

YOUTH RIGHTS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Section B: Advocating for youth rights

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Note: the content of this toolkit draws on a number of United Nations and external sources. To ensure the toolkit is user-friendly, content drawn from United Nations sources is not consistently referenced throughout, but included in the Bibliography.

Introduction

Welcome to the Youth Rights Advocacy Toolkit! This toolkit is the result of a partnership between the United Nations Human Rights Office, Education Above All Foundation and Silatech. The toolkit aims to empower young people to stand up for their rights.¹

Why a Youth Rights Advocacy Toolkit?

Throughout history, young people have been at the forefront of social movements, calling for, and often sparking social change. At the same time, youth activism is not always welcomed as a force for good, particularly where it is seen as a threat to the status quo and to well-established social norms, even if those norms perpetuate injustice and inequality and are used to justify the denial or even violation of human rights. Yet, making human rights a reality for all people is essential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet in the present and the future agreed by the international community in 2015.

There is increasing recognition of the need to address young people's human rights concerns, but change doesn't happen overnight and it is not the sole responsibility of youth activists, youth advocates or civil society to ensure young people can exercise their rights. Governments, the private sector and other stakeholders play a critical role as well; however, the present toolkit focuses on empowering youth in all their diversity to advocate for their rights, and particularly young people in situations of vulnerability or marginalization. The toolkit recognizes that meaningful youth participation at all levels and in all areas that affect young people's lives are essential ingredients for youth leadership to promote youth rights.

A vast amount of information, resources and tools exist on human rights and young people. This toolkit does not seek to reinvent the wheel, but to gather the most important information in a single place, in an accessible, user-friendly way, and to point readers and users in the direction of additional resources to support them in their advocacy for youth rights.

Who is the toolkit for?

The toolkit is for young people who want to learn more about their rights and how to advocate for them. This toolkit provides information on some of the human rights mechanisms and processes that exist at the global level, and how these can be used to promote youth rights. The toolkit also considers the importance of youth rights in the context of peacebuilding and humanitarian settings. No prior knowledge of or experience with any of the topics covered is assumed or needed.

¹ For more information on the partnership between UN Human Rights, Education Above All Foundation and Silatech, visit: <https://www.ohchr.org/youth/working-and-youth-vulnerable-situations> (available in English)

The toolkit is primarily intended for use by young people and youth activists, including young human rights defenders and young peacebuilders, as well as youth-led, youth-focused and youth-serving organizations. International organizations working to promote youth rights, government representatives, Ministries of Youth and Youth Parliamentary Committees may also find the toolkit relevant to their work.

Youth is not a clearly defined age category, a topic addressed in Section A under the question 'What is youth?'. The present toolkit is mostly aimed at young people aged 18 and older, although elements of it may also be relevant to those aged 15-17. Younger children will likely benefit more from resources focused on child rights.

How was the toolkit developed?

The Toolkit is the result of a joint effort by the United Nations Human Rights Office, Education Above All Foundation and Silatech, based on consultations with young people, including a Youth Advisory Board established within the partnership and consisting of ten young people.

A series of six online youth consultations held in May and June 2022 targeted youth in different countries and regions. The consultations aimed to identify the key human rights challenges and obstacles young people face, including when they advocate for their own rights, and to identify good practice examples, success stories and useful tips for youth rights advocacy. The consultations were jointly facilitated by UN Human Rights and members of the Youth Advisory Board, who also provided extensive input into the toolkit through several rounds of feedback, including an in-depth discussion organized at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France in September 2022.

The toolkit was developed with a view to presenting its content in an interactive, engaging way through a dedicated website or microsite, which will follow the present, initial PDF format prepared for the UN Human Rights website.

How is the toolkit structured?

Following the introduction and a brief overview of some basic definitions, the Youth Rights Advocacy Toolkit is structured in four sections:

- Section A: Human rights basics: principles and the treaties they underpin - how they relate to youth rights
- Section B: Advocating for youth rights
- Section C: Leveraging international human rights mechanisms and processes to advocate for youth rights
- Section D: Youth rights in peacebuilding and humanitarian settings

The toolkit is structured in a question and answer format. Each section consists of questions and sub-questions that address different topics. For each question, a shorter answer of a few lines to several short paragraphs is provided, along with a longer, more detailed answer for

those who are interested to go ‘More in depth’. Where relevant, links to resources where you can learn more and find additional information are also provided.

