

SO, YOU'RE GOING TO THE UN!

START ADVOCATING IN NEW YORK

A BEGINNERS GUIDE



What do you want to achieve?



Know what you're talking about!



Find your allies!



Get your message out there!



TO NEW YORK

FLYING HOME



From words to action!



What did you achieve?

- Map UN language
- Create an evidence base
- Collect personal stories
- Map (inter) national agreements
- Research your opposition
- What's your country's position?

- Join online prep-meetings
- Join a listserve or google group
- Perfect your elevator pitch
- Join a Major Group or Caucus
- Get to know your delegation

- Twitter icon
- Facebook icon
- Instagram icon
- YouTube icon

- Debrief & strategize daily
- Lobby your delegation
- Connect with civil society
- Deliver a speech
- Sit & wait
- Check out or host a side event
- Be a source of knowledge
- Provide input on the text
- Write & endorse statements

- Engage with your government
- Strategize for next year
- Engage the media
- Host or attend a debriefing
- Document & share commitments

- Transfer knowledge
- Strategize for next year
- Think about next steps
- Share lessons learned

SO, YOU'RE GOING TO THE UN!

THE NEW YORK EDITION

So, you're going to the UN! Now what? Whether it's your first time or whether you are already a well-weathered advocate, preparing to attend a New York based UN event like the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), or the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), can be a daunting task. But it doesn't need to be!

This infographic is part of a series of resources created by CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality, that aims to help young people successfully advocate for their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). CHOICE is a youth-led organization based in the Netherlands which focuses on advocating for young people's SRHR across the world, and promotes the meaningful participation of young people in this field.

The series includes:

- ✓ **THE CHOICE SRHR GLOSSARY:** this glossary provides short and youth-friendly definitions of key SRHR terms.
- ✓ **AN ADVOCATES GUIDE TO UN LANGUAGE:** this tool was created especially for youth advocates who are working on young people's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in order to help them successfully navigate language advocacy at the UN. It explains what UN Language is, why it is important, and how to get involved in UN Language Advocacy.
- ✓ **FACTSHEETS ON UN PROCESSES (FORTHCOMING):** these factsheets provide you with information on what the process is about, why it is important, and how you can get involved. This series includes Factsheets on the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Commission on Population and Development (CPD), High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and relevant Treaty Monitoring Bodies (TMBs).

- ✓ **THE CHOICE GUIDE TO UN PROCESSES (FORTHCOMING):** this guide is for anyone wanting to learn more about how the UN system actually works. It provides information on the basic structure of the UN, with a special focus on the agencies and processes relevant to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in both New York and Geneva, and how these processes can lead to concrete change at the national level.

This resource was created for anyone looking to learn more on how to successfully prepare to attend a UN process in New York. There are many different reasons to go to the UN: Commission: to advocate for your rights, to learn, to share your experiences, to network, to gain professional experience etc.; this guide is focused primarily on young people looking to do advocacy at the UN in New York, but it can be useful for a broader audience. It includes information on:

- ✓ how to conduct evidence-based advocacy,
- ✓ creative methods for capturing public attention and support,
- ✓ how to follow-up with international commitments back home,
- ✓ and even a handy packing list!

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

We appreciate your input! CHOICE places a high value on being inclusive and participatory; if you feel like anything in this infographic is not accurate, or that we are missing something important, please do not hesitate to contact us at info@choiceforyouth.org

Don't forget to check out our other advocacy resources at www.choiceforyouth.org

Please help rate the quality of this resource by completing a short (5 minute) survey



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SO, YOU'RE GOING TO THE UN!

START ADVOCATING IN NEW YORK – A Beginners Guide –



THINK OF YOUR GOALS

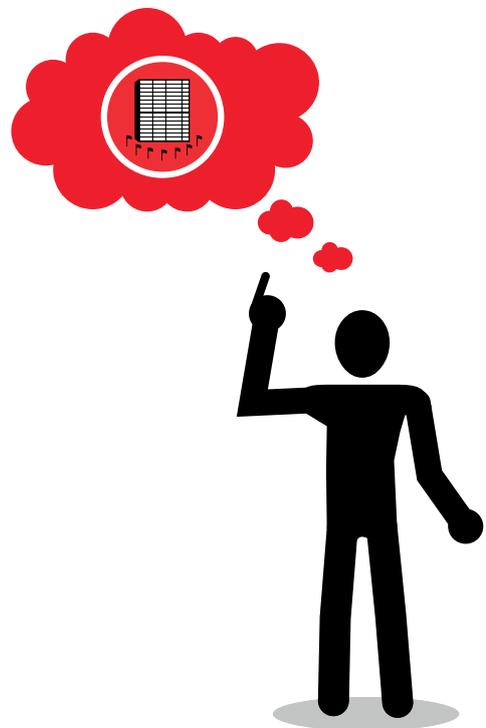
– What do you want to achieve?

