

A group of young people, including men and women, are gathered outdoors in front of a building. They are all smiling and have their right fists raised in a gesture of solidarity or celebration. In the center, a woman holds a black banner with a green star and a circular logo. The background shows a building with a corrugated metal roof and a solar panel mounted on a pole. The overall atmosphere is one of joy and community.

MODULE 9
**ADVOCACY
AND POLICY
DIALOGUE**



ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
ABBREVIATIONS	5
INTRODUCTION	7
→ WHAT UNFPA AND ITS PARTNERS ADVOCATE FOR	8
→ HOW UNFPA ENGAGES IN ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE	9
→ WHY DOES ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE MATTER TO UNFPA?	11
WHAT WORKS IN POLICY AND ADVOCACY DIALOGUE?	14
→ UNDERSTANDING THE POLICY CYCLE	14
→ SEVEN MYTHS ABOUT ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE	17
→ PRINCIPLES FOR COMPREHENSIVE POLICY ADVOCACY	19
HOW TO PLAN AND IMPLEMENT POLICY ADVOCACY	21
DO'S AND DON'TS	30
RESOURCES	32



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This module was written by José Roberto Luna (UNFPA HQ). The author gratefully acknowledges colleagues from UNFPA Headquarters and regional and country offices for their inputs: Satvika Chalasani, Bente Faugli, Howard Friedman, Cécile Mazzacurati and Petra Tenhoope-Bender (UNFPA HQ), Maki Akiyama (Asia-Pacific Regional Office), Maria Bakaroudis (East and Southern Africa Regional Office), Rune Brandrup (Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office), Allan Sanchez (Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office), Elida Nuri (Albania Country Office), Alfonso Barragués and Sergio Esperança (Geneva Office), Paola Broll (Guatemala Country Office) and Carmen Murguia (Peru Country Office), as well as participants in the Validation Workshop held in March 2021 for their feedback and suggestions.

For any questions or feedback, please contact jluna@unfpa.org.

Copyright © 2022 United Nations Population Fund, all rights reserved. Reproduction is authorized provided the source is acknowledged.

How to cite this publication: United Nations Population Fund (2022). My Body, My Life, My World Operational Guidance. Module 9: Advocacy and Policy Dialogue.

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover: UNFPA
Page 13: UNFPA
Page 20: UNFPA Armenia
Page 31: UNFPA



ABBREVIATIONS

CSE	comprehensive sexuality education
HRD	human rights defender
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IEC	information, education and communication
LGBTQ+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/non-cisgender identities (such as gender non-binary/non-conforming and agender)
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
SRHR	sexual and reproductive health and rights

MY BODY

1. ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS
2. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

MY LIFE

3. COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION
4. HARMFUL PRACTICES

MY WORLD

5. YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION
6. YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY
7. HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

CROSS-CUTTING

8. HUMAN RIGHTS
9. ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE



INTRODUCTION



Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country directly or through freely chosen representatives.

Article 21, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UNFPA has a long history of supporting youth participation and engagement in various forums, since young people are central to its mandate.

The Fund’s global strategy for adolescents and youth, *My Body, My Life, My World*, includes as part of the key interventions the promotion of meaningful participation of adolescents and youth, including in political spaces.

Under the “My World” domain, the strategy addresses the priority of supporting the systematic and meaningful participation of adolescents and youth in sustainable development, humanitarian action and sustaining peace, and the visibility of their priorities in policies and programmes responsive to their needs and priorities around the world. The strategy says:



UNFPA will work with partners and youth networks to strengthen the capacities of adolescents and youth, and ensure their contributions span the local to the global. UNFPA will bring together key people and institutions, including governments, civil society, donors, the private sector and youth-led organizations to advocate for more investment in young people as a development priority.

UNFPA therefore supports advocacy and policy dialogue as a core strategy to implement its mandate at the global, regional and country level.

Advocacy is a set of targeted actions addressed to decision-makers in support of a specific political cause. It includes tactics for building support, persuading and influencing that can be undertaken at levels ranging from the subnational and national to the regional and global.

Policy means a set of action points providing general goals or specific procedures to a government body or public institution for a greater good, such as for the fulfilment of human rights for young people. Policy includes laws, statutes, regulations, plans, budgets, guidelines and operational procedures.

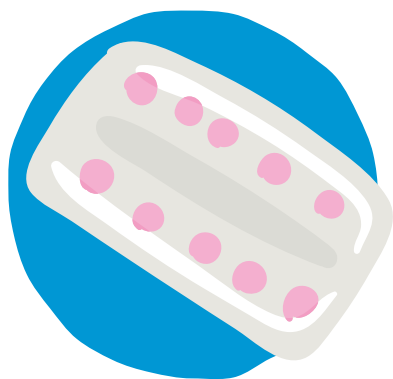
Advocacy and policy dialogue is the direct interaction of stakeholders with policy decision-makers and each other to develop, improve, reform and monitor policies. It includes providing evidence-based analyses and recommendations (including identifying the major drivers and bottlenecks of policy implementation), convening and facilitating dialogues, and offering options to address development challenges.

This module provides operational guidance and support to UNFPA country and regional offices to implement advocacy and policy dialogue in all areas covered by UNFPA's mandate. Faced with growing threats to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), UNFPA stands with young people to ensure that all adolescents and youth can make informed choices about their bodies, their lives and their world as a pathway to fulfil their potential. Advocacy and policy dialogue, with the meaningful participation of young people, is key to this, as shown by many of the examples in this module. At the same time, the module addresses the importance of advocacy and policy dialogue involving young people for the social, economic, environmental, humanitarian and peacebuilding work that is also part of youth programming.

By implementing policy advocacy with and for young people, UNFPA can make a big difference in transforming policymaking, redistributing power, giving meaningful spaces for youth participation in decision-making, building their political skills and supporting their proposals for change.

→ WHAT UNFPA AND ITS PARTNERS ADVOCATE FOR

Challenges to the advancement of SRHR right have significantly increased in recent years, including pushbacks against comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), human rights including the rights of LGBTQ+ people, gender equality and other issues. Opposition, false narratives and countermovements to expanding SRHR services are on the rise, while official development assistance for population and development policies and programmes has declined over the last five years. In many countries, there is a shrinking space for civil society action, with hostility to women and young people as human rights defenders or participants in social movements.



Social movements are an essential part of social change and have always played a critical role in the establishment and sustaining of SRHR. It is increasingly evident that networks of loosely coordinated civil society organizations, activists and individual citizens make more impact, particularly in applying social pressure, than when they work independently or in competition.