The different sections complement and build on one another, but can also be used separately depending on your needs and interests.

In addition, the toolkit contains an Annex which provides useful information on youth entrepreneurship as a way for young people to exercise their right to work. The Annex is structured in the same way as the Sections, but with a list of references at the end.

How should I use the toolkit?

You may already be familiar with some of the topics covered in the toolkit. Answer the following, brief questions to assess your level of knowledge, and to get an idea of which section or sections may be most useful to you, depending on your interest.

HOW TO USE THE YOUTH RIGHTS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

	Definitely not	Probably not	Maybe, I'm not sure	Probably yes	Absolutely, yes 100%
I am familiar with human rights and youth rights	<i>Go through Section A</i>	<i>Go through Section A</i>	<i>Look at the questions and topics covered in Section A to decide what may be most relevant to you</i>	<i>Focus on ‘More in depth...’ and ‘Where can I learn more?’ for any questions or topics in Section A that may interest you</i>	<i>Skim through Section A in case anything may be of interest.</i>
I have experience of doing advocacy	<i>Go through Section B</i>	<i>Go through Section B</i>	<i>Look at the questions and topics covered in Section B to decide what may be most relevant to you.</i>	<i>Focus on ‘More in depth...’ and ‘Where can I learn more?’ for any questions or topics in Section B that may interest you</i>	<i>Skim through Section B in case anything may be of interest.</i>
I have done advocacy, specifically on youth rights	<i>Go through Section B.</i>	<i>Go through Section B.</i>	<i>Look at the questions and topics covered in Section B to decide what</i>	<i>Focus on ‘More in depth...’ and ‘Where can I learn more?’ for any</i>	<i>Skim through Section B in case anything</i>

			<i>may be most relevant to you.</i>	<i>questions or topics in Section B that may interest you</i>	<i>may be of interest.</i>
I am familiar with and/or have experience using international human rights mechanisms to promote human/youth rights	<i>Go through Section C.</i>	<i>Go through Section C.</i>	<i>Look at the questions and topics covered in Section C to decide what may be most relevant to you.</i>	<i>Focus on ‘More in depth...’ and ‘Where can I learn more?’ for any questions or topics in Section C that may interest you</i>	<i>Skim through Section C in case anything may be of interest.</i>
I am familiar with, and have experience working on youth rights in peacebuilding and humanitarian settings	<i>Go through Section D.</i>	<i>Go through Section D.</i>	<i>Look at the questions and topics covered in Section D to decide what may be most relevant to you.</i>	<i>Focus on ‘More in depth...’ and ‘Where can I learn more?’ for any questions or topics in Section C that may interest you</i>	<i>Skim through Section D in case anything may be of interest.</i>

Getting started: some basic definitions

This toolkit uses a number of definitions and concepts that may be new to you. Below are some basic definitions that will help you to understand what we mean. Terms that are used very often throughout all sections are explained in more detail within the toolkit, for example, youth, human rights, or United Nations.

Convention (or Treaty): an agreement between countries that is formally accepted as law.

Humanitarian setting: a context in which an event (for example, armed conflict, natural disaster, epidemic, famine) or series of events has resulted in a critical threat to safety, security and well-being of a community or other large group of people.

Intergovernmental organization: an organization that is established by a group of countries, usually through a treaty, also often referred to as an international organization. An example of an international organization is the United Nations.

International law: a body of rules recognized by States that sets out their relations with one another.

Peacebuilding: a range of measures in the context of emerging, current or post-conflict situations for the explicit purpose of preventing violent conflict and promoting lasting and sustainable peace, often by addressing the root causes of violent conflict.

Rule of law: this means that laws apply to everyone in a given country, including lawmakers, the people who enforce the law, and judges.