Let's get right to it! The first thing you should do when preparing for any event (be it UN or otherwise) is to sit down and think about what you would like to achieve: Are you advocating for a specific issue, and if so which ones? Do you want to broaden your professional/social network? Do you want to learn more about a certain topic? Do you want to create awareness for your organization?

Once you have a list of goals try to narrow this down to two or three key objectives that you want to achieve. For example, if your main goal is advocacy you might say that you aim to have member states agree to include the following three Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) topics in the outcome document(s): (1) commit to providing comprehensive sexuality education in and out of schools, (2) commit to recognizing and protecting (young) LGBTI persons rights, and (3) commit to meaningfully engaging young people in SRHR processes.

If your goal is to broaden your network and strengthen your relationships with other (youth-led) organizations, you could aim to organize a daily meeting for youth advocates to share knowledge and strategize together! Remember, it's good to dream big but having a shorter list of realistic goals will help you plan more strategically and increase your chances of achieving your aims.

Lastly, if you are going to attend the UN event with other people, it is important to set aside time to come together and discuss your goals as individuals and as a group. Be sure to revisit your goals throughout this process to ensure that they are still relevant and achievable.



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DO YOUR RESEARCH

- Know what you're talking about!

CREATE AN EVIDENCE BASE

Once you have decided what your advocacy will focus on start working on creating an evidence base to support your arguments. Be on the lookout for any academic articles, research, or studies which can help strengthen your argumentation (e.g. statistics, program reports). Facts and figures from your own country and region are especially important, as these are more likely to have an impact on your government representatives. If there is a UN presence in your country, it might also be useful to take a field trip to the nearest UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA or UN Women office as they have a lot of interesting resources around SRHR, and may also be interested in supporting you. Finally, there will be a lot of factsheets circulating around before and during the UN event as well - make use of these and share any relevant information with your delegation!

PRO TIP: Students often have access to large databases of articles not open to the general public, if you cannot access these yourself ask around to see if anyone can share specific articles that you find useful!

MAP (INTER)NATIONAL AGREEMENTS

In addition to this, do some research to see if there are any national/regional documents or agreements (or even your own constitution) that your government has agreed to which could back up your arguments (e.g. if they have endorsed a regional agreement that recognizes comprehensive sexuality education then they should also be expected to support including a reference to comprehensive sexuality education in an outcome document). The Maputo Plan of Action and the Montevideo Consensus are examples of such regional agreements.

The Sexual Rights Database (<http://sexualrightsdatabase.org/page/welcome>) is a great resource that provides an overview of different nations laws and agreements on SRHR.

COLLECT PERSONAL STORIES

A very powerful form of research is to collect personal stories from people who have had positive and/or negative experiences with your advocacy topic. For example, if you are advocating to end early and forced marriages you could try to interview someone who experienced this personally, or who works with people who have entered into this kind of marriage. Meaningfully involving people who have personal experience with these issues will also help you formulate your own thoughts and feelings about them, and will give you a

better understanding of their needs and challenges. You could share these stories with your delegation or even start an (online) campaign - but be sure to get their consent first! Many people do not want their names and faces associated with sensitive issues.

Have a look at CHOICE's "Your CHOICE" campaign on Facebook and Instagram where we ask people across the world to tell us about an important choice they have had to make about love or sexuality https://www.instagram.com/your_choice_insta/

MAP UN LANGUAGE

If your goals are focused on advocating for specific language to be included in a UN text, you should also research how your chosen advocacy topic(s) are currently being represented at the UN; in other words what is the 'agreed language'? For example, if your aim is to have the term "Comprehensive Sexuality Education" included in the outcome document of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), you might find that in most UN outcome documents it is referred to as "evidence based comprehensive education on human sexuality".