Hence, UNFPA supports social movements, including those representing the rights and voices of groups most left behind, as a distinct enabler in UNFPA's strategic plan, and along with partners UNFPA advocates for universal access to SRHR and accelerated implementation of the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, which includes investment, policies and programmes ending preventable maternal deaths, ending unmet need for family planning, and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child marriage.

UNFPA in partnership with youth- and women-led organizations advocates for rights and choices for adolescents and youth to make informed choices about their own bodies, their own lives and the world. As laid out in *My Body, My Life, My World*, this involves access to high-quality adolescent SRH information and services, CSE, adolescent girl-centred programmes, meaningful youth participation in decision-making, dialogue, peacebuilding and humanitarian action, and the generation of data and evidence as well as demographic intelligence for investments, programming and policy-making.

→ HOW UNFPA ENGAGES IN ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE

Beyond service delivery and capacity-building, UNFPA is involved in policy development, based on our experience on the ground, the trust we have earned with governments, and by partnering with civil society, academic institutions, media and the private sector.

UNFPA undertakes advocacy and policy dialogue by:

- **providing analysis and recommendations on advocacy and policy issues**, recognizing development opportunities and offering data and evidence-informed options to address development challenges
- **convening and facilitating dialogue on policies** across government ministries and agencies, and/or among government, international partners and civil society
- **identifying major policy implementation issues** and developing strategies for government and partners to implement the policy more effectively
- **advancing the ICPD agenda**, including fulfilment of rights and commitments by ministries, departments and agencies of government, stakeholders and the international community to achieve ICPD-related 2030 Sustainable Development Goals through appropriate frameworks of action.



UNFPA performs advocacy and policy dialogue at various levels:

1 National and subnational: UNFPA plays a crucial role in ensuring that linkages between population and poverty and the ICPD rights-based agenda are integrated into planning at the country level, in coordination with other agencies. At the request of governments, UNFPA supports them in achieving the goals set forth in the ICPD Programme of Action – including universal access to SRHR, including family planning, CSE, and the prevention of, response to, and elimination of gender-based violence and harmful practices, including child marriage and female genital mutilation – as well as supporting meaningful youth participation and peace and security. Often this includes helping governments design, strengthen and implement policies, frameworks and programmes (including estimating costs, impacts and benefits) tailored to their specific context.

In **Peru**, UNFPA, along with several partners and more than 10,000 young people, advocated with the Constitutional Court to decriminalize consensual sexual relationships among adolescents. As an advocacy outcome, the Court signalled that the penal disposition was unconstitutional because it criminalized all sexual relationships with adolescents without any consideration of sexual consent. The judgment expressly recognized that adolescents have the right to sexual freedom, a manifestation of their right to the free development of their personality; as well as the right to information, health and privacy in matters of their sexuality.

According to the level of decentralization of each country, UNFPA may also support advocacy and policy dialogue at the subnational level to promote human rights-based and youth-responsive policies for investments and services for young people.



2 Regional and subregional: UNFPA, through its regional and subregional offices, works with regional and subregional partners, platforms and mechanisms to raise awareness of issues relating to its mandate. This may include supporting regional conferences on population and development, regional integration mechanisms or parliamentary forums, and promoting flagship initiatives, as well as supporting regional accountability mechanisms for civil society organizations.

In the **East and Southern Africa** region, UNFPA, in partnership with Girls Not Brides and the Southern African Development Community, has developed a Child Marriage Model Law and an implementation guide for parliamentarians, activists and human rights defenders, providing a human rights-based approach to legal frameworks to end child marriage. The Regional Office for **Latin America and the Caribbean** is implementing the Youth Now strategy through regional youth leadership camps with young people from a range of backgrounds to equip them with knowledge and skills on policy issues to advocate for their SRHR in forums such as the Regional Conference on Population and Development and the Regional Conference on Women.



3 Global: UNFPA plays a critical role in guaranteeing that the agenda of the ICPD Programme of Action, its transformative results and the Sustainable Development Goals are at the heart of development, peace and humanitarian priorities. To this end UNFPA participates in forums within the UN System and the Human Rights Mechanism, among others, while positioning emerging themes to address current issues around SRHR, for example by launching globally the annual flagship publication *State of World Population* and co-convening the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25.

At the **global level**, UNFPA supports policy dialogue and initiatives to make sure adolescent and youth issues are addressed through a human rights lens. This includes policy-level work related to UN Security Council [Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security \(2015\)](#), the Commission on Population and Development's Resolution 2012/1 on Adolescents and Youth, and the Human Rights Council's resolutions on Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation. These global frameworks are platforms to engage Member States to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of young people. Similarly, in 2019 a reference group of activists and an [engagement toolkit](#) were created to promote youth participation and accountability around the commitments of the Nairobi Summit on the ICPD 25th anniversary. In addition, UNFPA spearheads the Adolescent Investment Case and develops tools, guidances and investment cases for child marriage, female genital mutilation and intimate partner violence, respectively.

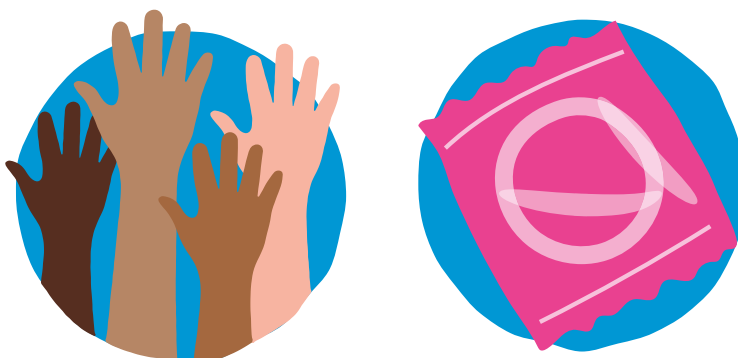
Across levels UNFPA also works closely with civil society organizations (mostly women- and youth-led), academia, parliamentarians and the donor community by making a strong, evidence-based case in favour of integrating population and development issues into all international development priorities.

→ WHY DOES ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE MATTER TO UNFPA?

UNFPA's mandate has a powerful impact on individual lives, families, communities, countries and the world as a whole. When it comes to realizing rights and choices for young people and women, working at the policy level is crucial. This is why it is so important to engage young people to participate meaningfully in advocacy and policy dialogue. Doing so allows them to express their views freely in political matters that affect them. The exercise of this right remains critical for building more just, inclusive, democratic, peaceful and sustainable societies around the world. UNFPA can contribute to youth empowerment by equipping young people with political skills, data collection and analysis, knowledge, evidence, resources and networks, and by partnering with adolescents and youth as political actors in advocacy and policy dialogue at all levels.

