocate working alongside other young leaders with disabilities, I feel we need to change attitudes and behaviours at the personal and organizational levels. We need young people without disabilities to work alongside us, but those of us with disabilities must be clear about what we need and how others can help. In addition, accessibility and budgeting for it cannot be afterthoughts.

FACT-FINDING



CHOOSING YOUR ISSUE

People become interested in different issues and causes for different reasons and that's good – our society experiences many challenges, and we need everyone to get involved in their own unique way. Your chosen issue might deal with advocacy at the highest level on an international stage or might focus on a grassroots initiative within your community. One is not better or more important than the other, but they do require different approaches.

No matter what your area of interest, the most important thing is that you are passionate about your cause and feel inspired and motivated to get involved.



Plan your work

Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project! Check out the [YAG Workplan](#).



When looking for your issue, think about your current situation as well as the future. Soon, the global population will be the youngest we have seen in decades. By 2030, two billion young people will be seeking employment and education opportunities. What will this mean for education, jobs and health care? What decisions need to be made today to satisfy people's needs in 10, 15 or even 30 years?

Education

Jobs

Health care



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has some resources to inspire you when starting your advocacy journey? You will find this in the **strengthening your advocacy** section! Check out the [website](#)

GATHERING INFORMATION

The first step in an advocacy process is to gain a deeper understanding about your issue or topic. This lets you use your skills as a researcher. The more you understand your topic and the issues surrounding it, the better equipped you will be to take action.

Plan your work

Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project!
Check out the YAG Workplan.

Some topics you need to gather information on include:

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND



SOCIAL CONTEXT



POLITICAL CONTEXT



HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

It is unlikely that your issue came out of nowhere, so you need to understand the history that led to the current situation and place your issue within the historic context of your community.

Remember, to ensure sustainable change, you need to find the root cause of a problem and knowing its history will help you do this. Some of the questions you can ask include:

- What is the issue?
- When did this issue begin?
- What are some of the events that led to or may have influenced this issue?
- Who was involved in this issue?
- What are some of the social impacts of this issue?

In addition, reflecting upon the history of an issue helps you understand how people feel. Most issues affect people at a personal level, and people likely have many different opinions and feelings about your issue. Understanding

the history and background, and specifically how an issue relates to your community or area, will help you to understand your issue's social context and the different perspectives people have developed over the years.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

Understanding the social context of your issue is extremely important. For your cause to be successful, you will need support from people at different levels. You need to understand the different perspectives and opinions that people have about your topic so you can start to work with them and build relationships that contribute towards finding a solution.

Remember, in many cases people may have strong emotions about a topic. What seems like a simple issue to you might represent something much bigger to someone else. Some people might stand strongly for or against your cause. Researching the social and cultural dynamics and understanding how different people relate to your topic will help you navigate the situation.

Some questions you can explore include:

- Who in the community is involved, either positively or negatively, in the issue? Think about community members (including other young people), government representatives, school boards and local leadership.
- How do these people relate to each other? Do good relationships exist within the community or is there tension between groups?
- What social and cultural considerations may influence the topic? For example, consider what role religion, culture, race, ethnicity and gender may play.
- What engagement has already occurred around the issue?
- Will youth advocates put themselves at personal risk by taking on these issues? What security or safety measures can you take to protect yourselves?

Pay particular attention to the last question. No matter how important your issue is to you, advocating for it should never put you, or any other person, in danger. To keep yourself safe, you need to manage risks. Make sure you understand the power dynamics, as well as the cultural and political context, of your country. You have the right to remain protected from harm, so learn which people and places you can turn to for help, if needed. For more information on protecting and promoting your mental health, see the section on **advocacy and mental wellness** 



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has some resources on how to look after yourself while gathering information? You will find this in the **selfcare as an advocate** section! Check out the **website**



Remember: Bringing about change is central to advocacy. To do this, you need to gather support and build relationships. Forming alliances and working with other passionate young people around your issue are extremely important and powerful tools in advocacy. See the section on **networking and fostering allyship  for more in-depth discussion.**

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Every situation, whether it is a school project or community initiative, has a political context. This refers to the processes and structures in place that define and guide

your topic, as well as the people who control them. First, develop a general understanding of your context by answering these questions:

- Who are the rule makers, and how are decisions made?
- How can people engage with decision makers? **For example, can you attend any public meetings, community gatherings or other relevant events? Do you need to write letters or put together a formal submission or petition?**
- How are voices represented within the community? Do any local structures exist that represent the community?

Second, gain a deeper understanding of your context by reading and understanding the existing policies or rules relating to your issue. For example, well-developed policies might exist but have weak implementation. We will go into more detail about **policies**  in a later section.

Now that you know what information you need, you can start gathering it. There are two main ways to find information: through desktop research and through personal engagement.



CONDUCTING DESKTOP RESEARCH

Desktop research means gathering published information about a topic. You can conduct research online or go to the library to collect books and read newspapers, journals, documents or reports. Using different sources of information will help you broaden your perspective and build your understanding. Take notes while reading documents

and keep track of different ideas. And make sure you have a system for saving and organizing your documents for future reference. The process of investigation and learning is ongoing, and keeping a record of your research and activities will help you organize your thoughts, as well as provide a list of facts to back up your ideas.



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has some resources on how to tell if a source of information is credible? You will find this in the **strengthening your advocacy** section! Check out the [website](#)

The internet is a great tool for doing research, but it's important to ensure the credibility of information. Pay specific attention to what sites you visit and make sure you use official websites, reputable news agencies or respectable academic journals. The strength of your understanding will come from the strength of your information, so make sure you use reliable, accurate sources.

Plan your work

Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project! Check out the **YAG Workplan**.

It can be difficult to determine whether a piece of information is credible or not, especially on the internet, so here are some questions to ask yourself:

- **WHO.** Who published the information? Why did they publish it – do they have anything to gain from it? Does the author have direct experience with the topic? Are they respected by large organizations, governments and academia as an expert?
- **WHAT.** What is the main idea of the piece, and are claims backed up by evidence? Look for pieces with supporting information and a list of verifiable resources.
- **WHERE.** Where did you find the information? Examine the source of your information and make sure it is reliable. If using a website, look for official sites with domains such as .gov, .ac or .edu.
- **WHEN.** When was the information written? Make sure your information remains relevant or provides some historical context if it is an older piece.
- **WHY.** What was the reason behind publishing this piece? Try to identify the agenda or objective behind the piece and analyse whether it appears biased.

EXPANDING PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT

Personal engagement offers another way to gather information. This is as simple as talking to different stakeholders to gather opinions and perspectives. This will help you understand how people are affected by and feel about your issue.

Plan your work

Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project!
Check out the **YAG Workplan**.

Definition

A **stakeholder** is any person, group, organization, government department, company or institution that has interest in a particular issue or cause. Some might be more directly linked to the issue than others, so it makes sense to create a map or diagram of all the groups and people that seem connected to your work.

It is important to speak to diverse groups of people, many of which you should have identified in your social context research. Some examples include:

- Peers and other young people
- Government officials
- Experts and academics
- Community-based organizations (CBOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or international non-governmental organizations (INGOs)
- Religious groups
- Private sector organizations
- Colleagues
- Parents, guardians and family members



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has some resources on how to engage with different community groups? You will find this in the **advocating together** section! Check out the [website](#)

Prepare to engage with people by learning about them and their general relationship to the issue. You can also make a list of questions to ask, such as:

- What do they think about the issue, and how does it affect them?
- How are they involved in the issue, and what has been their experience?
- What do they see as possible opportunities and solutions?
- Are they willing to participate in advocacy activities?

As you engage with people, verify whether the information you found through your desktop research matches what people tell you. Though sometimes difficult, try to

distinguish between fact and opinion. It's important to understand the difference between actual occurrences and what people think about those events.

#CaseStudy

TURNING HOPE INTO REALITY

As a young registered nurse in Lesotho, Mamello Makhele couldn't figure out why HIV patients weren't adhering to their medical treatment plans. She knew all the scientific facts and did research on different treatment programmes, but this didn't explain why the people she worked with were not taking their medication regularly.

Eventually, Mamello decided to conduct a different kind of research and started a fact-finding process. She started talking to community members about their lives and listened to their stories. Mamello learned that patients didn't need more awareness-raising campaigns or information about medication; they wanted shorter queues and more medical professionals to provide them with adequate care. As a result of understaffed facilities, many HIV patients were going without medication.

Mamello thought about creative ways to address this situation and came up with an idea to develop a medical app that people could use on their cell phones. She had limited resources and technical expertise, but she kept looking for ways to make the idea a reality. Eventually, Mamello managed to find the technical help she needed and developed the MobiHope app. She entered her app into the World Health Organization (WHO) competition in health technology where it gained the attention of various organizations, including her own government. She secured sponsorship to develop the app and it is now set to officially roll out throughout the country, making healthcare services more accessible to people in need.

UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGING WITH POLICIES



At the beginning of this guide, we noted that youth-focused policies are imperative to realizing a sustainable future. Youth advocates need to equip themselves with skills to best engage with these policies. Engaging with policy may seem intimidating; however, understanding which policies exist and which affect your issue will ultimately help your cause and improve your advocacy.

As a reminder, a policy is a set of plans or methods to make decisions or achieve a course of action. Many policies may already exist on your issue or cause on a local, national, regional or even global level. Finding and reading these policies might pose a challenge, but your actions will be far more effective if you do this. Remember, not every advocacy project gets linked to a policy. Your action could focus on changing attitudes towards a specific issue, and policy may not be the most effective object of your actions. But for greater change, policy will always play at least some role.

IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT POLICY

To begin, you need to identify which policy or policies you are looking for and how to access these documents. Try to determine the following:

- What policy aligns with your issue or cause?
- Is the policy open for public comment, or is it only available for you to use as background information?
- At the local or national level, which department or ministry is responsible for your advocacy issue?
- Which regional or international organizations might have pertinent policies?
- Are the documents you need accessible on the internet or in your schools, communities, local government offices or district offices?

Policies are public documents that should be easily available, but you may find it difficult to track them down. Your fact-finding should help you figure out where to find them. For some people, advocating and working to ensure policies remain easily accessible by the public is an advocacy goal in itself. For example, if you want to access a national

policy on health but your country hasn't made the document available online, you could advocate that your government upload all policy documents online for public access.

READING AND UNDERSTANDING A POLICY

Let's be honest. Policy documents can be boring or difficult to read – or sometimes both.

They can contain technical or complicated language that even the most experienced advocate struggles to read. As a result, many young people don't read these documents, meaning that youth voices often remain absent in the policies that affect their lives.

It's important to develop the ability to read, understand and comment on policy. You shouldn't get discouraged if at first you find policy participation difficult, however. You will become better at it with practice.

Start by reading through the document to determine if the policy aligns with your issue.