The language that is included in past UN outcome documents is referred to as agreed language, because it is language that has been negotiated and agreed upon by UN member states, and can therefore also be used to hold them accountable.

A handy tool for this is the 'UN Resources Tool' (<http://www.unadvocacy.org/client/app/>) which allows you to search through the UN database using key terms (e.g. you could type in Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity you will see all of the UN documents that use this term).

Once you've researched how your topic(s) appear in UN language sit down and think about:

- (1) What your red line is (so, what is the minimum you will 'accept' in this document, e.g. language should not become more regressive than previously agreed language).
- (2) What kind of (new) language you will try to have included.

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Going back to our example this means that we will aim for the term “Comprehensive Sexuality Education” to be included in the outcome document, but that language should not be worse than the already accepted term “evidence based comprehensive education on human sexuality” which was used in previous outcome documents at the CSW. In this situation, having the term “sex education”, which is considered even less progressive, in the text would be going below the red line.

PRO TIP: Check out **CHOICE's UN Language Tool** for more information on how to advocate for progressive SRHR language at the UN!

WHAT IS YOUR COUNTRY'S POSITION?

Usually, UN member states send a group of representatives (known as a delegation) to attend UN events and negotiate on behalf of their country. Because delegations are ultimately the ones with the negotiating power they are an important entry point for advocacy - if your delegation is willing to fight for your advocacy issue(s) you have a much higher chance of them making it into the final outcome document of the process. Delegations have the opportunity to provide their input on the first versions of an outcome document ahead of the actual UN event, so it is important to find out if there are any opportunities to share your feedback and standpoints ahead of time. Usually governments send representatives from their Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the UN, and it's a good idea to find out who exactly will be on the delegation so that you can seek contact, and potentially already provide input on the first version (known as the zero draft) of the outcome document(s).

Check to see if your government is organizing a briefing for civil society organizations who plan on going to the UN event in New York, and attend these as well (this is also a good networking opportunity). Ask your delegation what their focus and strategy will be, and what their position is on the advocacy topics that you have selected (note that delegations may not be comfortable speaking honestly about this publicly, but may be willing to be more open 'off the record'). Remember that once you are at the UN you don't need to focus only on your own delegation!

RESEARCH YOUR OPPOSITION

As the world is becoming increasingly polarized on many issues (especially surrounding SRHR), you are bound to run into people who stand for the exact opposite of what you believe in. It can be very frustrating to attend a side-event on reproductive rights only to have it derailed by someone claiming that abortion causes breast-cancer and even leads to terrorism (yes, this really has happened). While it can be tempting to get personal and fight back, we would advise against it! It is far more useful to fight any misinformation (like abortion => breast cancer) with hard facts and scientific evidence, than to get into a shouting match with someone who will not believe you anyway. Turn your focus instead to the fence-sitters - these are the people who are open to listening to your arguments and may come to support your cause. Researching the opposition's position and main arguments ahead of time should also help you prepare stronger counter-arguments that could help convince any 'fence-sitters'.

After doing your research make sure that you revisit your list of goals to ensure that they are still achievable and relevant!





START NETWORKING

– Find your allies!

FIND YOUR ALLIES!

Allies are the people or organizations that support your position. Allies can help provide you with important information, help perfect your advocacy strategies, can broaden your network, allow you to reach a larger audience, increase the effectiveness of your advocacy messages, and provide guidance and encouragement through the often challenging negotiation process.

It is also a good idea to try to find allies within your own delegation – because of their conflicting obligations it can sometimes be even more effective to talk to them when they are alone (you could, for example, approach a delegate when they are getting a snack, or refilling their water bottle). You can also see if there are other ‘friendly’ or ‘like-minded’ delegations that support your cause(s).

Find the people who support your cause, but do not forget about those who are on the fence – these are your potential allies and they could prove to be extremely valuable. Again networking, building professional relationships, sharing factsheets and position papers, and a perfected elevator pitch can go a long way!