Engaging young people as political actors also helps national, regional and global initiatives to overcome negative stereotypes about young people, such as the view in some countries that youth are a problem, immature, and apathetic about politics and participation or pose a risk to political stability. Debunking such stereotypes will help ensure that policy advocacy activities do not reproduce discrimination and intersectional exclusion of young people based on age, race, gender, class, income, place of residence, migratory status, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, language or religion.

When it comes to sexual politics – power-structured relationships and arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another, particularly around gender, sexuality and bodily autonomy – young people have an important role to play in challenging unequal, oppressive and discriminatory systems. The ICPD Programme of Action is the result of decades of social demands, mainly from women’s and youth organizations, for a world that respects, protects and fulfils SRHR everywhere, even in times of pushback. UNFPA has a privileged position in convening feminist and youth movements and can act as a bridge with decision-makers to ensure that SRHR are present on the development agenda and as part of women’s, health and youth policies.



Under “My World”, UNFPA focuses on priorities related to participation, mobilization and accountability with and for young people, by supporting:

- youth-led organizations, initiatives and movements, and their engagement in social and political processes, including in humanitarian and peacebuilding contexts
- a greater focus on and investment in adolescents and youth in social, economic and environmental policies and programmes, and in peacebuilding and humanitarian action
- demographic intelligence, including sex-and age-dissagregated data on young people.¹

1 In order to take an intersectional approach, disaggregation based on race, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity as well as income or class is essential.





WHAT WORKS IN POLICY AND ADVOCACY DIALOGUE?

→ UNDERSTANDING THE POLICY CYCLE



Planning advocacy and policy dialogue requires understanding how the policy cycle works. Policy formulation is a highly political process, and knowledge of its formal rules is required in order to participate. It is equally important to consider how informal rules, human interactions and power dynamics drive the policy cycle. This understanding goes beyond theory and involves complex relations, interests, political positions, and cultural and religious beliefs, in environments ranging from democratic to totalitarian.

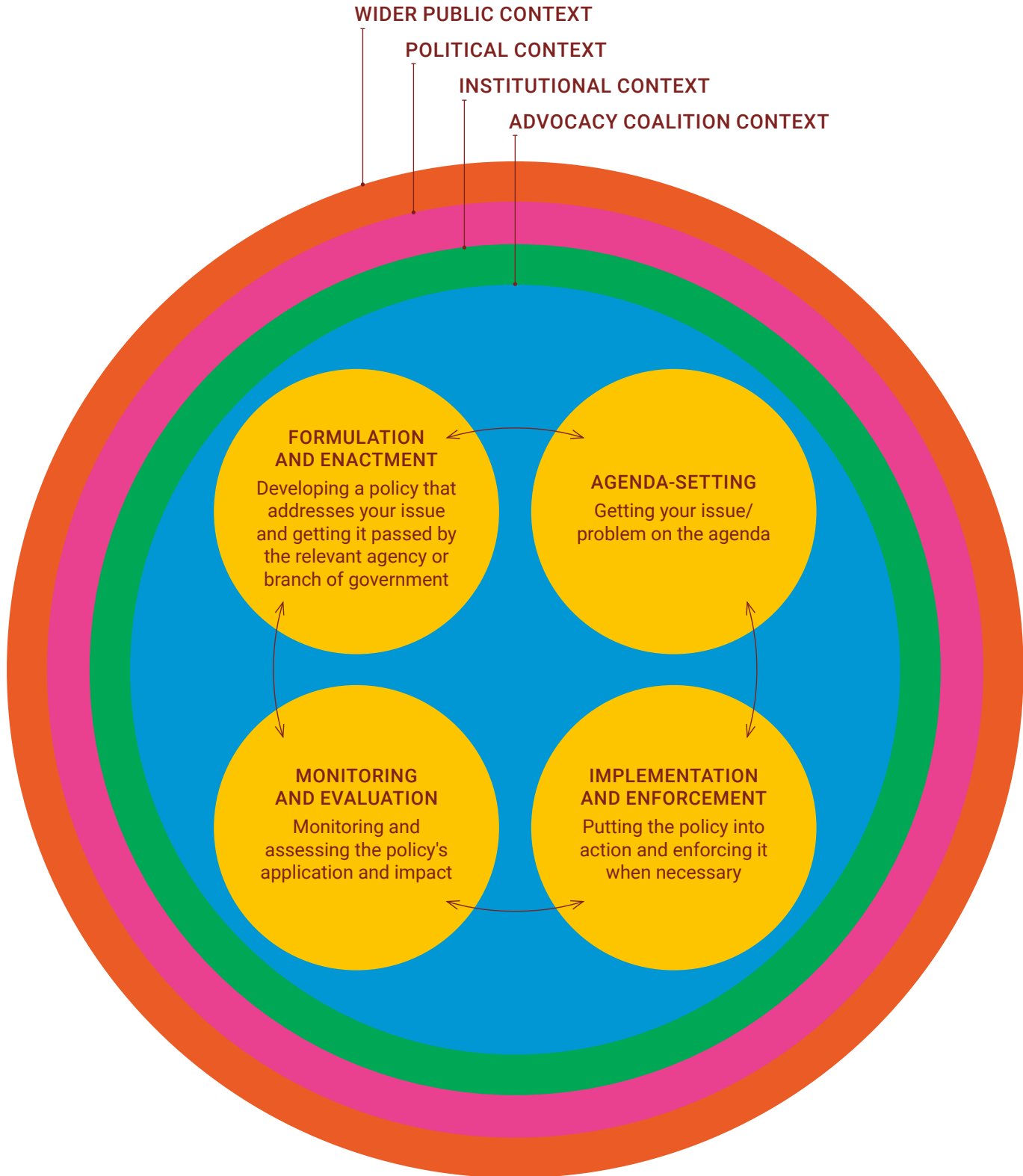
Despite this complexity, most countries follow a general policy formulation cycle that embraces at least four stages: **1)** agenda-setting, which can be shaped by government, the media and citizens, **2)** policy formulation and enactment by the parliament or a government body, **3)** policy implementation and enforcement, and **4)** monitoring, evaluation and accountability.

This understanding of the policy cycle has been criticized by some as a theoretical concept that is not always applicable to real-world situations. This is true insofar as political change is intrinsically a dynamic process. In certain contexts, some elements of the cycle as described above may not be present. And a policy proposal may of course ultimately be approved or rejected. Nevertheless, each of these stages offers potential entry points for advocacy and dialogue.