Here are some useful steps:

01	Begin by reading the TABLE OF CONTENTS to get a sense of what the document contains.	02	Do some RESEARCH to gather background information on the policy document – when was it written? Why was it written? Who was involved in the creation process?	03	Read the INTRODUCTION and EXECUTIVE SUMMARY . These will give you a good overview of the document's focus.
04	When you come across new or difficult words, use a DICTIONARY or web search to improve your understanding. You will be surprised at how much simpler the document becomes once you understand key concepts and terms.	05	Search an ELECTRONIC VERSION of the document for particular keywords to help you investigate how often 'youth' is mentioned, how often the subject issue (e.g., education, health, gender-based violence) is mentioned, and the context in which these are mentioned.	06	Pay attention to the LANGUAGE used, particularly in action items. Is the language committal or non-committal? For example, look at the difference between "We will eradicate poverty by 2030" and "We encourage the eradication of poverty by 2030." You can hold leaders accountable for what they have committed to do but not what they encourage or motivate.
07	Analyse the SOURCES of the information used in the policy document.	08	Search online for POLICY DOCUMENT KEYWORDS to see if you can find any credible news reports, summaries or additional sources of information on the topic.	09	GET HELP. Reach out to other young people or others from your network to discuss the policy.

You may need to read the document several times or ask for help to fully grasp the content. If you notice any gaps in the document or if the policy does not effectively speak to the needs of the community, make notes on where you see possible improvements. For example, a policy likely needs amendments if it does not mention young people as stakeholders or if it discriminates against marginalized groups.

Once you have understood a policy, it may lead you to conduct further research regarding a particular issue. A policy may contain good statistics, provide information about the history of the subject matter, and detail involved stakeholders. Make notes and investigate further.

COMMENTING ON POLICY



Making comments on a policy may seem scary. But as a young person, you have a voice and should be allowed to engage with any policy that affects your life.

Begin by finding out how the policy was created and what the rules say about making changes to it. Is there a way for young people to comment on the policy? If no commenting process exists or public input is not encouraged, don't give up. You can partner with other young people and organizations to call for an open consultative process that includes feedback from youth and other community members. You might also want to consider advocating for a child- or youth-friendly version of an important policy.

This might seem obvious, but read the whole document before commenting. If not, you could easily spend time commenting on one section only to find your points addressed further on. Also try to read other policies, laws and acts that are referenced within the current document. Knowing about other connected policies will help you become aware of potential overlaps or duplication of resources. Finally, many policies connect to international agreements made by your country. You will have an easier time understanding your local policies if you also have knowledge of these global agreements.



At this point you're probably thinking, "How am I expected to do all of this?" Take a deep breath and take it one step at a time. Changing the world doesn't happen overnight.



When you are ready, here are a few ways to approach commenting on a policy document:

GENERAL COMMENTS



Whether you write a few sentences or a page, try to provide your overall views on the document. You can provide personal comments, but you should also refer to your fact-finding research to help you include a wider perspective. General comments can also offer new ideas and solutions that are not already in the policy.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS



If you feel comfortable moving beyond general comments, you can then focus on specific sections of the policy document that are relevant to you and your cause. Identify gaps and weaknesses and offer ways to strengthen pertinent sections.

CHANGES TO THE LANGUAGE



A strong policy should use decisive and progressive language. It should inspire action and give timelines. Language should also be simple, inclusive and non-discriminatory. Editing the language of a policy can strengthen the document and make it more impactful.

Generally, the more specific you are, the more useful your comments. If you will present your comments verbally, make sure to come prepared with talking points. Write down your thoughts while reading the document, as well as specific comments about the policy. You will need these when you enter spaces where you can voice your opinions.

As you can see, it's important to identify how your issue relates to certain policies and engage with those policies to bring about long-lasting, systematic change. Remember that policies are specific to institutions – organizations, schools or governments, for example – and guide behaviour and decisions. You can apply your policy engagement skills in a school environment, workplace or community setting or at broader national or global levels.

If the policy is past the commenting phase and has already been finalized, focus instead on its implementation. You can take a deeper look at the promises made around the policy. Try commenting on the mechanisms put in place to ensure policy goals are accomplished.

#CaseStudy

CHANGING NATIONAL LAW

At the age of 17, Loveness Mudzuru from Zimbabwe was already married and expecting her second child. Her childhood dream of becoming a lawyer was shattered and she was living a life she had not chosen. When her mother died, Loveness realized that her younger sister would face a similar fate. She decided then and there to act to end child marriage.

“I had been disturbed by the fact that I was a child bride and I had no way of going back to school. It was difficult to see people my age going to school every day while I was sweeping the compound.”

Loveness’s sister-in-law introduced her to an organization that works to end child marriage. There, she met many like-minded young women and got involved in campaigns to combat child marriage. Loveness and another young woman embarked on a journey to change the national policy on the legal age of marriage. After studying multiple national policies and international agreements, they put together an argument that went all the way to the Constitutional Court of Zimbabwe. The court ruled in their favour and the law now states that the minimum age for marriage is 18 years, putting an end to formal child marriage.



NETWORKING AND FOSTERING ALLYSHIP



Bringing about collective change is the spirit of advocacy. Individual change has benefit, but collective change makes advocacy work for everyone, not just a few people. Collective change can only come through group action. That means gathering support and working with others, usually done through building networks and fostering allyship.

Plan your work ▶

Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project!
Check out the YAG Workplan.

NETWORKING

How do you build networks and foster allyship?

Definition

Your **network** is made up of the people you know – friends, family, colleagues, peers – as well as the people they know (your extended network). Networking sounds intimidating, but it simply means initiating and maintaining contact with individuals and organizations.



Networks exist and collaborate on different platforms and settings. Some networks thrive on online platforms, as they are a group of people based in different parts of your country or the world. In other cases, networks are groups of people who may physically collaborate on projects.

Networking can serve many purposes. It can help you access opportunities you might not find on your own; it can introduce you to people who can offer advice or provide a different perspective; and it can connect you with people who have varying skills. Networking with other passionate people can help you better understand your cause and how it affects others. Along the way you will meet many people who share your viewpoint, but you also will discover there is no one-size-fits-all answer to a problem. What works for you might not work for others. Networking will help your advocacy become more inclusive and also broaden your perspective.

You can build your network by attending events, meeting people through social media or other online platforms, or by connecting with people during your daily life. However, approaching networking opportunities with a robot-like focus on attending as many events as possible or getting everyone's business card is not a helpful approach. Your goal should be to find and grow a community.



Here are some tips to get you started on networking:

- **TRY MAKING A 'NETWORK MAP.'** Put yourself at the centre, and draw circles around yourself to help visualize all the groups that you intersect with in your life (for example, in your town or village, at your school, with any sports groups, religious groups, on social media, etc.). This can help you think about the many different places and spaces where you intersect with people.
- **TAKE SOME TIME TO CONSIDER WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THE PEOPLE IN THESE NETWORKS.** You can look to social media for those who share your values who you can connect with, or look for events (local or online) where you can meet people. Or you can identify people within your current network who can connect you to others.
- **LOOK FOR EXISTING YOUTH COMMUNITIES OR ORGANIZATIONS YOU CAN JOIN OR COLLABORATE WITH.** Consider what commitment or skill you can provide or work you can do to become actively involved in their networks.
- **REMEMBER THAT NETWORKING CAN HAPPEN ANYTIME!** It can be at a sporting event, a religious meeting place, a family gathering or really anywhere.
- **CONSIDER HOW YOU WILL MAINTAIN YOUR CONNECTIONS ONCE YOU'VE MADE THEM.**

We know that networking might feel stressful and uncomfortable, and many people get nervous when they think about the pressures of networking. Try to be easy on yourself. Networking really means connecting and building relationships, and it takes time. You won't experience instant gratification, but the effort you expend will pay dividends. Good networking involves learning about others and meeting others who want to learn about you. Ultimately you want to build a network of people you can turn to for support – and who feel comfortable asking for your help, as well.



Also see the section on **mental wellness**  for some calming breathing exercises that may help when preparing to network.

#CaseStudy

ADVOCACY PROFILE: SHOU NATER, LEBANON

Shou Nater is an advocacy campaign that falls within the framework of the Youth Citizens of Today project implemented in partnership with Masar Association and UNICEF Lebanon and led by CLAC Qaa Youth Initiative. In Arabic, 'Shou Nater' means, 'What are you waiting for?' This youth-led campaign focuses on youth civic engagement and aims to empower young people with life skills and show them the importance of volunteerism and community service. The project includes online sessions about teamwork, time management and volunteerism. The project's success is evident by the wide impact we have achieved and by the motivated and skilled youth that were the fruit of Shou Nater and who now volunteer with CLAC Qaa. We are particularly proud of Tabitha. Here is her story:

Tabitha was a victim of bullying for most of her life. Her peers mocked her name as well as her family's name, her weight, her glasses and more. This unfortunate situation affected her so strongly that she refused to leave her house. She feared meeting new people who might judge and harass her, so she became a near-hermit.

Tabitha heard about Shou Nater through social media. She reacted to the project's posts and was impressed by the idea and its impact. We approached Tabitha after seeing her comments on social media and asked her to join our youth initiative as a volunteer. She hesitated at first and worried that she might be bullied or marginalized by the other youth. We encouraged her to try. The first step in her new journey was participating in UNICEF's response to the Beirut blast. She was thrilled to help the affected people and felt like an active member of the community where her voice was heard.

The experience gave her confidence, and she realized the importance of her role in her community. Now Tabitha is involved in many NGOs, gaining more experience, and developing her personality and skills. She has become a role model in her community, and her mission now is to inspire peers and make a positive impact in society.



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has some resources on how to strengthen your engagement with others? You will find this in the **advocating together** section!

Check out the [website](#)

FOSTERING ALLYSHIP

Networking offers new connections, but much more benefit comes from genuinely building relationships and creating allies. Building a supportive group of allies is generally more deliberate and strategic (as compared to networking). Your allies are closer, trusted people around you who offer their support, assistance, advice, information, protection and even friendship. They supplement your skills and compensate for your weaknesses with their unique abilities and approaches and also can help you view situations from a different perspective. Your allies are there when you need to work through an idea, need emotional support or want someone to just pause and listen.

Note that here we use ‘allies’ in the general sense – to mean a group of supportive people. Today, you may hear the term ‘allyship’ commonly used in conversations regarding social justice, diversity and equity. In this sense, allyship is used as a term for someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, ethnicity, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with marginalized groups.

Fostering allyship takes commitment and practice. You might find allies in younger people, peers or older people. If you work in multidisciplinary teams (as most of us do) earning the respect and partnership of those in other disciplines will make you a more effective teammate.

Intergenerational dialogue brings together people of different ages to share their experiences and ideas about how to improve the community and address its challenges. There is great benefit to combining the wisdom of older people who have more life experiences with the views and voices of children and youth. Intergenerational dialogue only works if young people and adults demonstrate mutual respect. Therefore, it's important to engage with people of all ages respectfully and kindly, bearing in mind their perspective and context.

Whether you want to serve as someone's ally or are seeking support for your cause, consider the qualities that make a good ally – someone who:

- listens to and believes the people who are affected by an issue
- becomes aware of their own biases and works to eradicate them
- offers support but doesn't assume they know what's best
- provides their viewpoint but doesn't speak over others
- educates themselves about an issue or others' experiences
- works to make space for others, especially in places where others have been excluded

A strong ally for youth, for instance, values and respects young people, treats them as equal partners, and provides

the support young people need to speak up and participate meaningfully in society.