State: another word for country; often used as 'member State', i.e. a State that is a member of an intergovernmental organization, such as the United Nations. Note: throughout this toolkit, State is always used to mean a country, not a subdivision or region within a country.

United Nations: an intergovernmental organization established in 1945, made up of 193 member States (as of 2022).

United Nations General Assembly: the primary decision-making body of the United Nations, where each country that is a member of the UN participates and has a vote.

United Nations resolution(s): formal expressions of the opinion or will of an organ of the United Nations, such as its General Assembly, the Security Council or the Human Rights Council.

Section B: Advocating for youth rights

In this section: How do I advocate for my rights as a young person while staying safe?

- [B.1 What is youth rights advocacy and why is it important?](#)
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B.1 What is youth rights advocacy and why is it important?

Youth rights advocacy means promoting human rights for young people, including freedom of thought, expression, association and the right to access information. It means standing up for your rights as a young person. Although young people have many rights in theory, in practice you may face various barriers and obstacles to enjoying, or exercising, those rights. History has shown that marginalized groups often have to work hard to be granted rights, even though human rights are universal and inalienable. Youth rights advocacy can help address injustices and promote human rights for young people. While you have the right to promote your rights, this does not mean that you are obliged to do so at any cost. This section provides additional information on how to go about advocating for youth rights, while ensuring that you stay safe from harm.

B.2 How can I stand up for my rights?

There are many different ways in which you can stand up for your rights as a young person, from very basic, simple actions to developing and implementing advocacy and campaigns. Below are a number of important, basic steps you should consider if you want to advocate for youth rights. Some steps may be more relevant than others depending on the context in which you are working. You may also want to consult other advocacy resources and consider additional factors or steps that apply to your situation. The UN Human Rights Office's Stand up for human rights campaign may provide some ideas and inspiration. For more information on the campaign, visit: standup4humanrights.org

B.2.1 Step 1: Identify the key human rights issue or concern affecting young people that you want to address

You may already be a youth advocate or have some ideas in mind, but if you have not already done so, identify the key human rights issues or concerns affecting young people in your context that you would like to address.

Consider the extent to which the issue affects young people more broadly. Some things to think about:

- Does it affect all young people, or only a specific group?
- How does it affect different groups of young people in different ways? For example, how are young women, LGBTQI+ youth, young refugees and migrants, young people with disabilities, youth living in rural areas, young people of African descent indigenous youth, youth belonging to minority groups, etc. affected?
- How can you reach out to and involve the different groups affected to ensure their participation? It is important to put youth at the center to advocate for their rights, and to avoid making assumptions without consulting those who are directly affected.

If you have identified several different issues or concerns, narrow your focus down to one key concern or human rights violation that affects young people in your context.

Important: make sure you are not putting yourself in danger and know where to turn if you are at risk. For more information on how to be prepared and take precautions, see the question '[How can I stay safe and be protected while defending my rights?](#)'.

B.2.2 Step 2: Set clear aims and objectives

Once you have narrowed your focus on one key human rights concern for youth in your context, you will need to identify what you want to achieve. To do so, think about the following:

- What is your primary aim or goal? Try to be as short and specific as possible.
- If relevant, break down your overall goal into a few clear objectives. For example, what are three key things that need to be achieved in order for your goal to be met?
- What is the impact you want to see, and by when? What would you like to see in the short-, medium- and long- term, and what time frame is necessary; how many weeks, months, years?
- Are your objectives realistic and achievable within the time you have and in the context where you will be advocating?
- How can you measure progress towards your goal and/or objectives?

An easy way to remember the above points is to check that your aims and objectives are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (or SMART in English).

Think about your key limitations and constraints. Is there anything you can do to address them? If not, then recognize them and factor them into your planning.