For all these reasons, it is important to ground policy advocacy in a strong analysis of the context, including the normative, formal and informal rules of power and decision-making, and to get expert advice and analysis throughout the policy advocacy process.

Planning advocacy and policy dialogue requires understanding how the policy cycle works. Policy formulation is a highly political process, and knowledge of its formal rules is required in order to participate.

POLICY CYCLE IN A SOCIOECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

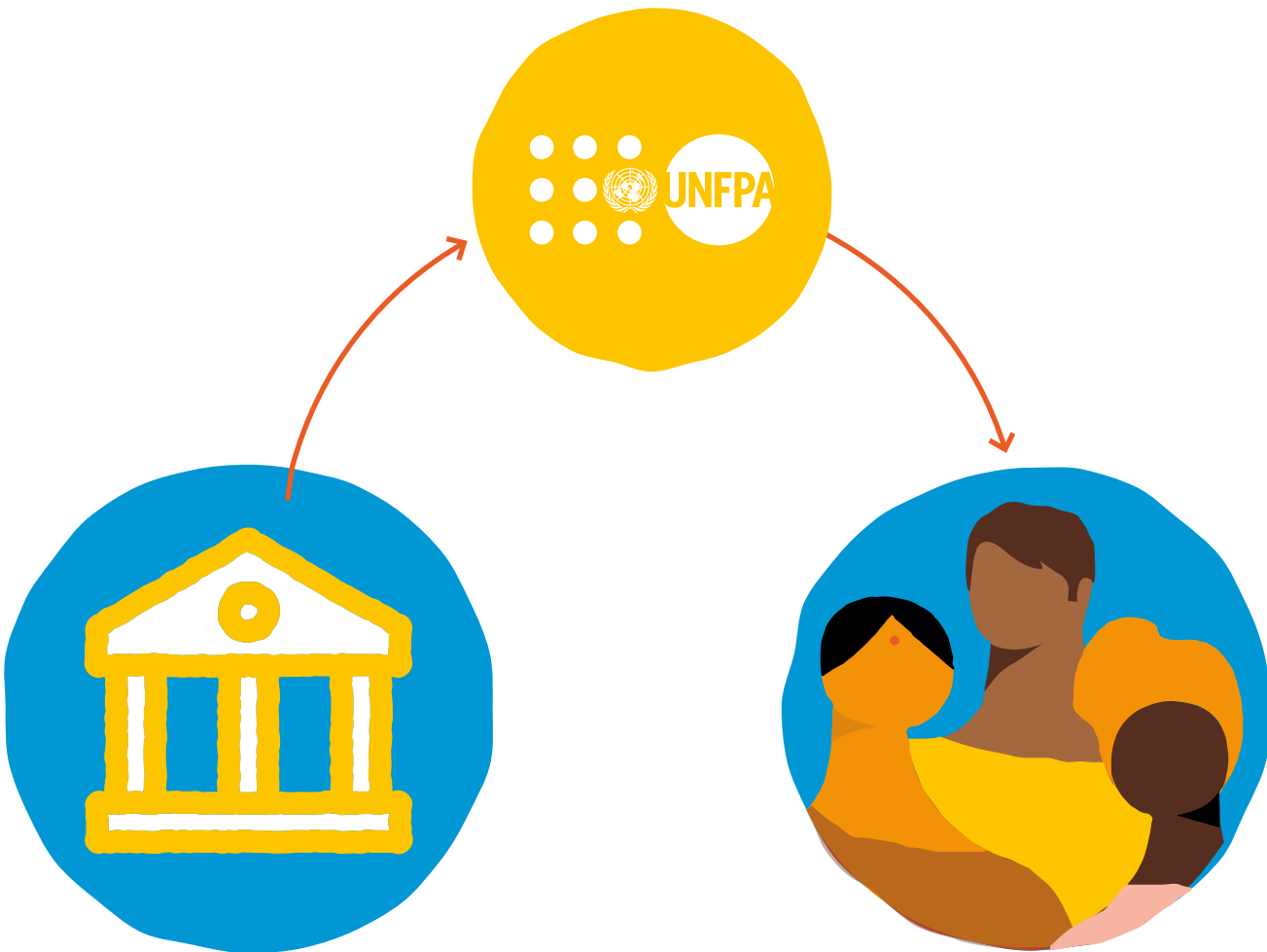


Source: Adapted from Professional Policy Making for the Twenty-first Century (Strategic Policy Making Team, UK Cabinet Office, 1999) and A Living Roadmap for Policy Making 2.0 (IGI Global Book Series, 2014).

Political regimes shape the dynamics of policymaking, and while some are open to civil society participation and are expanding spaces for this, others may be reluctant or opposed to open political debate, either because of concerns about their image and the public perception of policies and actions, or simply to demonstrate their power.

UNFPA, along with other UN agencies and international cooperation and humanitarian actors, can act as a bridge between governments and civil society organizations, movements, media, academia and relevant stakeholders.

At the country level, for instance, UNFPA has a privileged space within the UN System and beyond for convening and negotiating, and for providing data, evidence and knowledge that can support evidence-informed policymaking. This allows UNFPA to bring to the policymaking arena the concerns of civil society organisations, human rights advocates and other political players.



→ SEVEN MYTHS ABOUT ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE



Just as there are many definitions of advocacy and policy dialogue, there are numerous myths about what it is and is not. Before discussing each step in advocacy and policy dialogue, let's look at some of these misconceptions.

MYTH	REALITY
#1 Everything that UNFPA and its partners do is policy advocacy.	UNFPA and some of its partners do advocacy and policy dialogue, but UNFPA also does many other activities that cannot be considered advocacy, such as service delivery, technical assistance and knowledge management.
#2 Capacity-building, training, and information, education and communication (IEC) are advocacy interventions.	Capacity-building, training and IEC could be part of an advocacy strategy, but as stand-alone actions they cannot be considered to be advocacy, especially if they do not relate to policy change.
#3 Advocacy is the same as public relations.	Advocates might consider using public relations in their advocacy and policy dialogue activities, but simply undertaking public-relations activities does not mean that policy outcomes will be achieved.
#4 Community dialogues are always advocacy.	Although community dialogues are considered an effective intervention to influence and change social norms, community dialogues themselves are not advocacy if they are not directly linked to policy issues.
#5 Only experts can conduct advocacy and policy dialogue.	While advocacy and policy dialogue require specific knowledge and skills to achieve their objectives, young activists and women leaders have achieved considerable policy changes around the world without initially being considered experts in this field.
#6 Lobbying is the same as advocacy and policy dialogue.	Advocacy and policy dialogue are intrinsically related to each other due to their common objective of influencing policy decision-makers, but advocacy encompasses broad dimensions in policymaking, while lobbying seeks to influence decision-makers through face-to-face negotiations.
#7 By carrying out advocacy and policy dialogue, UNFPA and the UN threaten the sovereignty of countries.	Everything UNFPA and the UN implement at the country, regional or global level is in accordance with international, regional and national agreements and with international law.