How do you identify potential allies for important causes? These tips will help you build these allyships:

- **IDENTIFY PEOPLE** with whom you have a good relationship or around whom you feel comfortable.
- **THINK ABOUT DEVELOPING ALLYSHIPS IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.**
While more senior allies can remove roadblocks and provide valuable advice, you also need junior allies who can support you as a leader and mentor.
- **BE PROACTIVE** in reaching out to offer help with something, even before someone asks you.
- **BE GRACIOUS** when an ally asks for your help; however, don't feel obligated to fulfil their request. Be honest about what you are able to do.

Demonstrate integrity. Be honest and trustworthy and follow through on what you say you will do. Like other relationships in your network, your ally relationships are reciprocal. Allies are earned. You earn an ally by being an ally first.

- **COMMUNICATE.** Stay in touch during times when you don't need anything.
- **BE CONSIDERATE OF WHAT YOU ASK.** Don't put an ally in an awkward or sensitive position.
- **THINK ABOUT WHO YOU CONSIDER YOUR ALLIES TO BE.** Have you been intentional about these relationships?



ATTENDING CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS WITH DECISION MAKERS



Attending and actively participating in key events will benefit your advocacy and allow you to engage with potential supporters and key stakeholders. These events vary widely – you could attend an organized meeting, a training or workshop, a conference or some other special occasion. Attending a lot of events can be fun, but you should think about your actions critically. Consider each engagement's relevance and how your involvement would benefit your cause before you commit to attending. It is also important to enter the space knowing what you hope to get out of the meeting.



Be careful of becoming a 'conference hopper' and losing yourself in the process. Your time and energy are some of your most valuable resources as an advocate. You do not want to find yourself going from one conference or workshop to another, hopping around to different events. You should always consider the implications of your attendance. What does attending this event mean for your mental and physical well-being? What resources will you use to attend this event that could be used elsewhere? What is your carbon footprint for this trip?

You can seek out meetings and conferences taking place in your community and online that suit your advocacy work. As you build your network, ask people how best to get involved and how to get invitations to events that interest you.

Many young people feel as though event opportunities are closed off to them, possibly due to financial constraints or because they don't feel welcome in these spaces. They might also assume they don't have the necessary qualifications or skills to attend meetings, workshops or conferences. While you may be just beginning your education or career, remember that your experiences and ideas are important.

You might not be the head of an organization or hold a PhD, but your lived experience as a young person matters and your voice and views should be heard. Having confidence in yourself is a big part of the battle. Show up. Listen. Say something if you feel the time is right. Make contact with people. None of this is easy. But you will feel so much better for having tried and having put yourself out there.



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has some resources with tips for adults and young people on how to support meaningful engagement? You will find this in the **advocating together** section! Check out the [website](#)

FINDING SPACES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Each opportunity to engage is different. Events vary in terms of their purpose and setting, so how you prepare and the actions you take while attending will differ. Events

can take place in person and online, and can be anything from a 30-minute conversation to a daylong engagement. Here are some examples:

MEETING

- This can be an engagement between two people or a group of people.
- Meetings can be organized to discuss an issue or make a decision in a formal or informal setting.



CONFERENCE

- Conferences are larger, more specific meetings, where participants come together to present, debate and discuss a particular issue or topic.
- Different conferences can have different outcomes, such as knowledge sharing, creating a shared document or communiqué or reaching some kind of agreement as a group.



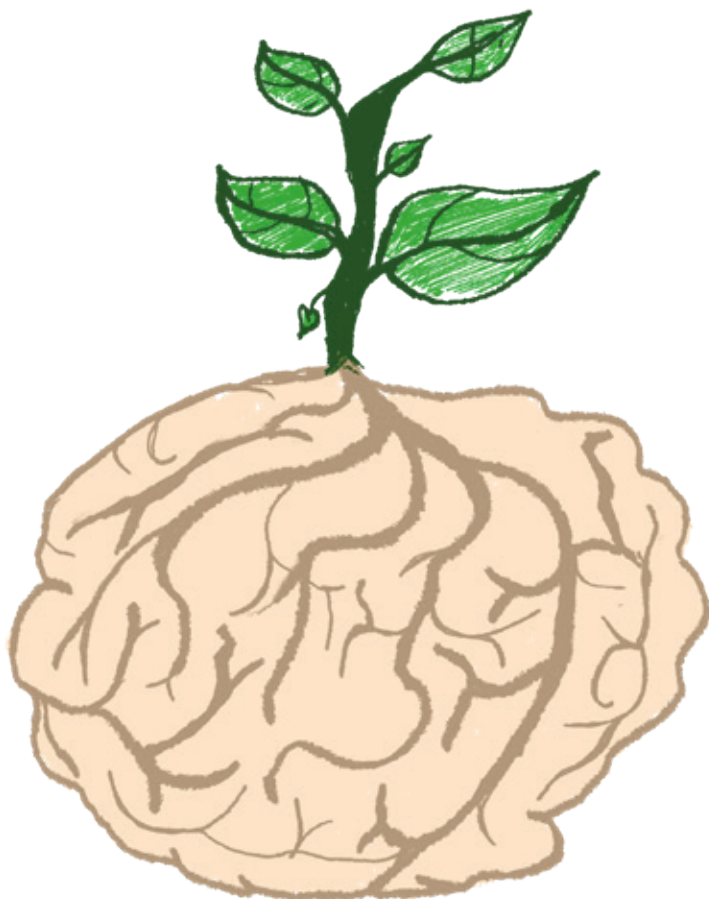
TRAINING/WORKSHOP

- Trainings aim to equip participants with new skills and information relating to a specific topic.
- These engagements can vary in size and length, as well as level of interactivity.



Let's start by exploring how you can get into the room. Here are some ideas:

- **GET ON THE LIST.** Securing an invitation to a local or national meeting might be as simple as joining the right mailing list or network. Identify organizations and government agencies that work on your issue. Ask if they hold stakeholder meetings and whether you can get added to a general mailing list or list of contacts for upcoming meetings.
- **USE SOCIAL MEDIA.** Many decision makers use social media platforms. If you are on social media, make sure you follow government officials, government departments, organizations, media, business or other stakeholders related to your issue and see if they share information about meetings, workshops or conferences.
- **LET YOUR NETWORK KNOW ABOUT YOUR INTENT TO ENGAGE.** You may be surprised by how many potential invitations people miss because they do not tell others about their desire to participate. People are less likely to invite you if they do not know you'd like to take part. Reach out to people who have participated in or organized an event that interests you.
- **ORGANIZE THE EVENT YOURSELF.** If you want to discuss an issue with a specific group of people, consider organizing the appropriate event. Have a look at the section on [building momentum](#)  for guidance on how to do this.



PREPARING TO ATTEND AN EVENT

Once you have found your way into an event, you need to prepare for your engagement. Good preparation will allow you to enjoy your experience and use it to better your advocacy.

Having some kind of background information on the event and the issues being discussed will be useful. Remember that each event is different, so you will need to alter your preparation accordingly. Referring back to the fact-finding section may help you. Here are some general points to consider:

Plan your work

Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project!
Check out the YAG Workplan.

GATHER INFORMATION ON THE EVENT ITSELF

- Who is organizing the event?
- Where is the event taking place?
- What is the purpose and history of the event?
- Who will be attending the event?
- What are some of the activities planned for the event?

RESEARCH THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE EVENT

- What issues will be discussed during the event?
- Are there any specific documents you need to be aware of?
- Is there any relevant information you need before attending?

PREPARE FOR THE ROLE YOU WILL PLAY IN THE EVENT

- Is this an opportunity to observe and learn or will you speak out?
- Will you propose some kind of change or attempt to influence a decision being made?
- Are you representing a larger group or just yourself?
- How can you prepare for this?

ORGANIZE ANY RESOURCES OR SUPPORT YOU WILL NEED TO ATTEND THE EVENT

- Do you need to pay to attend the event or travel to the venue?
- Do any scholarship opportunities exist?
- Do you need a chaperone to attend with you?



#CaseStudy

SOARING TO GLOBAL HEIGHTS

Ditebogo Lebea's advocacy journey began as a child, when she regularly visited her family in rural Limpopo, South Africa. "I noticed how rivers and dams that once were filled with water now were bone-dry. It was extremely hot, worse than before, and when it rained, heavy floods would destroy the houses of some of my family members. I saw the effects of climate change first-hand. It was, and continues to be, personal to me. I had to take action."

Ditebogo began participating in Model United Nations debates and youth participation work through Youth@SAIIA, and later became a global young reformer through her church. She advocated for churches to educate people on climate change and for church policies to acknowledge climate action. Her work, together with that of other young reformers, resulted in churches around the globe committing to renewable energy by using solar power and developing solar cooking projects around Africa.

In 2016, at the age of 19, Ditebogo was invited to attend her first United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP22) and represent her church in Morocco. She familiarized herself with national policymaking and global negotiation processes. She attended stakeholder meetings with the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and was often the youngest person in the room. Ditebogo began to understand how South Africa creates its national position. She worked with other young South Africans to create a youth statement on climate change and pushed for formal youth participation in the negotiations.

In 2017 Ditebogo was invited to join the South African delegation to COP23 as the country's youth delegate.

Ditebogo's work continues, and when the South African draft Climate Change Bill was released in 2018, she was part of the team that analysed the draft bill and submitted a youth position. Ditebogo knows policy change takes time, but she is committed to being part of the fight.

PARTICIPATING DURING AN EVENT

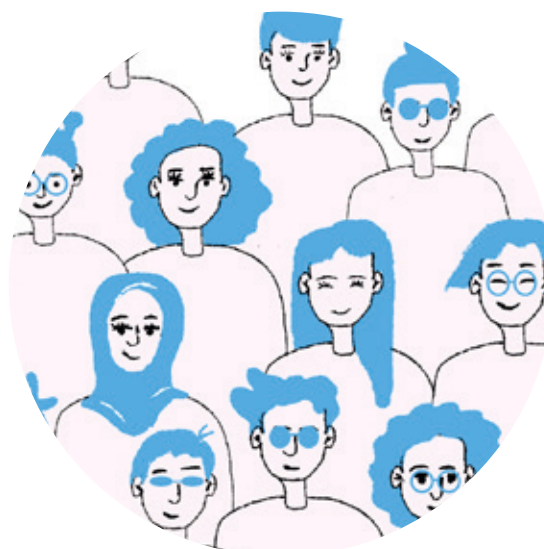
So you've been given a seat at the table. What now?

Once in the room, try to make the most of your experience. Meet new people, contribute whenever possible and learn as much as you can. This is where all of your preparation comes in handy. These events will help you learn more

about your issue from different perspectives and hopefully introduce you to the decision makers responsible for policies and legislation around your issue and the processes they follow. While each event is different, here are some tips to keep in mind.