B.2.3 Step 3: Think about how to achieve the aims and objectives

When you have identified your aims and objectives, think about the different ways in which you can achieve them. For example:

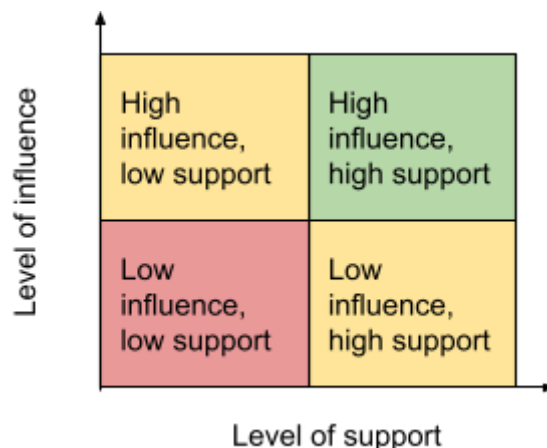
- What initiatives, activities or interventions would be most appropriate or effective?
- What resources do you have at your disposal to make the activities and interventions a reality? Resources may include funds or financial support, human resources, i.e. people and the time they have available, etc.
- How will you evaluate the extent to which different activities or interventions were successful?

B.2.4 Step 4: Make a map of your partners and allies

Partnerships and coalitions can be a good way of building support for your cause. They may be particularly effective and important in situations where your advocacy work is perceived as a challenge to the status quo or a threat to authorities. It may be a good idea to involve potential allies and partners and youth directly concerned about the issue you want to address already in Steps 2 and 3, to build a sense of shared ownership and commitment among the main partners and to promote meaningful youth participation.

Once you have identified key aims and objectives as well as how you want to achieve them, start to map out partners and stakeholders, including those that you want to target and try to influence. Some things to think about:

- For each partner or stakeholder, consider their level of influence over decisions concerning your aims and objectives, as well as the extent to which they support your aims and objectives. It may help to use a graphical representation, as displayed below. Focusing on the players with both high influence and high support is likely to be most effective. You may want to consider how to build more support among the actors with high influence and low support, as well as how to leverage those who have high support even if their level of influence is low.



- Be as specific as possible. For example, if you identify a civil society organization as a key partner, check if the organization has specific policy and priorities that are in line with

yours, or whether a single team or individual within the organization is most closely aligned with your cause and what their influence can be.

- Make sure to consider both youth and human rights actors, which may include:
 - Youth: Ministry of Youth, Parliamentary Committee responsible for youth issues, local authorities, youth-led and youth-focused civil society organizations such as Local or National Youth Councils, Youth Parliament, organizations representing and/or working with youth in vulnerable situations, informal youth networks, etc.
 - Human rights: Ministry of Justice and/or Ministry of the Interior, Parliamentary Committee responsible for human rights, National Human Rights Institution, civil society organizations focusing on the promotion and protection of human rights, etc.

If youth and human rights organizations are not already working together, it may be a good opportunity to set up new partnerships for youth rights advocacy.

- When you identify the main partners you want to reach out to, think about what is most likely to guarantee their support and how you can convince them to partner with you. For example:
 - Clearly communicate your aims and objectives to them
 - What is the added value of your initiative or campaign, and how will it contribute to their overall goals? In other words, why is it in their interest to join forces with you?
 - What kind of support are you looking for? Be as specific as possible: are you forming a coalition of organizations, are you requesting resources (e.g. human or financial), are you searching for partners who can amplify your messages?

B.2.5 Step 5: Develop your advocacy messages

Now that you know your objectives, how you want to achieve them, and who you will target to work towards human rights change, it's time to work on your advocacy messages. These messages will be the key points you want to get across to the different partners and stakeholders you target and interact with, but also to a wider target audience if you have one, to get your message out there and to build support. Some things to consider:

- Ensure your messages are brief and easily understandable
- Who is the target audience, and how can you appeal to them? Think about how to convey your message to the different audiences you are addressing. For example, you will most likely use different language when you are speaking to policy-makers or decision-makers, and when you are communicating about your work on social media. If you do not have much experience in developing advocacy messages for different audiences, do not be afraid to ask your closest partners for help.

B.2.6 Step 6: Revise, fine-tune and improve as you go along

As you implement your activities or initiatives, be mindful of what seems to be working well and what you could still adapt or improve to achieve your goals. There is no one-size-fits-all; some activities may work well and be very effective in one context, but not in another, and you will only learn by trial and error.