KEY CONCEPTS FOR ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE

Lobbying: A strategy to generate political change by influencing decision-makers through direct dialogues or other interactions.

Public financial management: The budget process by which governments manage public resources (revenue and expenditure) and the impact of such resources on the economy or society. Gender-responsive and youth-responsive budgeting are needed to ensure strategic investments in adolescents and youth.

Accountability: From a human rights perspective, accountability refers to the relationship of government policymakers and other duty bearers to the rights-holders (youth and women) affected by their decisions, and to actions establishing preventive and corrective measures for improving policymaking and service delivery.

Human rights: Human rights are rights that every person has simply because they exist as human beings – they are not granted by any state. These universal rights are inherent to us all, regardless of nationality, sex, gender, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language or any other status. They are universal and inalienable, indivisible and interdependent, grounded on the principles of equality and non-discrimination. States have obligations and duties under international law to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.

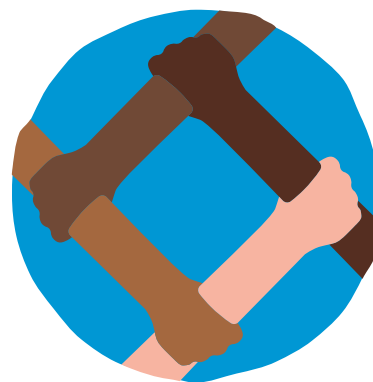
Sexual and reproductive health and rights: SRHR entails a set of freedoms and entitlements. These freedoms include the right to make free and responsible decisions and choices, free of violence, coercion and discrimination, over matters concerning one's body and sexual and reproductive health. The entitlements include unhindered access to a range of health facilities, goods, services and information, which ensure all people full enjoyment of the right to sexual and reproductive health under article 12 of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ICPD and other international human rights instruments.



→ PRINCIPLES FOR COMPREHENSIVE POLICY ADVOCACY

A comprehensive model of advocacy and policy dialogue at UNFPA means integrating essential components by making operational the principles coming from *My Body, My Life, My World* by:

- supporting **evidence-based** policymaking and policy advocacy with and for young people
- **putting adolescents and youth at the centre** as political actors and partners in policy advocacy and decision-making
- **ensuring accountability** by governments, civil society organizations and other duty bearers
- **applying a gender and power lens** to policy advocacy, which means opening spaces particularly to adolescent girls and young women, challenging sexism, harmful masculinities and adultism, and giving voice to young people in all their diversity, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics
- adopting policy advocacy **oriented around the life course**, engaging adolescents at early ages in capacity-building and then boosting their political participation as youth activists
- taking affirmative action to **leave no one behind** and operationalizing intersectionality to support the groups most marginalized by oppression such as racism (Indigenous and African descent), sexism and heterosexism (adolescent girls, young women, key populations and non-binary groups), ableism (youth with disabilities) and other relevant groups according to particular contexts
- **applying policy advocacy to all settings**, working with civil society organizations, governments and the United Nations System as a cross-sectional strategy that can support all the areas of UNFPA's work on adolescents and youth globally.



դանգ է
գտնվելու վայրը



Ընտանիք



34-ներ
մարմին





HOW TO PLAN AND IMPLEMENT POLICY ADVOCACY

A comprehensive policy advocacy strategy requires actions at various levels including strengthening institutional capacity, analysis and planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and accountability.



1. IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

A number of participatory methods can be used to identify an issue of SRHR for young people that requires advocacy. These include developing a problem tree, conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis or using data and evidence that could lead to defining policy solutions.

Some examples of policy issues related to SRHR are the legal age of marriage, making school mandatory for young people up to a certain age, ensuring access to CSE, supporting non-discrimination against pregnant girls in schools, and ensuring access of non-married adolescents and youth to sexual and reproductive health services, including access to contraception. Other potential policy issues include working with public financing institutions to establish an age- and gender-responsive budgeting system to ensure that investments in young people are included in poverty reduction strategies, as well as in social development and inclusion policies or economic growth measures to achieve the demographic dividend.

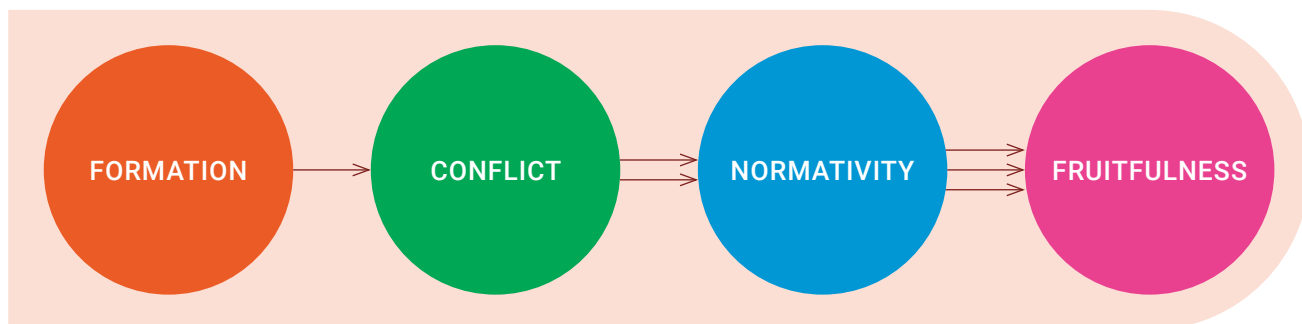
2. FORMING ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS



Forging alliances remains central to UNFPA’s strategies to advance its mandate. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ICPD and the Beijing Platform of Action are examples of how the voices of activists and governments have transformed the development agenda. Diverse, broad, inclusive and strong alliances of organizations with a collective objective are more likely to achieve their advocacy and policy goals.