- Refer to the notes you made while preparing to attend the event. Your research is specific to the event you are attending, and this should guide you throughout your engagement.
- Keep in mind all the research you have done throughout your advocacy journey. You may use the policy documents you researched earlier, as well as your fact-finding, to support your points and positions.
- Listen actively and take notes of the conversations had. Gathering information from your engagements can help your advocacy in the future.
- Try to meet and interact with other participants throughout the event, and develop networks with other young people and adult allies. Have a look at the [networking and fostering allyship](#)  section for more.
- Be confident in yourself as an advocate and participant in the event. Take part in any activity, speak up and share your opinions where you feel comfortable.
- Participate and offer suggestions, where appropriate. This demonstrates that you are well-informed and can add value to further discussions and consultation around the issue.

At the end of the event, remember to take some time to reflect on what you have experienced. What lessons did you learn – about yourself, your issue, the process, other stakeholders, and anything else you think is relevant? Make sure to use any relevant information in your advocacy journey.



BUILDING MOMENTUM





You will need to build momentum throughout your advocacy process, continuously drawing people together to support your cause. The way you communicate your ideas and activities will depend on which stage of the advocacy journey you are on. Whether you are just beginning or further down the line, there are some important points for you to consider.

COMMUNICATING WHAT YOU KNOW AND RAISING AWARENESS

The first steps towards building any kind of momentum for an idea are to communicate what you know – tell the story – and raise awareness about the importance of your cause and why action needs to be taken. Awareness-raising activities can range from an in-class discussion to a national campaign. Raising awareness involves taking

information you have learned throughout your advocacy journey and packaging it in different ways so people can easily understand your key advocacy messages. You also need to inspire people to get involved and take action. To do this, you need to know your audience.

Ask yourself these kinds of questions:

- What is important to the people you want to reach?
- What do people need to hear to realize the importance of this issue?
- Who do they need to hear this message from?
- How do you want them to get involved?
- What kind of language seems most appropriate?

Our world is made up of stories, and you can use compelling, human stories to explain your issue and connect with others. Spend time developing your narrative to make it as

meaningful as possible. Try to avoid using overly aggressive or provocative language, however. You are trying to start a constructive discussion.

What makes a good story? Think about one that affected you, whether something your grandmother told you, a film

you saw or even an internet meme. Examine the stories you find powerful and that evoked emotion in you.

In general, a compelling advocacy story:

- Has a clear structure, with a beginning, middle and end
- Is direct and concise, speaking to the point you are trying to make
- Is relevant and draws on issues that people find important
- Shares something personal and appeals to people's emotions, allowing them to connect with you and your story
- Makes it clear what you want people to do

Once you have identified your target audience and developed your story, you can engage with people to raise awareness about your issue. There are many tactics you can try – writing letters, making short videos, creating a

song, holding talks or having group conversations. Think carefully about the impact you want to achieve and how best to do this.



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has some great resources to help you tell your story? You will find this in the **being a better communicator** section! Check out the [website](#)

There may be times when you need to share your message aloud in front of an audience. People sometimes think good speakers must have strong, outgoing personalities, but that is not always true. Good speakers are confident and know how to present themselves as intelligent, believable, authentic, and trustworthy. This can mean different things to different people, so it doesn't matter if you are extroverted or introverted – the principles of being a good speaker are the same.

There is no such thing as a perfect speaker, and everyone improves with experience. You can learn from the people who inspire you by watching videos or recordings of speeches, presentations and negotiations. Practise your communication skills with your friends or members of your community, and ask for feedback on what you can improve. You can also try watching yourself in action in a mirror or recording yourself. This will give you an idea of your non-verbal communication habits, by seeing how you maintain eye contact and what gestures you make naturally.

Plan your work ▶

Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project! Check out the **YAG Workplan**.

#MyStory

MARGIANTA, INDONESIA

I believe advocacy always comes from a personal story, either your own or those of people around you. For me, my family's stories made me realize the bigger picture.

Whenever I work on tobacco control advocacy, I'm reminded of my grandpa who died of stroke. My grandfather was addicted to nicotine, and his last words were to request a cigarette. I could have let the story end there and stayed silent. But I decided to act.

In 2015, I decided to honour my grandfather by initiating the Youth Movement for FCTC with my Indonesian youth friends. Our movement aims to support tobacco control policies, so we can prevent young people from becoming victims of cigarettes and the tobacco industry. In Indonesia, the issue of tobacco use goes beyond health. Tobacco companies exploit farmers and workers and manipulate potential smokers, especially young people, to get them interested in smoking.

Knowing this, the Youth Movement for FCTC chose to focus on exposing Big Tobacco's manipulative tactics that target young people. Assisted by Lentera Anak Foundation, we support tobacco control policies through youth-led research, training, campaign and advocacy and have achieved one national declaration, written 11,000 letters, drafted 30,000 petitions, conducted countless grassroots trainings, and reached 102 communities and thousands of youth in 31 cities.

I also have spoken at several summits, such as One Young World and World Health Assembly, with public officials and Hollywood celebrities sharing the same message: that David is going to defeat Goliath. Indonesian youth are fighting against tobacco industries that are targeting them. We are the face of the youth-led fight against Big Tobacco in Indonesia.

Everything starts from a story. This is my story, and it's still ongoing. What's yours?

ORGANIZING EVENTS

Events are a good way to share information, network with other people and develop ideas to support your advocacy process. Events can be anything from a town hall meeting

to a bake sale to a large conference and can take place in person or online. There are a few important points to keep in mind when organizing an event.



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has some great resources to help you plan and host successful events? You will find this in the **strengthening your advocacy** section! Check out the [website](#)

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

Before you decide to hold an event, you need to determine your objective. What do you want to achieve through this event? Sometimes your objective might be quite general, such as simply sharing information, and other times it might be more specific, such as asking for contributions to a policy

document or raising funds for a cause. Understanding your reason behind organizing an event will determine the types of activities you plan, the people you invite and the way you communicate with your audience.

AUDIENCE, SIZE AND ACTIVITIES

Events can vary enormously. You might host a simple gathering in your home or plan a large meeting at a community hall. You also need to think about the activities that will take place during an event. Will people simply listen to a speaker

or would you like them to engage in a more active way? Have a clear idea of who you want to attend and what you want them to do before you begin planning event details.

ORGANIZATION

All events require organization. You will need to schedule a date and venue, arrange for speakers and presenters, create marketing materials, develop activities, and figure

out who to invite. Large events may require a planning team. Start by making a list of all the necessary details and then assign tasks to specific people.

EVENT HOSTING

Hosting can be both exciting and stressful. Remember, the most important thing is to stay focused – be clear about what you are trying to achieve and do your best to help generate ideas and discussion.

Always refer to the notes you made while preparing for your event. These will help you while you host the event to ensure you complete all the planned activities and reach your desired outcome.



Remember that being a good advocate and hosting events are not similar skills. This may be a good time to engage your networks, ask for help, and delegate some hosting responsibility.

#CaseStudy

TURNING TRAGEDY INTO TRIUMPH

After witnessing the death of her cousin as a result of drug use, Lima Bamba from Côte d'Ivoire understood the pain and suffering linked to drug addiction. She knew she could make a difference by sharing her story to raise awareness about the danger of addiction. Lima started to engage with children as young as six, telling them about drugs and how to keep themselves safe. She also ran anti-drug workshops for university students.

Lima has since founded the Emergency for Teenagers association, which raises awareness about drug addiction and helps monitor and support people in recovery. Emergency for Teenagers now collaborates with local NGOs to combat drug abuse, providing significant support to people in Lima's community. Through this, she is able to reach a wider audience and strengthen her advocacy. Her story highlights the importance of forging alliances with other organizations that may be fighting for a similar cause, to build upon each other's strengths.

ENGAGING WITH MEDIA



Media is a powerful tool for advocacy. By using your voice in the media, you can influence decision makers, politicians, and the general public. But what is the media and how do you engage with it?

Our society is sometimes called the information society. Every day, and through different kinds of channels, information is shared to inform, educate or entertain – as well as to sell products and services. Examples include the internet, social media platforms, radio, television, newspapers, books and film. Information and messages reach people through text, image, animation, film and sound and are produced by journalists, advertisers and the general public.

Journalists or **reporters** are professionals who produce and distribute news based on facts supported by evidence. Journalists are bound by strict professional ethics to remain accurate and fair in their reporting and to stay honest and transparent in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Advertisers share information that will make the receiver want to buy a product, service or ideology. They are also governed by ethics not to share false information or use offensive language or imagery.

The **general public** is all the people who have an opinion and decide to communicate it through different means, including social networks.

A democracy cannot function without a news media that remains free to ethically perform its duties. The media guarantees both an opportunity for people to speak and be heard, as well as stay informed about what is happening locally, nationally and globally.

Plan your work



Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project!
Check out the YAG Workplan.



HOW TO ATTRACT THE MEDIA'S ATTENTION

Journalists have space to fill every day in their newspapers, television or radio programmes and engaging them is an important part of advocacy. Reporters are always looking for good content, and you will get their attention if you can offer them a strong story. Here are a few tips on how to do that:

FIND CONTACTS. You may know the names of a few journalists, but do some research first to find out who would have interest in the theme you are covering. Find their social media profile, read their articles, follow them and watch for an opportunity to connect with them directly about your project. Sometimes finding contacts means picking up the phone, asking for the news desk, stating that you have a potential story to share and taking down the relevant person's email address or number. You can specifically ask for the contact details of the journalist on the education, health or politics beat, for instance. Community radio stations are also great places to start because these journalists often are more receptive to projects in the local community.

CONNECT. Let's say your project is about education, and the journalist you would like to connect with covers that topic. A good time to reach out is a few weeks before the beginning of the school year, for example, because they will likely seek good content for those days. Just as with networking, it's also important to build rapport and maintain contact with reporters covering your advocacy issue.

PITCH STORIES. A simple and direct summary of your story idea, or pitch, will get a reporter's attention. Keep your pitch to one page or shorter and include:

- ➔ A short description that answers five Ws and an H. A good story answers who, what, when, where, why and how. What problem is your project trying to solve, and why is this story important right now?
- ➔ A list of interviewees. Journalists need people to interview, so make sure you line up people they can talk to – maybe you or someone from the community your advocacy aims to help.
- ➔ Visuals. If it is a print or TV journalist, they will need visual material (photo or video) to illustrate the story. Think of what would provide a good visual illustration. If your project revolves around clean environment, for instance, offer to have a journalist and photographer or videographer tag along while the team cleans up beaches or neighbourhoods. Note that simply filming meetings does not produce good visuals, so think more creatively. Also remember to strategically place some branding in whatever will be photographed or filmed. This might mean having the interviewee wear a T-shirt branded with the logo or name of your project. You should also ask the journalist to add your project's web address or contact details alongside your name on screen (called a chyron) if you get interviewed for a video or television piece.
- ➔ Contact details. Include your details at the end or beginning of your pitch document, and don't forget to keep your phone on and check your email frequently after sending a pitch in case the journalist reaches out. A main characteristic of media journalism is speed. Stories often get produced fast and schedules are tight, so you maximize your chances if you are quick to respond.