B.2.7 Step 7: Evaluate

Once you have concluded the initiative and/or activities you planned, look back in order to evaluate and assess what worked well and what could be improved next time, or as you move forward. For example:

- To what extent did you achieve your overall aim, as well as the objectives you identified in Step 2?
- What factors contributed to success? What factors hindered progress?
- What were the key obstacles and challenges?
- What would you do differently, and what are the key lessons learned?

To get an accurate picture, consult with those who worked most closely with you.

Based on the seven steps described above, next you will find a list of 10+1 Top Tips for Youth Rights Advocacy.

B.3 What are some good tips for youth rights advocacy?

Based on the steps for youth rights advocacy, below you will find some top tips. Some may be more relevant to you than others, so feel free to reflect and think about some of your own tips based on your situation and experience.

10+1 TOP TIPS FOR YOUTH RIGHTS ADVOCACY

1. **Be clear about what you want to achieve:** set clear aims and goals and ensure that your actions are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound.
2. **Use research to support your advocacy:** look for any existing data or information that supports your advocacy aims and make use of it to strengthen your argument. Where these do not exist, you may want to consider including data collection as part of your advocacy work, particularly if it would have an impact on achieving your objectives.
3. **Put young people at the center:** make sure young people are in the driving seat at all stages, advocating for their own rights. Provide a safe environment where young people can express themselves freely, learn from each other and be empowered to become effective advocates by developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes required.
4. **Work collaboratively through inclusive partnerships and coalitions, in particular protection networks:** bring together a broad-based coalition of actors that support and strive towards the same or similar goals, including from other sectors and social movements. Be inclusive of different actors and young people from different walks of life. Ensure that you have a few focal points for emergency contacts and to report any threats or attacks that you face as well as to get assistance protecting yourself.

5. **Mobilize political, institutional and high-profile support:** build support for your cause, and bring political and institutional actors on board. Identify any high-profile or influential figures that can help attract support, such as celebrities.
6. **Develop clear and consistent messaging:** communicate about your objectives and work in a clear, consistent way. The same message can be communicated in different ways, so adapt the message to the main audience you are trying to reach at a given moment. Use online platforms effectively if they are widely available in your context and be strategic about reaching out to the media if you plan to do so.
7. **Be creative, innovative and flexible:** think about different and new ways to raise awareness and build support for your advocacy goals. Be open to change and adapt your activities based on what is most effective, likely to mobilize the most support and contribute towards the impact you are trying to achieve, but without compromising to a point where the activities or objectives would not bring any added value.
8. **Be patient:** change doesn't happen overnight, so make sure to acknowledge and celebrate even the small, incremental steps that bring your advocacy goals closer to being a reality.
9. **Reflect on, evaluate and learn from your advocacy:** think about the key messages you take away including what you learnt from others, and how you can use this knowledge to improve your future advocacy.
10. **Stay safe and take care of yourself:** ensure that you will not put yourself in danger or risk of harm as a result of your advocacy; be prepared and inform yourself about where you can go or who to turn to in case you face threats, intimidation or harassment. Avoid having a high level of visibility or public exposure if the situation is getting intense and keep a low profile for some time. Consider the impact your advocacy may have on your mental health and be prepared to set your boundaries and respect them.

And finally, one more bonus tip:

11. **Have fun!** Advocating for your own rights can be exhausting, frustrating and in some cases even dangerous. At the same time, it can be an empowering experience and an opportunity to meet like-minded people while developing a wide range of skills.

B.4 How can I stay safe and be protected while defending my rights?

Safety and wellbeing, including when it comes to mental health, are utmost priorities when advocating for your rights, as reflected in Top Tip #9 in the previous question.

Without intending to discourage you from taking action for human rights, it is important to remember that advocating for human rights can be dangerous, particularly where there is strong opposition to the change you want to achieve.

Familiarize yourself with the context in which you are working. To what extent are those who defend human rights, including Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and human rights organizations, able to freely carry out their work? Some organizations monitor the civic space, i.e. the openness and freedom for civil society actors across the globe to operate without fear or reprisals; one example is the CIVICUS monitor, a tool that provides up-to-date data on the state of civil society and civic freedoms in 196 countries, available in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).