Building alliances and coalitions requires not just identifying potential allies through stakeholder mapping, but also a collaborative approach to building relationships based on common interests, trust, respect for diversity and the value that all members can add. Approach potential partners in a targeted manner, with a clear idea of how the various partners complement each other in working towards the advocacy goal, recognizing their roles individually and the added value of a coalition. Alliances and coalitions may have temporary partners, but they are primarily a long-term process.

Networks, coalitions and other forms of alliances during implementation of the advocacy and policy strategy usually go through phases of growth, which may include:



Many human rights defenders, including young people engaging in advocacy and policy work for the first time, may not anticipate conflict within coalitions and may not be well prepared to deal with it. However, a degree of conflict should be understood as part of the healthy growth of any coalition, with the potential to lead to the creation of normative tools such as principles, internal protocols, and procedures for decision-making and political representation. These can sustain the collective agreements among members, strengthen internal capacities and facilitate transparency and accountability.

UNFPA supports bolstering youth movements and working with youth-led organizations, coalitions and networks to create intergenerational platforms and entry points for adolescents and youth to engage at local, national and global levels, including in humanitarian and peacebuilding processes.

At the **regional level**, UNFPA supports AfriYan and the African Coalition on Menstrual Health in the African continent, while in Latin America and the Caribbean region UNFPA supports the Youth Alliance on ICPD and Aliadas platform to end child marriage and early unions, and partners with Mira que te Miro for social monitoring on SRHR. In Europe and Central Asia UNFPA supports Y-PEER, and in the Arab States region it supports the Regional Accountability Framework, an alliance to end child marriage. At the country level UNFPA supports networks and civil society coalitions advocating for CSE, youth peace and security, and access to contraception for young people.

“Leaving no one behind” principle to policy advocacy: Policy advocacy is often led by young people from privileged backgrounds, so it is critical to embrace a “leaving no one behind” approach to ensure that the most marginalized youth are able to participate and make their voices heard within youth coalitions created to advocate for defending their rights. This requires embracing intersectionality to analyse the convergent oppressions that young people may face according to their specific context and the power dynamics that are present, such as racism, sexism, adultism, heterosexism, ethnocentrism and ableism, among others. UNFPA must uphold the rights of the most vulnerable young people by promoting inclusion and taking measures to ensure that they have access to political participation and to decision-making spaces.

3. CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TRAINING



“Knowledge is power. Information is liberating.”

Kofi Annan

Advancing a strategy for advocacy and policy dialogue requires equipping youth advocates with the skills to lead and participate in the political arena. Advocacy and policy training should include:

- key concepts around advocacy and policy
- the policy formulation cycle
- human rights and international human rights law
- international, regional and national laws
- Components of a comprehensive advocacy model
- how to define and prioritise an advocacy and policy issue
- mapping actors
- how to be a spokesperson
- managing opposition and safeguarding personal and collective integrity
- project management, resource mobilization and reporting on advocacy
- monitoring and evaluation of advocacy and policy outcomes
- accountability, transparency and coalition-building.

While training on advocacy and policy dialogue is an essential component of a comprehensive advocacy model, it must intrinsically support the capacities to advocate for intended policy outcomes on adolescent and youth SRHR. This strategy must be considered a process of continuing education.

In 2019, UNFPA co-convened the **Non-Formal Education Forum** in Rio de Janeiro as an opportunity to advocate for the recognition of CSE as a critical element for the non-formal education agenda. Prior to the forum, advocacy training was conducted with young people from all regions to prepare them to meaningfully participate in the forum and advocate for CSE in non-formal education in their national arena. As a result, the delegation included in the forum’s agenda and its declaration out-of-school CSE, the importance of effective empowerment programming for adolescent girls, gender equality and human rights perspectives.

4. POLITICAL ANALYSIS AND PLANNING

The capacity to undertake policy analysis includes the knowledge and skills to map the agendas of government, the public and the media, and the positions, interests and will of key stakeholders.



Strong political analysis informs the design and planning of the advocacy strategy, along with gathering data and evidence of effective or promising practices that could serve as a foundation for the call to action. UNFPA's population data can be instrumental here. Although political analysis is central to planning for policy advocacy, it must also be an ongoing activity during the advocacy process itself to keep track of how the political environment evolves and the potential risks or opportunities it might offer to your policy advocacy cause, as well as to prevent pushback.

A plan should emphasize political goals, while being comprehensive and achievable. It should consider the resources available and opportunities for fundraising or partnerships.

5. CREATING THE MESSAGE

A clear and focused message is one of the most important features of an advocacy campaign. It should be developed in response to several questions:

- What is the advocacy problem you are trying to solve?
- Who is your target audience?
- What are the best channels and the best media source to communicate your message?
- Can your message appeal to both the mind and the emotions?
- Does it make a clear call to action in favour of your cause?
- Are there data and evidence to uphold your message?

Engaging the target audience effectively and making the best use of opportunities to spread the message means capitalizing on the best spokespersons, influencers and key allies. Remember that although developing a communications strategy can include IEC, communications for development and public relations, communication in policy advocacy is primarily political communication.

6. IMPLEMENTING THE ADVOCACY STRATEGY

Once the alliance or coalition has completed capacity-building, identified the problem, analysed the political context, identified the target audience, created the message and gathered the necessary resources, it is time to start implementing the policy advocacy strategy through the coalition.



Depending on the scale of the advocacy process, this may require the mobilization of resources and the management of one or more projects to achieve the expected results. There may also be autonomous advocacy processes that are developed through the combined efforts of the actors involved and which will not be subject to project management during the implementation phase.

It is important to note that in political matters there is no magic formula or instruction manual for the perfect timing for advocacy. An analysis of the context and opportunities, and an awareness of the risks involved, is the best and only resource. It is essential to judge both when to act and when not to. For example, in a certain country a legal reform is being developed to include CSE in the education system, but teachers and the community have not been consulted about the reform, and this could hinder its progress. It is therefore best not to move forward until a support base for the proposal has been generated.

An analysis of the context and opportunities, and an awareness of the risks involved, is the best and only resource. It is essential to judge both when to act and when not to.

UNFPA's role in supporting implementation of policy advocacy is not limited to providing capacity-building, financial contributions and technical assistance to youth-led organizations, movements or other coalitions, but also includes partnering with them in analysing the political context, and UNFPA can act as a bridge between different stakeholders.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring means systematically tracking progress in the implementation of policy projects and strategies, while evaluation is an assessment of the relevance, impact, effectiveness, equity, efficiency and sustainability of an intervention.