FOLLOW UP. Once you have sent your pitch, follow up with an email or call in a few days. Remember not to be too pushy. Journalists receive pitched stories all the time and have many projects to choose from. You want to build a pleasant rapport with them to maximize the chance they will reply to your emails or pick up the phone when you call. If they decline your idea, ask if they can tell you why so you can learn how to improve your approach. Go back to the drawing board and polish your pitch.

You always have the option to write a short article, opinion piece or blog post and try to have it published in a school newsletter, larger newspaper or online. You could even produce a podcast to share your message (though that takes more time and effort). Or you can get creative and express yourself through poetry, storytelling, comics or artwork. The main goal is to get your idea into the world. Regardless of what form you pursue, make sure your message is strong and clear.

ENGAGING ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Digital platforms – including social media – provide powerful ways to communicate ideas, raise awareness, encourage broad support, and build momentum for your cause. With more and more people having access to the internet via their mobile phones, digital engagement can offer a quick, cheap and easy way to reach many people. The global reach of digital platforms allows you to interact with people from around the world and learn about ideas and struggles different than your own. This boosts creativity while at the same time fosters solidarity networks among young people.

Digital platforms are powerful, but should be used with great caution. You should always use social media consciously, for instance. Don't get sucked into the social media trap of having arguments with others online or spending hours scrolling aimlessly through posts. Also remember to always check the reliability of any information you find on the internet. Have a look at the **fact-finding**  section to make sure the information you use and share is trustworthy.





HOW CAN YOU USE DIGITAL PLATFORMS TO BOOST YOUR ADVOCACY?

BUILD A PRESENCE FOR YOUR CAUSE OR ORGANIZATION.

You can set up accounts on social media platforms popular in your country and use these to share information and updates with other people. Make sure what you share – articles, memes, photos, videos or music – speaks to your issue, encourages discussion and comes from credible sources of information.

DEVELOP A CONTENT STRATEGY. The internet provides a lot of competition for people's attention so try to create something unique and creative. Make sure you post regularly, avoid repeating content, and don't get too caught up in how many followers you have. Having 100 followers who regularly engage with you is infinitely more valuable than 10,000 who ignore you.

PARTICIPATE IN SOCIAL LISTENING. You can research conversations taking place online around your issue (by searching hashtags, for instance) to get a better understanding of the discussions people are having and how they view the issue.

DESIGN A DIGITAL CAMPAIGN. This is one way to get a message out to lots of people and encourage them to take action. The section on **creating a digital campaign**  provides more details.

TEAM UP. Look for opportunities to team up or partner with established groups or organizations to have a larger impact.

GO LIVE. Many popular platforms give the opportunity to 'go live' to create discussions or communicate an issue in an immediate way. For example, you could organize a live online presentation from a beach or river clean-up that shows the problem and lets you interview some of the volunteers as they work.

WORK WITH DIGITAL INFLUENCERS. Individuals who have a large following and powerful impact on social media are known as influencers. They can help you gain traction for your advocacy project. Once you identify someone who cares about your cause and represents your values, you can approach them to either share your content or co-create a message.

CREATE DIGITAL PETITIONS. Petitions are formal requests that ask for change and are usually sent to organization or government leaders. Many websites let you easily create and share an online petition, which lets others show their support for your issue. Leaders often take notice when many people sign a petition. Make sure that your petition is addressed to a specific person or organization and that you include a clear request, such as asking a minister of education to introduce school gardens in all schools throughout your country.

Plan your work ▶

Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project!
Check out the **YAG Workplan**.

ENGAGE IN DATA ACTIVISM. Data provides powerful support for any advocacy project and helps you put your topic in the spotlight. It is important to gather data around your advocacy issue and communicate it wisely and timely. An open data approach, making data available to everyone, can also help others combine their efforts with your advocacy project. For example, you could use low-cost air quality monitors to gather data around the air pollution in your community and post the results on social media.

SEEK E-FUNDING. Many websites can be used to raise funds ('crowdfund') for your activities. Remember to remain transparent about how you will use funds and provide updates to those who have supported you.

PROTECTING YOURSELF ONLINE

When engaging online, it is important to protect yourself. While online advocacy is important, always use social media responsibly. Here are some tips on how to stay safe online.

- Make sure you have strong passwords and that you protect your accounts. Don't share these details with anyone.
- Maintain a civil and compassionate dialogue with people, even if you do not agree with them.
- Become aware of your country's social media laws. Several influencers have been taken into custody over tweets or Facebook posts.
- Make sure to attain the consent of all participants who you will feature in your campaign; explain why and where you will use their data. Make sure that the information you share online doesn't put you or anyone else at risk, especially when working with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and in sensitive contexts.
- Protect your personal information and data. Be careful when you sign up for different services; it is common for data to get sold to third parties.
- Think carefully about what you share regarding your personal life. Activists and advocates can become targets of people who harass others online (often called trolls).



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has some great resources on safeguarding and protection, as well as how to protect your data? You will find this in the **selfcare as an advocate** section! Check out the **website**

ONLINE HARASSMENT

Unfortunately, you may experience some harassment online. Here are some tips if you do.

- **KEEP CALM.** Don't let anger overtake you and do not engage in back-and-forth arguments.
- **EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS.** Make sure to state that you disagree with what is happening and you don't feel comfortable with it. Remember your disapproval is of the other person's behaviour and their comments.
- **ASK FOR SUPPORT.** Don't keep your fears to yourself. If you are worried about your safety or something that has happened to you online, urgently speak to someone you trust.
- **REPORT.** Social media sites include a way for you to report harassment or upsetting content. If someone or something hurts you, report it.
- **DISCONNECT.** Make sure you take regular breaks from the internet, especially if too much time online is having a negative effect on your mental health.

#CaseStudy

USING VIDEO TO RAISE SOCIAL AWARENESS

"Sometimes people don't have the time or energy to read through a thick document. Many people find it easier to watch a video, which often has more impact. It makes you see what is happening on the ground and it's an eye-opener. My video really got people talking, and when they became interested, they wanted to know more."

Louise Kongolo Kanza was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and was raised in South Africa, where she faced xenophobia. People treated her badly because she was from a different country. When xenophobic attacks spread across South Africa in 2017, Louise and her sister knew they had to raise awareness about the fear and pain that were being experienced daily.

They formed a group of both South Africans and foreigners and thought of ways they could share their stories. They didn't have a lot of resources, but someone had a camera, so they decided to make a short video about the impact of the xenophobic attacks. They recorded the film at a house that had been burned down and called the video #Singabantu. They used their personal social media accounts to share the content, and people were moved by the story they told.

The video got a lot of attention and was eventually broadcast on Trace Africa in 18 different countries. In 2017, #Singabantu won the UN Alliance of Civilizations Plural Plus award and Louise and her team were invited to several events to raise awareness about xenophobia. After these experiences, Louise began to coordinate the Sophie A Kanza Foundation, that organizes events focused on uniting her community.

CREATING A DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

You should design your social media campaigns to encourage broad support and build momentum around your cause. Powerful examples of social media campaigns include #FeesMustFall, where students in South Africa advocated for a reduction of university fees and gathered nationwide support. #AfricaMatters is another campaign that has created a platform to empower African youth to reject indifference and pessimism about the continent.

Plan your work

Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project! Check out the YAG Workplan.

Here are a few pointers on how to create a digital campaign:

- **SET YOUR GOALS.** Be clear about what you want to achieve with your campaign. Set targets if you can, such as 'raise awareness about air pollution and reach 10,000 people to sign a petition to reduce car pollution by December'. Try to be as specific as possible.
- **DETERMINE YOUR AUDIENCE.** Your audience includes people or institutions you seek to influence to achieve your goal. Try to define your audiences as clearly as possible and find out more about them.
- **DEVELOP YOUR KEY MESSAGES.** You should develop your messages to appeal to the head, heart and hand. Appealing to the head or brain means using words, facts and figures to support your advocacy. To appeal to people's hearts, bring in emotional and personal stories that your audience will care about and believe in. Lastly, appeal to people's hands or their ability to get involved. People need to feel invited to join you and want to know how their involvement can make a difference.
- **DECIDE UPON YOUR TACTICS.** What specific actions can help you reach your intended audiences? What type of content will appeal to them? What platforms do they use? Are they more likely to listen to certain people?
- **DO A RISK ASSESSMENT.** Think about how people might react to your messages and content. Are they likely to misunderstand it or get upset about it? Make a plan for how you will address safeguarding concerns.
- **DEFINE KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES.** List the activities needed to implement your digital campaign. Figure out what monetary and human resources you will need to make this happen.
- **DEVELOP A TIMELINE.** Decide what you are going to do and when. Are there special time periods when people will care more about your issue?
- **ENGAGE AND MODERATE.** When people respond to your messages and content, try to engage them further. Acknowledge and thank your supporters. If you think it is safe to do so, respond to those who might not agree and try to present evidence on why your approach is a good one.

→ **MONITOR AND EVALUATE.** As discussed earlier, monitoring means observing and measuring the impact of your advocacy efforts. If an approach isn't working, try to understand why and adjust your actions to increase your impact. Once you finish your campaign, evaluate how it went, as well as what worked and what didn't. Also document any lessons learned and recommendations for the future.



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has some great resources to help you develop your blogging and digital advocacy skills? You will find this in the **being a better communicator** section! Check out the [website](#)

Other forms of group communication

While media and social media are the most common ways to engage with people, other communication platforms also allow you to connect. SMS and WhatsApp groups, in particular, have been effective at bringing people together and helping them to stay in touch. You might find it useful to start your own kind of chat group that provides regular updates and communication to interested people. While engaging on these groups, be aware of how things can come across over text – remember that people cannot read your tone and body language. It is also a good idea to have clear rules of engagement for your group, ensuring that all members know what is appropriate to discuss in the group.

DEVELOPING AN ADVOCACY PLAN



You now have a good sense of the issue that's important to you and likely feel eager to get started. Before you do anything, though, it helps to have an advocacy plan. You will use all the information you have gathered, as well as some additional details, to create your plan.

It is important to clarify your intended impacts from the beginning. What change do you want to see? The impact of your advocacy is the long-term effect or end result you want to achieve. In advocacy, your impact might only become visible over time – maybe long after your advocacy work has ended! Knowing your hoped-for goals now, however, will help you decide how to proceed.

It might seem counterintuitive to start at the end and work backwards, but getting clear on the impact you want to make will help you come up with specific activities that get you closer to your goals. We will talk more about this later in this section.

Plan your work

Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project!
Check out the YAG Workplan.



CONSOLIDATING INFORMATION

Now is the time to look at all the information you gathered, start consolidating it and write it all down. Break your information into the following topic areas and think about the following questions:

MAIN PROBLEM OR CONCERN:

Brief overview of the main problem.

- What is the main problem?
- How does it affect the target population?
- Why is this issue important?

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND:

Overview of the factors leading to this situation and important considerations about the social and political environment around you.

- What engagement has already occurred around the issue?
- Who are the main decision makers and how can you best engage with them?
- What sensitivities should you consider when engaging with different people?