JOIN A LISTSERV OR GOOGLE GROUP

A listserv or a Google group is basically an organized email group where information is shared and (advocacy) strategies are discussed. Listservs are usually topically based, so there is a listserv for the young feminists, a listserv for SRHR, a listserv for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) etc. Listservs are a great way to expand your network and to get access to important information and intel on the UN process, and are definitely worth joining. This is also where the different versions of the outcome documents will be shared, as these documents are not made available publicly until they are finalized at the end of the UN event.

Note that to be added to a listserv or Google Group you can contact the listserv/group administrator, or ask another member that you know to add you. Remember that because a lot of confidential information and strategic discussions are shared over listservs, many administrators enforce very strict rules about who can and cannot be in these groups to prevent information from landing in the wrong hands.

JOIN A MAJOR GROUP / CAUCUS

The UN has nine official major groups which are supposed to represent the nine sectors of civil society and serve as a channel which citizens and organizations can use to

participate at the UN. For example, the Major Group for Children and Youth is the official major group for people under the age of 30, and it strives to represent the voices of children and youth from around the world at the United Nations.

Similarly, a caucus is a gathering of organizations that are willing to cooperate to strengthen their advocacy. These organizations are in touch throughout the year, mostly through email groups and online calls, and come together before the start of a conference to strategize on how to influence the outcome document. Caucuses are not officially recognized by the UN as an official stakeholder but they are often key players in advocacy during these UN processes. Generally, two or three larger organizations take the lead in organizing the Caucus. Caucuses communicate primarily through their own listserv and through online and in-person meetings and strategy sessions.

Major Groups and Caucuses are a good way to build your network, get access to insider information and to strengthen your own capacities at the same time, and they can be good learning opportunities. For example, the Youth Caucus is a great way to get involved with other young advocates, and to find support from your peers.

JOIN ONLINE PREP-MEETINGS

Many networks, including several youth-oriented ones, organize online preparatory meetings via Skype or Google Hangouts. These meetings are held to give people a chance to get to know who is going to attend the event, to share intel amongst each other, and to strategize and plan for the weeks ahead. Usually these prep-meetings are organized through the listservs and Google groups that you join. Of course you can always take the initiative and organize a prep-meeting yourself!

GET TO KNOW YOUR DELEGATION!

Try to find out who will be on the delegation and look up what their backgrounds are (have they worked on projects that are similar to your advocacy issue for example? Can you see any entry points?). Check in your network to see if anyone has ever worked with them before to get some insider information (e.g. are they easy to work with? What is the best way to approach them?).

Furthermore, many delegations are open to inviting a civil society representative to join their delegation. Look into (1) whether they have ever had a civil society representative, (2) what group this person is from (e.g. is it a youth/women's/indigenous/LGBT representative, and is this person selected by a specific civil society network?), and (3) of course see whether there is a possibility for you or someone from your own organization or network to join (for example, because the CPD is very youth-focused a strong argument can be made for having at least one young person on the delegation).

Consider writing a proposal which presents all of the arguments for having a (youth) civil society representative (even if you don't give this to them directly it will help you organize your own thoughts and strengthen your argumentation skills). If your government has rejected your proposal to bring a representative along, consider how you can strategically advocate for this to be included in the future (e.g. is it something that the media could be convinced to pick up? Do you have any allies within the government who could help push for this?).

PROFILE YOURSELF AND/OR YOUR ORGANIZATION

If your aim is to network or to build a name for your organization it is important that you prepare ahead of time.

- ✓ Get business cards made
- ✓ Update your website and social media accounts
- ✓ Create and professionally print organizational materials (annual reports, fact sheets etc.)
- ✓ Perfect your elevator pitch
- ✓ Make a list of organizations, including networks and caucuses, and people present that you definitely want to connect with
- ✓ Consider hosting a side-event, a panel discussion or a workshop before or during the UN event

BEST PRACTICE: YOUTH AMBASSADOR SRHR ON THE DUTCH DELEGATION

The role of Youth Ambassador SRHR was set up by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality in 2015. Through this program, the MOFA and CHOICE, work together to give young people a voice and a platform to advocate for their sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and their meaningful participation in all areas of decision-making; at the national, regional and international level. This partnership contributes to the development of progressive and inclusive policies for young people and emphasizes the importance of meaningful youth participation in the design, development and implementation of sexual health policies. The Youth Ambassador provides an important link, connecting policymakers with the sexual health realities of young people in the Netherlands and around the world.