Monitoring advocacy programmes should not be confused with political scanning as an advocacy activity, e.g. monitoring media reports, government statements, or groups opposed to the advocacy or policy goal. Monitoring the risk of backlash is integral to policy analysis, and it should continue throughout the policy advocacy process because of the sensitivity of topics such as SRHR. But programmatic monitoring means answering questions such as: Are we doing the activities we set out to do? Are the people who we wanted to participate actually involved (especially young people)? Are we meeting our timelines? What results have we seen? What changes in course have been necessary? Are we keeping to our budget?

M&E may not be a strength of some civil society organizations, particularly community-based or youth-led advocacy groups or collectives. Such groups often struggle to obtain funding for M&E activities, and they may overlook the need for M&E, especially if they view policy advocacy as an “art” rather than a systematic process. Nevertheless, it is important to apply the same principles of M&E to advocacy and policy dialogue as to other forms of programming. M&E tools include measures of participation, media monitoring, theory of change, results frameworks and multisectoral and multistakeholder accountability mechanisms.

For advocacy, performance monitoring – which involves the measurement of performance over time against key performance indicators – and formative evaluation – usually undertaken early in the development of the program to inform interested parties about the trends in results – are more prevalent than impact evaluation. Impact evaluation is less common because most advocacy evaluation focuses on whether advocacy strategies achieved their goals – changing a system, increasing funding for a policy or programme, changing a policy – rather than extending to impacts in young people’s lives.



M&E should be tailored to implementing partners’ role and mandate, since civil society organizations, governments, academia and the international community have different but complementary functions. With governments and research partners, UNFPA can support the evaluation of the impact of policy changes through qualitative as well as quasi-experimental methods, such as regression discontinuity design (where there are clear cutoffs in defining benefits and entitlements) and natural experiments (where there is staggered roll-out of policies by region).

In **Zambia**, opposition groups organized a coalition to advocate for stopping CSE, claiming it had harmful effects on children. They promoted a petition to the government to withdraw from the Ministerial Commitment on Comprehensive Sexuality Education and to retract the national CSE curriculum. Responding to a tentative promise from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to withdraw the curriculum, UNFPA and UN partners mobilized with civil society and CSE champions, monitoring and conducting political scanning to influence and defend the right to CSE by providing evidence to the government stakeholders. An outcome of this policy advocacy was that Parliament issued a communiqué reaffirming “support to the provision of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) for all that benefit women and adolescents, and safeguard the health of their children and societies at large and recognize that CSE is an integral part of SRHR”.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Accountability and transparency are linked and are foundational to governance and the human rights perspective. Across all components of advocacy and policy dialogue, accountability and transparency help ensure that the participation of youth and civil society is ethically driven, and they increase the legitimacy of policy advocacy, both internally and for government stakeholders.

A human rights-based approach depends on fostering accountability of multiple actors and at various levels:

- **Administrative accountability:** administrative mechanisms that help to ensure that public servants implement policies correctly and in accordance with their purpose.
- **Social accountability:** activities in which individuals and civil society organizations (e.g. youth-led and women-led organizations, social movements and coalitions) act directly or indirectly to advocate for accountability. Such activities are typically initiated independently, but they may be facilitated by the state and have increasingly been supported by multilateral development agencies in the name of promoting accountable governance and fighting corruption.
- **Political accountability:** the role of officials in responding to their decision-making around policy matters. The role of parliamentarians is crucial in promoting a culture of political accountability based on their duty of making governments answerable for their performance in implementing public policies and respecting human rights.
- **National legal accountability:** includes the duty of the state to guarantee effective enjoyment of human rights, including the duty to provide effective legal remedies to victims, counselling and paralegal support. Legal remedies can be judicial, i.e. some youth organizations could specialize in litigation or promoting policy changes, as well as non-judicial actions, such as through a national human rights institution.
- **International accountability:** includes systematically integrating adolescent and youth SRHR information into reports submitted to international human rights mechanisms, including regional human rights bodies, treaty monitoring bodies, special procedures and the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review, together with implementation of its recommendations. More on the Universal Periodic Review can be found in Module 8.

SAFEGUARDING YOUNG PEOPLE AS HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS FROM BACKLASH AND REPRISALS

Adolescents and youth, youth-led organizations, community or civil society organizations may suffer reprisals due to their engagement with the United Nations in the field of human rights, including as a result of gaining positive policy advocacy outcomes on SRHR.²

Reprisals and intimidation against individuals and groups engaging with the UN may take different forms, such as travel bans, threats and harassment (including by officials), smear campaigns, surveillance, introduction of restrictive legislation, physical attacks, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence or denial of access to medical attention, or even killings.

Addressing and preventing such acts of intimidation and reprisals is a long-standing priority for the UN. It is thus fundamental that UNFPA, at headquarters, regional and country levels, safeguards the physical integrity of its partners by informing them thoroughly and beforehand of the potential consequences of their engagement. UNFPA may also facilitate, at the request of and with the informed consent of the alleged victim, the reporting of allegations of cases of intimidation and reprisals. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has a dedicated email for this (reprisals@ohchr.org).

States have specific obligations under the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), and it is important that it is widely shared among our partners. UNFPA may also facilitate contact with the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of HRDs, who is mandated to look after the situation of HRDs worldwide and can be contacted on defenders@ohchr.org.



2 The rights of human rights defenders (HRDs), defined as “individuals, groups and associations contributing to the effective elimination of all violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of peoples and individuals” are safeguarded in Resolution 53/144 (1999), adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly, commonly known as the Declaration on HRDs.



DO'S AND DON'TS



DO

- ✓ Take a comprehensive approach to advocacy and policy dialogue
- ✓ Analyse the political context by mapping the public agenda, the agenda-setting and the key players
- ✓ Promote data and evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue
- ✓ Incorporate a human rights perspective
- ✓ Apply a permanent capacity-building, M&E and alliance-strengthening approach
- ✓ Support meaningful youth participation in policy advocacy
- ✓ Endorse accountability as a core element to advocacy at all levels
- ✓ Embrace a “leaving no one behind” approach to advocacy by applying an intersectional approach



DON'T

- ✗ Use stand-alone advocacy activities that will have limited impact
- ✗ Implement advocacy strategies without deep knowledge of the political context and the likelihood of pushback
- ✗ Support policy advocacy that promotes ineffective interventions that can do harm
- ✗ Be blind to policy advocacy proposals that may lead to human rights violations
- ✗ Assume that the coalition has nothing to learn or improve
- ✗ Encourage policy advocacy approaches that are tokenistic with young people (e.g. providing only merchandise like t-shirts, or asking them to deliver pamphlets) and not embrace their real participation in decision-making
- ✗ Tolerate lack of transparency or accountability in policy advocacy supported by UNFPA
- ✗ Engage elite young people in policy advocacy activities, instead of ensuring that the most marginalized youth are able to participate in political matters that affect them