POSSIBLE ALLIES, NETWORKS

AND YOUTH PLATFORMS: Different people and groups you can collaborate with or learn from.

- Which peers can work with you at this early stage? What would this look like?
- Who will you need help or support from? What would this entail?

POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES

AND SOLUTIONS: An overview of possibilities to address the situation.

- What are some ideas you have to bring about change?
- Are there any key events or upcoming opportunities that you can connect your advocacy to?
- How can you influence the decision-making process?

KEY ACTIVITIES: Some of the main activities needed to achieve your goal, including the main actors who need to be involved.

- What is the best way to gain support for your cause, and how should you engage with people to encourage this?
- Will you need some kind of financial or human resources for your project?
- How can you secure the financial support this project needs?

At this stage, don't worry too much about writing well. The most important consideration is to consolidate your ideas and make sure you have a fairly good overview of the main

components listed above. You may not have answers to all the questions but keep them in the back of your mind.



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has resources on fundraising and budgeting for your advocacy project? You will find this in the **advocating together** section! Check out the [website](#)

#OurStory

DANIELLE AND KERRIE, THE CARIBBEAN

We reside in the Caribbean where one in three children live with being overweight or obese, one of the highest rates in the Americas.

As a young girl growing up in Antigua, Danielle struggled with her weight and had difficulty finding a physical activity that she really enjoyed. She blamed herself for not being competitive, flexible or fast enough to participate in sports and slowly began to form a negative association with physical activity – a reality for many girls that often lasts into adulthood.

Through her master's degree research, Danielle came to understand that one of the major barriers to developing enjoyable physical activity programs for children in the Caribbean was the absence of their meaningful engagement in designing programs and influencing policies that affected their lives.

Across the sea on the island of Barbados, Kerrie faced similar struggles. A shy and overweight adolescent, she had a desire to work and make a difference in the Caribbean health system but lacked confidence and didn't know where to get started.

We eventually became health advocates working for the Healthy Caribbean Coalition's (HCC) Childhood Obesity Prevention Project and its youth arm, Healthy Caribbean Youth, which we now lead. Ensuring that no child is left behind is the core of HCC's advocacy work. HCC aims to tackle childhood obesity through empowering civil society organizations and youth across the Caribbean to advocate for the implementation of evidence-based policies, which ultimately safeguard youth.

Through this advocacy work, we have found our own voices and together create spaces for other youth advocates to do the same and stand up for more active, healthy environments for young people like us.

REACHING YOUR GOAL: THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE



Now that you have brainstormed and brought information together, it is important to have a clear long-term goal and an idea on how it can be reached – so you can plan how to get there!

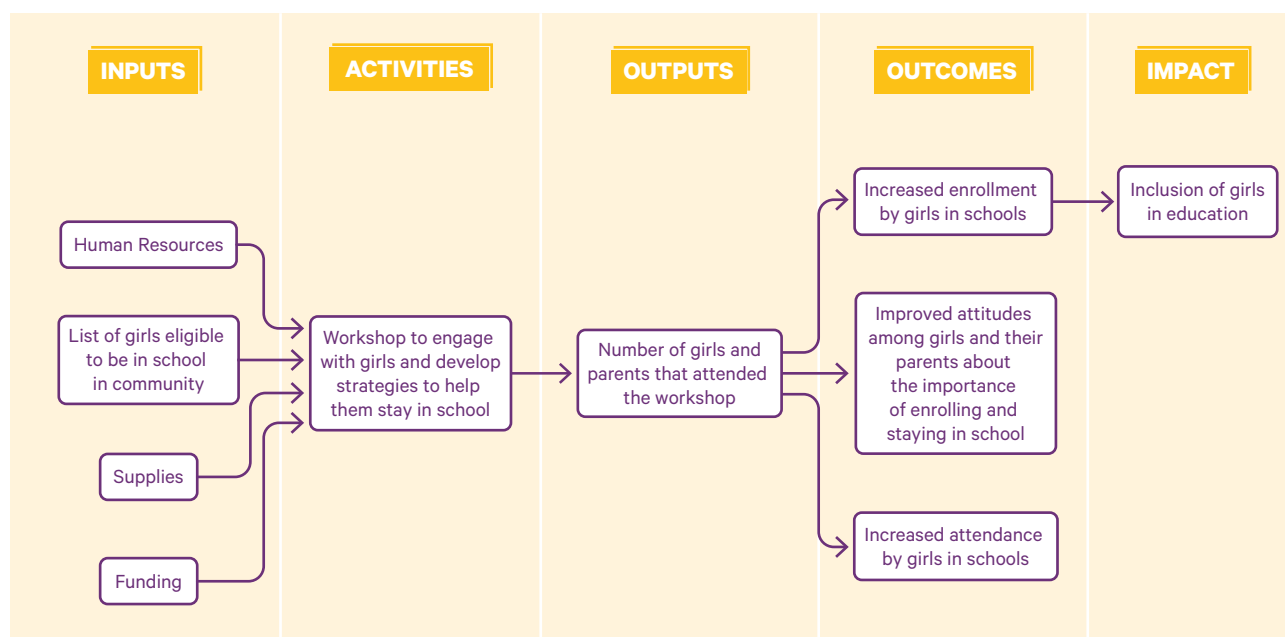
To break this thinking down into steps, it can help to bring the many pieces of information you have into an 'impact model'. As the name suggests, an impact model asks you to consider what impact you are trying to achieve. By working backwards from there, this model helps you understand what resources, activities and markers of progress are required to reach your desired goal, or impact.

The following are questions to ask yourself:

- What are your big picture **GOALS** or **IMPACT**?
- What are your main **OUTCOMES** or the change you hope to see in the short term?
Outcomes are the short- or intermediate-term results you can see at the community level. It may help to think of them as markers of progress that you can identify in your community as a result of your programme. For example, your outcomes might be that more people become aware of a certain issue or have some changed attitudes, skills, knowledge or behaviour as a result of your programme..
- What are the direct **RESULTS** or **OUTPUTS**?
Outputs are the immediate results achieved through the activities you undertake. For example, this could be the number of people that attend a workshop or training session you organize.
- What are the **ACTIVITIES** needed to achieve your outcomes (and also to support your longer-term impact)?
- What are the **INPUTS** needed to implement your key activities?
These are the resources invested in the programme – for example, funding, training, supplies and human resources.

Your **activities, outputs, outcomes** and **actions** should include specific actions, strategies or implementation steps that will contribute to the realization of your long-term goals. These should be SMART, an acronym that stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. A SMART indicator considers all of these criteria to help you focus your efforts and increase the chances of achieving your impact.

Below you can find an example of an impact model, which includes examples for each component. This example assumes a long-term goal of increasing the inclusion of girls in area schools.



PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER: WRITING YOUR ADVOCACY PLAN

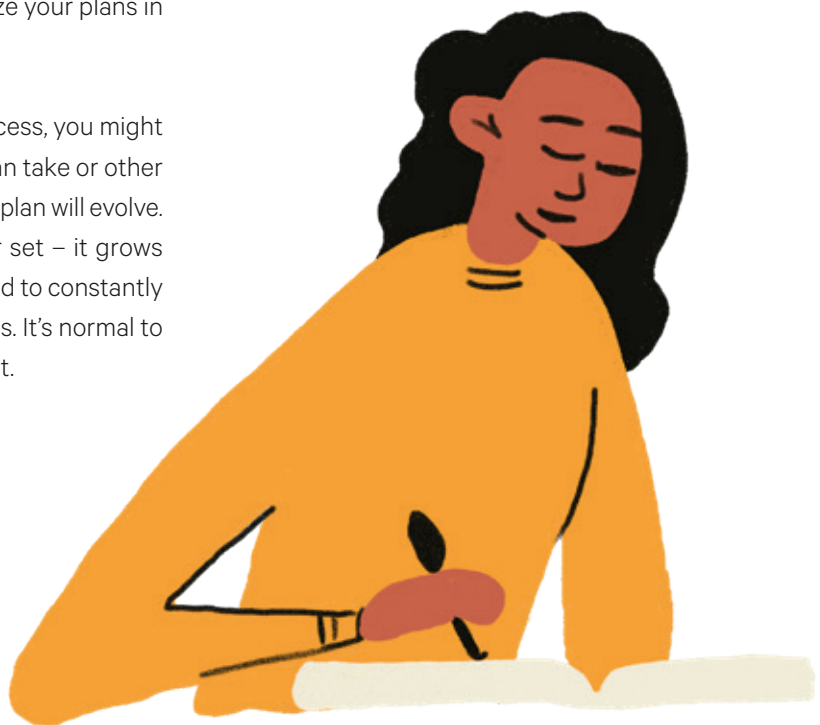
With all of the information you've gathered and some idea of what your impact model is, you now can pull together a first draft of an advocacy plan. An advocacy plan is really just a resource to help you organize yourself in a logical way. It can contain different pieces of information, depending on what you feel is helpful.

Different people organize their work and thoughts in different ways, so you should feel free to organize your plans in whatever way works best for you.

If you're just beginning your advocacy process, you might not feel clear about specific actions you can take or other details. Don't worry. This is normal and your plan will evolve. An advocacy plan rarely remains fixed or set – it grows and develops as you learn, and you will need to constantly revise your plan based on your experiences. It's normal to start and then revise, reconsider and adjust.

Plan your work ▶

Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project!
Check out the [YAG Workplan](#).



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has some resources on advocacy and monitoring your progress? You will find this in the **strengthening your advocacy** section! Check out the [website](#)

MONITORING YOUR ACTIVITIES

As you brainstorm and bring together your advocacy plan, it is also important to think about how you will monitor and evaluate your project.

Monitoring refers to regularly gathering information during your advocacy to determine the effect of your activities and help you decide if you should do anything differently as the advocacy or an activity is happening. Monitoring asks you to appraise both the outputs and outcomes as described above in the impact model, and can offer information on where a policy, programme or project is at any given time. In other words, it provides a 'snapshot' of the situation or programme status.

You may also be familiar with evaluation. Evaluation usually refers to some sort of process (usually conducted in the middle of or after your advocacy project has ended) to find out if you have achieved the stated outcome or impact. Evaluation can be time-consuming, costly and difficult. For the purposes of this guide, we will not cover evaluation, but the Voices of Youth website can guide you to evaluation resources if you would like to learn more.



Anyone can do good monitoring, and it provides an excellent way to identify what's going well or poorly so you can adjust your advocacy activities as needed. Through monitoring, you can look at how you're using your resources, the quality of your activities, and whether your activities are having an effect. It's important to have an open mind with monitoring and be prepared to adjust your activities and address problems.

For example, let's use the example goal of including more girls in your area's schools. How would you know if you were on track to achieve this? First you must identify the markers of progress that will demonstrate whether your activities are affecting your outcomes. Possible markers of progress using the above example include an increase in the number of girls attending school, girls reporting increased confidence in their academic work, a change in school policy or more lawmakers who discuss the topic. These measurable markers can demonstrate your progress towards including more girls in education (and be measured through a monitoring activity such as a survey, attendance sheet, or something else – see below for more detail on the monitoring of activities).