Human rights defenders often work together to pool knowledge and resources, offer support, recognition, personal security and solidarity through Protection Networks (PNs) that bring together different civil society actors at the local, national, regional and international levels. Protection Networks are vital, particularly in contexts where formal protection mechanisms are weak, unreliable or even hostile towards human rights defenders. Do some research to identify protection networks you may be able to link up with. PNs may not always be highly visible, so you could start by reaching out to organizations that work to promote human rights in your local or national context, or even at the regional or international level.

B.4.1 More in depth...

Before starting your advocacy, it is very important to:

1. **Ensure you are not putting yourself at risk of harm, including for your mental health:** to the extent possible, ensure that the course of action you choose to follow does not place you at harm. Consider whether there may be any backlash and from which actors, and inform yourself of what steps are available and where you can turn to in case of danger, such as a Protection Network. Think about your own boundaries and make sure to respect them, including when it comes to your mental health. Whenever you think the risks outweigh the purposes of your advocacy, feel free to step away and ensure your personal security first. Do not be shy to ask for assistance.
2. **Assess whether you are facing an immediate threat or danger:** if you are facing an immediate threat or danger, reach out to a competent authority or trusted individual, network or organization with a view to ensuring your safety. This may range from law enforcement authorities, to individuals or networks dedicated to the protection of human rights defenders, or even the United Nations.

Make sure you are aware of any online protection tools for digital security and equip yourself with other protection tools whenever possible. Learn about risk assessment and mitigation strategies.

B.4.2 Where can I learn more?

- You can read more about the UN's work to improve civic space at the country level and strengthen protection practices at the UN Human Rights [website](#).
- To learn more about protection and tools or resources that may be available, consult [Protection International](#) (available in English, French and Spanish) or [Frontline Defenders](#) (in English). Frontline Defenders provides an [Emergency Contact form](#) for Human Rights Defenders, to facilitate contact with someone who speaks Arabic, English,

French, Russian or Spanish that helps determine how best to support you in an urgent situation.

- To learn more about the various barriers and threats that young people face in civic space as well as key aspects of protecting youth in civic space, have a look at: [If I Disappear: Global Report on Protecting Young People in Civic Space](#) (available in English)

B.5 How can young people in vulnerable situations, including situations of conflict, violence and insecurity, advocate for their rights?

First and foremost, young people in vulnerable situations must prioritize their safety and protection (refer to the previous question: [How can I stay safe and be protected while defending my rights?](#)). If you are unable to actively advocate for your own rights, in order to minimize any potentially severe risks or threats, try to identify organizations that can support you, to raise awareness and call for action on the challenges that you, and others like you are facing. These may include civil society organizations working to protect human rights or international organizations such as the United Nations.

B.5.1 Where can I learn more?

For more information on the work of the United Nations to protect human rights during conflict situations visit the UN Human Rights [website](#).

Section D of the toolkit provides more information on youth rights in peacebuilding and humanitarian settings.

Have a look at the [11 ways to help young people in conflict zones](#) (available in English).

B.6 What are some examples of successful youth rights advocacy?

Achieving success in your advocacy to have a lasting impact for youth rights depends on many different factors, and you cannot control all of them. There is no one single recipe for successful youth rights advocacy; however, below you will find some examples. They are not intended to be prescriptive, but rather indicative and to serve as a source of inspiration.

Future we want (2020)	
Led by	UNICEF Italy and UNICEF Italy youth advocates
Scope	National (Italy)
Stakeholders targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parliament• Government policy-maker