Uudoo.ku



RESOURCES

- Advocates for Youth. *Advocacy Toolkit*. <https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/storage//advfy/documents/advocacykit.pdf>
- Advocates for Youth (2019). *Youth Activist Toolkit*. <https://advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Youth-Activist-Toolkit.pdf>
- CARE International (2014). *The CARE International Advocacy Handbook*. <https://www.care-international.org/files/files/Care%20International%20Advocacy%20Handbook.pdf>
- Guttmacher-Lancet Commission on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (2018). *Accelerate Progress: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for All. Executive Summary*. https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/page_files/accelerate-progress-executive-summary.pdf
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2011). *Project/ Programme Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Guide*. <https://ifrcwatsanmissionassistant.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/ifrc-me-guide-8-2011-1.pdf>
- International Planned Parenthood Federation (2012). *Sexual Rights and the Universal Periodic Review: A Toolkit for Advocates*. <https://sexualrightsinitiative.com/resources/sexual-rights-universal-periodic-review-toolkit-advocates>
- International Planned Parenthood Federation Western Hemisphere Region, Inc. (2010). *Handbook for Political Analysis and Mapping*. <https://lac.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Political%20Analysis%20and%20Mapping%20web%20version.pdf>
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. How to share information about cases of intimidation and reprisals. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Reprisals/Pages/HowToShareInformationAboutCases.aspx>
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2004). *Human Rights Defenders: Protecting the Right to Defend Human Rights*. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet29en.pdf>
- World Health Organization (2018). *Advocating for Change for Adolescents! A Practical Toolkit for Young People to Advocate for Improved Adolescent Health and Well-being*. https://www.who.int/pmnch/knowledge/publications/advocacy_toolkit.pdf?ua=1

REFERENCES

- ① United Nations Population Fund (2007). *UNFPA Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth. Opening Doors with Young People: 4 Keys*.
https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/framework_youth.pdf
- ② United Nations Population Fund (2013). *UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth: Towards Realizing the Full Potential of Adolescents and Youth*.
<https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA%20Adolescents%20and%20Youth%20Strategy.pdf>
- ③ The Policy Project (1999). *Networking for Policy Change: An Advocacy Training Manual*.
<http://www.policyproject.com/pubs/AdvocacyManual.pdf>
- ④ United Nations Population Fund and Promundo (2010). *Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality and Health: A Global Toolkit for Action: Advocacy and Policy*.
<https://www.unfpa.org/publications/advocacy-and-policy>
- ⑤ AMSHeR (2018). *A Policy Advocacy Guide on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights [SRHR] for Young Key Populations [YKPs]*.
<https://advocacyaccelerator.org/product/a-policy-advocacy-guide-on-sexual-reproductive-health-and-rights-srhr-for-young-key-populations-ykps/>
- ⑥ United Nations Population Fund (2021). *UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Annex 3, Business Model*. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/board-documents/DP.FPA_.2021.8_-_UNFPA_strategic_plan_2022-2025_-_Annex_3_-_Business_model_-_FINAL_-_18Jul21.pdf
- ⑦ United Nations (1990). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- ⑧ United Nations (2018). *United Nations Youth Strategy: Youth 2030: Working with and for Young People*. https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/18-00080_UN-Youth-Strategy_Web.pdf
- ⑨ Devlin M (2006). *Inequality and the Stereotyping of Young People*.
<https://www.developmenteducation.ie/media/documents/Inequality%20and%20the%20Negative%20Stereotyping%20of%20Young%20People.pdf>
- ⑩ Millet K (1969 [2000]). *Sexual Politics*. Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- ⑪ Hivos and International Institute for Environment and Development (2018). *Advocacy Toolkit: People Centred Advocacy for a More Sustainable Food System*.
<https://pubs.iied.org/g04301>
- ⑫ Strategic Policy Making Team, UK Cabinet Office (1999). *Professional Policy Making for the Twenty-first Century*. <https://ntouk.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/professional-policy-making-for-the-21st-century-1999.pdf>
- ⑬ International Planned Parenthood Federation (2010). *Handbook for Advocacy Planning*.
<https://live-ippfwhr.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Handbook-for-Advocacy-Planning.pdf>

- 14 United Nations Children's Fund (2017). *UNICEF's Engagements in Influencing Domestic Public Finance for Children (PF4C): A Global Programme Framework*. https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/UNICEF_Public_Finance_for_Children.pdf
- 15 United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Development Fund for Women (2006). *Gender Responsive Budgeting in Practice: A Training Manual*. <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/gender-responsive-budgeting-practice-training-manual>
- 16 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2013). *Who Will Be Accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/WhoWillBeAccountable.pdf>
- 17 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2021). What are human rights? <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/pages/whatarehumanrights.aspx>
- 18 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2016). *General Comment No. 22 (2016) on the Right to Sexual and Reproductive Health*. https://www.escr-net.org/resources/general-comment-no-22-2016-right-sexual-and-reproductive-health#_ftn2
- 19 Centre for Development and Population Activities (1995). *Cairo, Beijing, and Beyond: A Handbook on Advocacy for Women Leaders*. https://www.mewc.org/images/stories/documents/Cedpa_CairoBeijingAndBeyond_1995.pdf
- 20 Asia-Pacific Leadership and Policy Dialogue for Women's and Children's Health (2012). *Building Advocacy Coalitions for Greater Action and Accountability: Note for Discussion*. https://www.who.int/pmnch/media/news/2012/advocacy_building_coalitions.pdf
- 21 United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Children's Fund (2020). *Seven Steps to Strengthening Legislation, Policy and Public Financing to End Child Marriage*. <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/seven-steps-strengthening-legislation-policy-and-public-financing-end-child-marriage>
- 22 United Nations Children's Fund (2010). *Advocacy Toolkit: A Guide to Influencing Decisions that Improve Children's Lives*. <https://www.right-to-education.org/resource/advocacy-toolkit-guide-influencing-decisions-improve-childrens-lives>
- 23 Virtual Knowledge Center to End Violence Against Women and Girls (2020). What is monitoring and evaluation? <https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/330-what-is-monitoring-and-evaluation-.html?next=323>
- 24 Human Rights Council (2012). *Technical guidance on the application of a human rights based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce preventable maternal morbidity and mortality. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/21/22)*. https://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/women/docs/A.HRC.21.22_en.pdf