What are some markers of progress you would use to assess your initiative?



As noted earlier, it's important to plan how you will monitor your advocacy before you begin any activities. You can start monitoring on day one: How was the situation before you started? Make sure to document that. Once you begin taking action and implementing your activities, continue monitoring what's happening. This process can help you continuously assess whether you are on track towards achieving your desired outcomes and can help you understand whether the ideas and activities you implement are producing the desired changes you hope to see (or whether you need to alter your approach).

Monitoring includes regularly collecting different types of information or data. Choose your monitoring methods according to the markers of progress that you have selected.



Once you've identified your markers of progress, you can develop ways to monitor an outcome (for instance, an increase in the number of girls attending school) and gather data. You should feel free to get creative about how you collect monitoring information! Here are some ideas: Take pictures or videos of the community's needs and status over time; discuss key issues with different members of the community; or walk around the community and take notes of what has been shaped by your initiative.

Reflect upon what questions you need answered – and what information can best answer those questions. For instance, perhaps you'd like data on the number of girls who have attended school since your initiative started. Who can provide you that information and have you built a relationship with them?

Most importantly, you can use information you gather through monitoring to improve your advocacy work. Think about questions such as the following: Did you have the resources (input) you needed? If not, how did that affect the project? What can you do to improve your efforts? Were there any unintended consequences, good or bad?

It's important to note that your monitoring plan will likely include multiple measurements for each section of your impact model. A monitoring plan might also include a schedule of when to conduct each type of monitoring activity, how to gather and compile information, and what to do with the information you find, such as using it to shape the next iteration of your programme or to make tweaks along the way.

Important groups of people to engage when monitoring your activities:

Your target population – ask if your activities are helping them and if they have ideas for change

Staff, volunteers, and stakeholders – ensure they're getting what they expected and ask if they have ideas for change

Any volunteers or programme participants who dropped out – ask why they dropped out and what might have kept them involved

To help inspire you, below are some questions and answers to spur ‘monitoring thinking’ – using an example of increasing the percentage of girls completing primary and secondary-level education. One example of each aspect of the impact model is described, to give you a sense of how you can set up and think about your own monitoring strategy.

Your monitoring plan may have multiple parts. When you are starting out, to keep it simple and do-able, we suggest you focus on the activities, outputs and outcomes you hope to see.

	WHAT TO MEASURE?	HOW TO MEASURE?	HOW TO VERIFY?
INPUTS	Human resources: The number of staff on your team who are trained to provide workshops to parents/caregivers and girls in the community.	Count the number of staff on your team who had some formal training on conducting behavioural change workshops.	Give the staff a pre- and post-training questionnaire to test their knowledge on conducting the workshops.
ACTIVITIES	Number of workshops conducted to engage with girls and parents/caregivers in the community and teach them helpful strategies to stay in school.	Count the number of workshops you have implemented in the past two weeks.	Use your programme reports and records to track how many workshops you conducted.
OUTPUTS	Number of girls and parents/caregivers that attended the workshops.	Count the number of girls and parents that attended the workshops you put together.	Use an attendance tracker at each workshop to record the number of people who attended.
OUTCOMES	Percentage of girls and parents with improved attitudes regarding staying enrolled and attending school.	Calculate the number of parents and girls, as a percentage of all parents and girls in the community, who expressed improved attitudes towards girls enrolling and staying in school.	Conduct a community-level survey of all those who are in the neighbourhood or community of interest at baseline and then after your workshops, to see if and how attitudes have changed.
IMPACT	Percentage of girls completing primary- and secondary-level education.	Calculate the number of girls, as a percentage of all girls in the community, who complete their primary- and secondary-level education.	Conduct a community-level survey of all girls in the community eligible to be in primary- and secondary-level education.

Here are some additional questions you can use to reflect on and continuously refine and improve your advocacy project:

- Think about your own experience and consider what has changed for you. Have you learned anything that would change the activities you had initially planned?
- Revisit the social and political contexts. What are some of the contextual factors that affect your initiative?
- What are some enablers and barriers to your work's progress?
- Look at other advocacy activities. Are other community programmes or initiatives happening that may support or hamper your programme? Could they be influencing the changes you see in your community? Have you reached out to the programme leaders to discuss ways to collaborate?

Quantitative data, which is objective, gets measured and conveyed with numbers and graphs; **qualitative data**, on the other hand, is subjective and descriptive, and focuses on a topic or item's characteristics as well as people's opinions. Both types of data can help your cause.



THINKING BEYOND ADVOCACY



It is important to remember that advocacy is not an occasion but rather a lifestyle. You should reinforce your advocacy principles by the way you live and the choices you make. It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the challenges you face, and you might not always know what to do in your daily life to address these concerns. But people often underestimate the importance of lifestyle choices. Every day you make decisions about the food you eat and the way you treat people, animals or the environment. All of these choices reflect your principles.

Changes do not happen only at a macro level. In fact, some of the most relevant changes occur locally, in your life and community. Your routine matters! Because change occurs

in small steps, it is important to not only evaluate your advocacy work but also to think about your own actions as a citizen. Change can be as simple as carrying your own shopping bag to the store to reduce single-use plastics or buying food from local farmers to support your community. It also may be more complex, such as working to overcome your own biases or prejudices and opening yourself up to understanding other people's reality.

Whenever you can, choose to lead by example. It is one of the most powerful and long-lasting strategies in advocating for change. You need to become the change you want to see in the world, so make sure you act in ways that support your values and your advocacy issue.

FOLLOWING UP

You've made some progress in advocating for an issue you are passionate about. What happens next? If your advocacy takes a long time, what do you do while waiting for a decision or change to occur? Following up on the progress of your work will differ depending on the nature of your advocacy, who you have engaged with and what you are trying to achieve. For instance, if you worked on influencing policy, stay informed on next steps. Having a policy in place is only a start. For real change to happen, policies need to be implemented.

Here are some ideas to keep you going as you wait for decision makers to act.



If your advocacy takes a long time, what do you do while waiting for a decision or change to occur?

MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND MAJOR SUPPORTERS

It is crucial for the success of your advocacy to follow up with contacts you have established during the process. Stakeholders are usually busy people with back-to-back schedules, so you have to find ways to ease their engagement with your advocacy goal. One simple way to do that is by keeping in touch.

Throughout your advocacy process, you will engage with a wide range of people. Establish a relationship with them and see how you might explore new ideas or get involved in other initiatives. Maintaining a good set of contacts across a wide range of fields will also prove useful in your future activities. You can have a look at the **networking and fostering allyship**  section for more guidance. Here are some tips:



When attending events or meetings with potential partners, make sure you take down their contact details – phone number, email or social media handle – or ask for a business card.



Organize your contacts somewhere, either on paper or in a computer spreadsheet. Make note of where you interacted with them and include comments on what you discussed and how you might collaborate in the future.



Send a courtesy message the day after you meet someone to thank them for meeting and to ensure they have your contact details.



Keep referring back to this list during your advocacy journey and contact potential partners for collaboration.



Finally, ensure that you give feedback to anyone who has helped you on your journey. Keeping your contacts, including peers and those supporting you online, informed on your progress is crucial.

This can seem like an overwhelming list of activities given that your network will keep growing as you continue your advocacy work. How can you follow up with all of your contacts? By prioritizing. Usually you won't need to contact

everyone at the same time. Instead, you can organize your follow-up moments into a schedule so that you can keep in touch with different people in a feasible way.

KEEPING UP WITH YOUR WORK'S PROGRESS

If your advocacy process led to a decision, such as adopting a policy or deciding to put some change into action, you need to follow up with decision makers to make sure they follow through. Call or write them to show your interest in their work and offer them support in the following stages of the process. Remember to always review your goals and markers of progress in the **advocacy planning**  section. Sometimes an important part of your work involves raising awareness about the progress of a policy change and possible obstacles holding it back.

Following up with decision makers can take time, so share the responsibility with your advocacy team. As your work progresses, it is important to develop the skill of delegating roles and sharing duties with your team members. Following up can become less of an effort and more of a fun collaborative activity with your team.



MAINTAINING MENTAL WELLNESS AS AN ADVOCATE



Serving as a young activist can be incredibly rewarding, but it can also take a toll on your emotional and mental health. Common challenges and feelings that young people experience in their advocacy journey include stress, distress, anger, guilt, disappointment, overwhelm, lack of motivation, fatigue and hopelessness. These are normal feelings! And they can all be difficult to manage at times.

Each young person deals with their experiences differently. Sometimes you may feel overwhelmed and like your feelings are impossible to handle. Other times you may feel like you can handle your feelings, but they are always in the back of your mind bothering you. It is important to recognize that you have internal and external skills, knowledge and support that you can draw upon to find help and healing.

As young activists and advocates, you care about the issues, pain and challenges that other people face. Empathy might be one of your strengths. While caring for others may come easy to you, becoming aware of your own needs and taking care of yourself might seem harder. Maintaining a balance between the energy you put towards caring for others and caring for yourself is important for the work you do and for your own well-being. The following sections suggest ways to care for your emotions (including stress), how to ask for help, and where to find help.

Many young people struggle to find the language they need to talk about how they are feeling. You are not alone!



For more in-depth resources on mental well-being and advocacy, including definitions related to mental health, see '[A Global Youth Mental Health Advocacy Toolkit](#)' (Orygen) and '[Staying Resilient While Trying to Save the World: A Well-Being Workbook for Youth Activists](#)' (Amnesty International).



CARING FOR YOUR EMOTIONS

To strive towards better physical and mental health, learn how to identify your emotions and how to handle them – this is also known as emotional regulation. Here are some ways to do this:

**CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF
REGULARLY**

Learning to become aware of how you feel is the first step towards managing your feelings. Make space each day to ask yourself: What feelings have I experienced today? What are the top three common feelings I have experienced this week? Think about what may have contributed to how you felt, good and bad, to help you identify triggers that make you feel bad or those that give you a boost.

**KEEP REMINDING YOURSELF
THAT ALL FEELINGS ARE OK**

Learning to accept how you are feeling and to not dismiss your feelings is important. Remember that it is normal and healthy to feel a range of emotions. Sometimes, however, emotions lead to negative thoughts that affect how you act and cope. It can help to reframe this kind of negative thinking. Here are some examples of how to do that:



Negative thought	Reframed statement
Having unpleasant feelings makes me weak.	Facing my difficult feelings takes strength and courage.
My feelings aren't as important as other people's feelings.	My feelings are just as valid as those of other people.
Other people expect me to be positive all the time.	This is an unrealistic expectation; negative or difficult feelings are human.
I can't face my negative, difficult feelings.	I can find positive ways to cope and I have resources available to me.

FIND POSITIVE WAYS TO COPE

When you experience negative or difficult feelings, it's important to find positive and safe ways to help you get through them. Some ideas include:

- **LISTENING** to music
- **WATCHING** your favourite movie or TV show
- **EATING** healthy meals
- **TALKING** to a friend
- **GETTING A HUG** from someone you trust
- **GETTING ADVICE** from a trusted adult
- **MOVING** your body for some exercise
- **REDUCING** online screen time

Plan your work

Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project!
Check out the YAG Workplan.