Youth rights in focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Right to participate in public affairs ● Right to health, including mental health ● Right to education
Main objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduce a youth participation dimension into the NextGenerationEU Recovery Plan, a European Union initiative to support recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic ● Include civic education in school curricula ● Support the introduction of mental health professionals in schools
Key outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creation of a Youth Advisory Board for the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs
Success factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overall institutional environment ● Main objectives shared broadly by many civil society actors ● Political figures in the Ministry of Youth were close to UNICEF ● Broad media coverage
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The initiative was overly ambitious at the beginning, meaning that the goals had to be re-envisaged ● Hard to ensure political momentum
Lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have clear, limited advocacy objectives that are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound ● Use media effectively to leverage political momentum ● Ensure a broad-based coalition ● Have an implementing committee
More information	https://www.unicef.org/eca/press-releases/future-we-want-manifesto-written-adolescents-italy-post-covid-19-future

You Matter (2019)	
Led by	Youth Inter-Active (YIA)
Scope	Local (Umlazi Township and Durban, South Africa)
Stakeholders targeted	Municipality, civil society organizations
Youth rights in focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Right to health, with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) ● HIV/AIDS and human rights ● Right to education, with a focus on human rights education

Main objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build the capacity of young people from marginalized communities on their SRHR, while integrating civic education • To build social cohesion among youth • To decrease the infection rate of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections among youth
Key outcomes	Adolescents and youth started making informed decisions about bodily autonomy, contributing to a decrease in the HIV/AIDS infections
Success factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohesion with the organization • Research-based advocacy • Engaging community leaders, actors and relevant stakeholders • Letting the voices of youth drive the initiative
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social constructs and systemic barriers leading to social exclusion • Lack of resources to mobilize; financial barriers • Lack of engagement from relevant stakeholders
Lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth leadership in the implementation of policies, not only seeing youth as beneficiaries • The voices of those who are marginalized must be heard in order to address marginalization • Data collection for advocacy

Books not Bullets (2019) - An initiative under 'Silencing the Guns in Africa'	
Led by	GIZ African Union Office, Office of the African Union Youth Envoy
Scope	National (South Sudan)
Stakeholders targeted	Young people from South Sudan
Youth rights in focus	Right to education for young people living in refugee camps
Main objectives	Ending the use of guns by improving access to education, as the majority of young people in refugee camps could not access education
Key outcomes	More young people from refugee camps were admitted to education, avoiding the possible radicalization of youth
Success factors	Partnerships and collaboration with different stakeholders
Challenges	Lack of understanding of content-wide campaigns (such as Silencing the Guns) for the majority of citizens who do not have

	access to information about such campaigns, their target audience, etc.
Lessons learned	Partnerships are critical to promote human rights work and to gather support for achieving targets and goals

Online petition to allow teenage mothers to resume schooling (2017)	
Led by	Petrider Paul, youth activist
Scope	National (Tanzania)
Stakeholders targeted	Former President of the United Republic of Tanzania
Youth rights in focus	Right to education for young women, and teenage mothers in particular
Main objectives	To allow teenage mothers to return to education, reversing an earlier decree
Key outcomes	Support for the online petition with over 100,000 signature, resulting in a government decision to allow teenage mothers to access education in 2020 through alternative education pathways
Success factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of online petition platform that is free and easily accessible • Social media platforms as an advocacy tool • International support from human rights defenders
Challenges	Intimidation, particularly from people suggesting it was possible to be silenced or detained for opposing a Presidential decree
Lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth advocates / young human rights defenders need protection mechanisms to ensure that they are safe and secure while advocating for human rights • Avoid confrontational styles or approaches, particularly when communicating about human rights issues or work
More information	See the online petition

Bringing youth concerns during political protests to the international level (2021)	
Led by	The Millennials Movement, in cooperation with other youth organizations
Scope	National (Colombia); International (United Nations)

Stakeholders targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth-led organizations • United Nations entities, e.g. the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth
Youth rights in focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to participation, with a focus on civic engagement • Right to freedom of opinion or expression • Right to freedom of peaceful assembly
Main objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify the main issues facing young people in Colombia in the context of protests, and convey them to key UN stakeholders
Key outcomes	30 young people from Colombia shared their views and concerns through a series of youth hearings, contributing to a summary compilation shared with youth representatives at the UN
Success factors	Providing a safe space for young people to express themselves freely, while giving the opportunity to all participants to contribute
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information about how to address human rights violations for youth • Lack of knowledge and integration of human rights by youth affected by different types of human rights violations • Limitations of online-only events; reaching young people without internet access
Lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a safe space is critical • Follow-up and continuity • It is important to have capacity building on the options available to submit information on human rights concerns or violations for youth