Another activity is to write down three things you find fun and enjoyable and three people in your life who always help you feel good. Keep these as your go-tos when you feel you are having a difficult time.

RESPECTFULLY COMMUNICATE WHAT YOU WANT AND NEED

Feedback from youth advocates around the world reveal a common theme: Sometimes, it can be hard to say no or to ask for the things you need. In fact, being assertive is a learned skill, and as with any skill you become better at it with practice. As a youth activist and advocate, you might be good at communicating what you think and standing up for issues or others. How might you apply those same skills to communicating and advocating for your own needs? Here are some tips:

- **Take time to think about what you want and need, as opposed to only what others want and need from you.**
 - Use 'I' statements. Ask for what you want or need by starting with 'I' or 'my':
 - "My worry is that..."
 - "I think that I..."
 - "I feel that I..."
 - "When I'm..."
 - "I need to..."
 - "I would like to..."
 - "I hope that..."

Assertiveness is a way of behaving in which we are able to communicate our feelings, thoughts and beliefs in an open, honest manner without violating the rights of other people



- Say no. Learning when and how to say no is an important way to take care of yourself. Saying no can be difficult. Here are some thoughts and phrases that might help.
 - Let others know that they matter, but you do, too:
 - “I appreciate that, but no thank you.”
 - “I care about you, but I can’t.”
 - “I can see why this might suit you, but it doesn’t work well for me.”
 - Suggest an alternative, but make sure it’s one that works for you:
 - “Today I don’t have time, but perhaps in a few weeks?”
 - “This isn’t very realistic for me, perhaps you could ask X?”
 - “I don’t want to do X right now, but what about if we did Y instead?”

MANAGE STRESS

Many experiences or events can cause stress in daily life, and some larger events can cause greater strain. You’re not alone. Everyone experiences stress at some point in their lives, and different techniques can help you handle this in a positive way.

Checking in with yourself, as noted above, is a good start. Simply pause to think and reflect. What are the top three things that have caused you stress this week? What are the top three things that have helped you reduce stress this week? You can’t escape stress, but you can aim to maintain balance in your life.

It may also be useful to recognize how stress affects your body and mind:

- Emotional symptoms might include feeling sad or withdrawn or experiencing sudden overwhelming fear, intense worry or severe mood swings.
- Physical symptoms might include a racing heart, fast breathing, sweating, headaches, nausea or vomiting, loss of appetite or drastic changes in weight.
- Behavioural symptoms might include engaging in arguments or sudden outbursts of anger, self-harm, increased or unusual drug or alcohol use or smoking, withdrawing from friends or family, changes in sleeping patterns or drastic changes in personality.
- Cognitive symptoms might include racing thoughts, inability to concentrate or cloudy thinking.



Calming exercises

Slow, deep breathing is one of the simplest and quickest ways to calm the body when you feel overly stressed or experience strong difficult feelings. [Here](#) is a link to a breathing exercise video to help guide you. Keep this trick in your back pocket for overwhelming moments. This short video by the World Health Organization also provides a grounding technique that can help:

- ➔ Close your eyes and sit comfortably.
- ➔ Notice how you are feeling and what you are thinking.
- ➔ Slow down and connect with your body by taking three slow and deep breaths.
- ➔ Refocus on your surroundings by engaging your different senses – what do you see, what do you hear, what do you smell, what do you taste, and what do you feel?

(If at any point you feel uncomfortable, feel free to pause or stop and reset. It can take a bit of practice to get it right and get the full benefits, but stick with it.)

For more practical skills to help cope with stress, see the WHO publication '[Doing What Matters in Times of Stress: An Illustrated Guide](#)'. A few minutes each day are enough to practise the self-help techniques discussed in the guide, which can be used alone or with the accompanying audio exercises.



#MyStory

ANJALI, INDIA

Mental health is political. I have come to learn that through my experiences working with communities and as someone on her journey of recovery. Being a mental health professional with lived experience has been a challenging path. When I started out, I believed firmly the onus for our well-being was solely ours – to get over it. However, four years working in community engagement and advocacy has shown me that is not the case. Access to health care, social security, justice, jobs and education is a fundamental human right behind recovery and is owed to us by our governments.

One young girl who had been working as a child labourer since the age of nine said, “We do not think about stress; we have to survive. I was born to help my family.” At first, I wondered if any laws could help her break the poverty trap and address transgenerational trauma, but laws focused simply on removing the child from her family and placing her in a childcare institution (which resembled a juvenile prison).

It dawned on me that our laws were flawed and so was the system. My idea of advocacy might actually harm this young child if I refused to ignore the context of her life. Her parents did not wish to make her work and were in fact caring and loving. They felt helpless, too. It was the first time I found myself deep in the grey area of ethics. It helped to reflect upon the question of who gets to decide their own needs and the course of their life. After collaborating with the family as part of a field outreach programme, my organization was able to support the family by ensuring better employment opportunities for both parents and alerting them to free education opportunities for girls as part of our country's National Education Program.

Advocacy for me means amplifying voices and creating sustainable, participatory opportunities for the people we support. I feel gratitude and contentment knowing that the communities we work with trust us.



Voices of Youth resources

Did you know UNICEF's Voices of Youth website has some great resources to help you take care of yourself and communicate what you need? You will find this in the **selfcare as an advocate** section! Check out the [website](#)

DETERMINING WHEN YOU NEED HELP

It can feel scary to admit that you need support, but doing so is a sign of courage and strength.



Remember: You don't need to reach a breaking point before you ask for help.

Here are eight signs that you might need support with managing your feelings or supporting your mental health and well-being:

- Finding it hard to get out of bed or feeling tired all the time
- Withdrawing from and avoiding friends or tasks you need to do
- Losing interest in usual activities
- Having trouble concentrating
- Experiencing irritability
- Feeling sad most of the day, nearly every day
- Having thoughts or feelings of wanting to harm yourself, or feeling like there is no point to life
- Experiencing any of the above for more than a couple of weeks



FINDING HELP

Maintaining a healthy mind and body means consistently looking for different actions you can take and methods you can use to support your journey. It's equally important to know where to get information and support when you need them. You are never alone. Different support structures and methods are available to you at different points along your advocacy journey. Building a strong toolkit filled with supportive resources can help during difficult times.

You already have some tools that have taught you how to breathe, reflect on a situation or feelings, and gently move through adversity. If at any point you feel you are having a true mental health crisis, call your local emergency number or your medical contacts for referrals. If, however, you are not facing an emergency, you can find support in your friends and colleagues.

When you need:

- **COMFORT**, talk to a friend who you trust
- **GUIDANCE**, turn to an adult you trust
- **SUPPORT**, talk to a community leader or someone in your community who supports you
- **PERSPECTIVE**, interact and engage with other young people going through similar situations

Though asking for help can feel scary, help from other people can positively change your life. If you are struggling and don't know what to say or how to express that you need help, try some of these examples:

- **When you don't know what you need:** "I'm feeling _____. I'm not sure what to ask for, but I think I need some support. Are you free to talk (day/time)?"
- **When you feel stuck:** "I'm struggling. Can we (meet up/ etc.) on (date)? I'd love your help in thinking through some ideas and making a plan."
- **When you don't want to talk about it:** "I'm in a bad place but I'm also not ready to talk about it. I'd love to chat/do an activity together to help me feel distracted."
- **When you need to feel connected:** "Can you check in with me (on date/every day) to make sure I'm doing OK?"
- ★ "I haven't been doing well. Would you mind texting me every morning to say hi? It would really help me."
- ★ "Hey friend. I've been kind of sad lately. Do you want to Snapchat/send selfies to each other before bed every night, just to check in?"
- ★ "I'm feeling down. What do you think about being self-care buddies? We could text each other once a day, something that we did to care for ourselves, and would love to have any ideas you have?"
- ★ "I've been isolating myself lately. What do you think about checking in with each other a few times a week? I'd love to be in better touch."
- ★ Can you share a favorite memory with me or remind me of some of our good times together?

with thanks and credit to Sam Dylan Finch for this content

YOUR PERSONAL RESOURCE LIST

Your toolkit isn't complete without additional resources. Take some time to find the supportive organizations and groups in your communities (before you need them).

Some examples include:

- **HELPLINES:** Find the phone numbers or web addresses for local, provincial, national and international helplines that support mental and physical health.
- **SUPPORT GROUPS:** Seek contact information for various groups that offer peer support, whether online or in person.
- **WEBSITES:** Keep a list of organizations focused on mental health and well-being, along with their website information.
- **SOCIAL MEDIA:** Follow accounts that provide daily motivation, as well as the accounts of organizations focused on mental health and well-being.
- **PROFESSIONAL GROUPS:** Join groups of people with similar interests to support your cause and your journey; they may also help when you are feeling overwhelmed.
- **PROFESSIONAL:** See a mental health worker during difficult times.



Plan your work



Document your thoughts to help you develop your advocacy project!
Check out the YAG Workplan.

FEELING STUCK



At various points throughout the advocacy process you might feel stuck, confused or demotivated. Do not despair. This is a normal part of the process, and often in these moments you will do your best learning.

GET SUPPORT. Try to find someone who you can talk to and share ideas with – a friend, guardian, parent, teacher or colleague. Personal support and encouragement are important, so try to find someone to connect with.

REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

Sometimes you will be the first person to make a path that others can follow, and this can be a lonely experience. Remember that youth from around the world have undertaken similar tasks and faced similar challenges. Read other people's stories, look for examples similar to yours, and see how other people have handled their situations. Connect with young people on different platforms – in your local community or an online group – to share ideas. As you do this, you will start to develop creative or innovative solutions.

DON'T TRY TO DO EVERYTHING BY YOURSELF.

You might serve as the main driver of a cause, but you are not superhuman and cannot do everything alone. It's easy to take on too much and burn out easily, so make sure you look after yourself, as well as your cause. Start building a team of people who can help you achieve your goals. Remember, everyone has a different set of skills and abilities, and by working with a team you can start to distribute the workload and engage in the advocacy process more effectively.

TURN TO AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND PEOPLE.

Many resources exist to support you during your advocacy journey. Have a look through Voices of Youth, **Internet of Good Things**, and other platforms for inspiration and guidance. Seek out organizations that work on your issue area for support and potential collaboration with other young people.

What should you do if you feel stuck?



LAST THOUGHTS – FOR NOW



DEAR READER...

Dear reader,

We have one more confession – we aren't finished yet.

If you've reached this point, you may have realized that advocacy is a continuum. Just when you think you are done, you may find yourself right back at a new beginning. Along this journey you will hopefully get to see some wonderful changes happen as a result of your work, but remember that growth is a process and it takes time.

As you turn your eyes to the future, you must be brave enough to take ambitious steps and remember that policies implemented today might only show results for the young people who come after you.

Stay strong, be patient, remember you aren't alone, and know that you are part of an amazing generation of young people around the world, ready and leading.

From the creators of the 2018 YAG

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NOTES

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue dotted lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.



NOTES

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