African Climate Mobility Initiative (ACMI) (2022)	
Led by	ACMI, UNICEF, Migration Youth and Children Platform, Greenwall Foundation, Bosch Foundation
Scope	Regional (Africa)
Stakeholders targeted	African youth, especially those from vulnerable backgrounds
Youth rights in focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to clean, healthy and sustainable environment • Right to seek asylum • Right to decent work
Main objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable African youth to design solutions to climate mobility, with a focus on green skills • To empower African youth to engage with climate policy-making, with a focus on capacity-building for the

	Conference of the Parties (COP), a key UN conference on climate change
Key outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 8-9 youth finalists presented their proposals at the COP27 pavilion ● Connected platform for youth collaboration across Africa ● Recognition of the intersections between different youth rights
Success factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong public- and private-sector partners, including institutional support ● Inclusive and meaningful youth engagement ● Science-policy apparatus ● Prevalence of climate mobility vis-a-vis youth rights ● Prior experience of the Migration Youth and Children Platform with the Youth Innovation Award
Challenges	Resource constraints among youth constituencies, and lobbying partners to provide resources to address the gap
Lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The importance of a collaborative process ● Bridging the gap between science, policy and advocacy ● The intersection of different youth rights

Bibliography and further reading

International human rights treaties

International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Convention on the Rights of the Child

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

Right to education

CESCR [General Comment No. 13](#): The right to education (article 13) (1999)

UNESCO [The right to education](#)

Right to decent work

ILO [International Labour Standards relevant to work and young persons](#)

OHCHR report on Realization of the right to work ([A/HRC/40/31](#)) (2018)

CESCR [General Comment no. 18 on the right to work](#) (2005)

ILO [statement](#) to the Third Committee of the 68th General Assembly - Decent work is a human right

Right to participation

[Guidelines](#) on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs (2018)

OHCHR and [equal participation in political and public affairs](#)

Right to health

OHCHR and [the right to health](#)

OHCHR and WHO, [Fact Sheet No. 31: The Right to Health](#) (2008)

Right to housing

OHCHR and [the right to adequate housing](#)

OHCHR and UN-HABITAT [Fact Sheet No. 21 \(Rev. 1\): The Human Right to Adequate Housing](#) (2009)

Right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

OHCHR [About human rights and the environment](#)

OHCHR [infographic](#) on promoting the human right to a healthy environment for all

Human Rights Council [resolution 48/13](#) on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

General Assembly [resolution 76/300](#) on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

Other

Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on youth and human rights ([A/HRC/39/33](#)) (2018)

OHCHR [Human Rights Education and Training](#)

[UN Human Rights and NHRIs](#)

[Preventing human rights violations](#)

The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions ([GANHRI](#))

OHCHR [Right of peaceful assembly](#)

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Practical Guidance: [Maximizing the use of the Universal Periodic Review at country level](#)

UPR Info [The role of youth](#)

UPR Info [Q&A on the modalities of the UPR Process](#)

Human Rights Treaty Bodies

The [Human Rights Treaty Bodies](#)

Peacebuilding and humanitarian action

UNICEF, [Financing for Young People in Peacebuilding: an Overview](#)

UNFPA, [Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Programs in Humanitarian Settings: An In-depth Look at Family Planning Services](#)

IASC, [With us & for us: Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises](#)

[The Missing Peace: Independent Progress study on youth, peace and security](#)

UNDP, [Frontlines: Young people at the forefront of preventing and responding to violent extremism](#)

IANYD, Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding [Practice Note: Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding](#)

WHO, [World report on violence and health](#)

High-Level Global Conference on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes, [Implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, A Guide for Public Officials](#)
UNESCO, [Youth led guide on prevention of violent extremism through education](#)
Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on best practices and lessons learned on how protecting and promoting human rights contribute to preventing and countering violent extremism ([A/HRC/33/29](#)) (2016)