The Youth Ambassador for SRHR joined the Dutch delegation to the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) in 2015 and 2016, as a civil society representative. Their position on the delegation gave the Youth Ambassador access to official and informal negotiation spaces which are normally off limits to young people, and put the Youth Ambassador in a unique position to connect and support the international SRHR youth movement during these processes, and help amplify youth voices from around the world.

CHOICE sees the Youth Ambassador as an example of a best practice which can be replicated by other governments to ensure young people's meaningful engagement within national, regional and international spaces and processes.

You can follow the Youth Ambassador's journey via [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Youth Ambassador Blog](#)

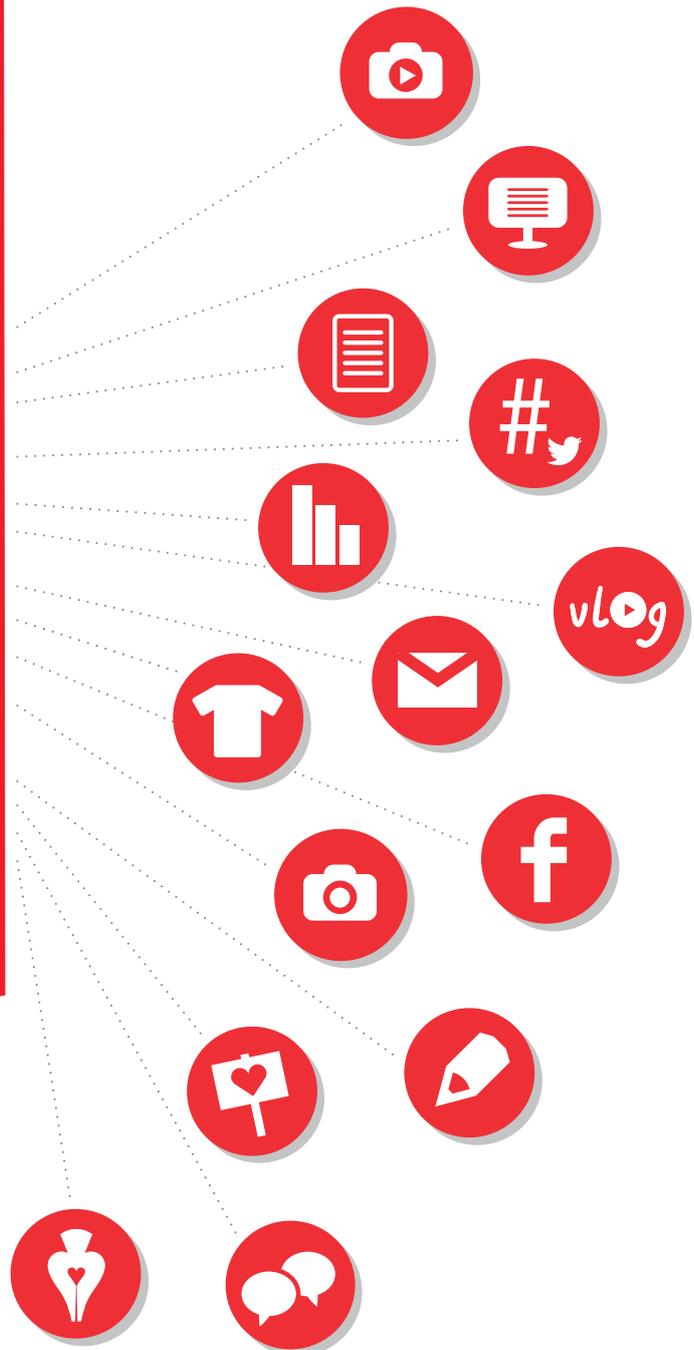


GET CREATIVE

- Get your message out there!

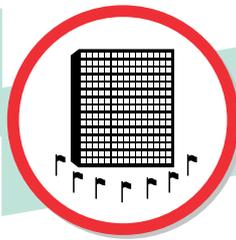
Now that you have collected a large evidence base it's time to get a little creative! Advocacy is a lot more effective if you have a large base of public support. The following are examples of activities you could consider:

- ✓ If you have the resources infographics can be a very effective (and fun!) way to visually represent information that is easy to understand, and there are a lot of free programs out there that you can use.
- ✓ Film a short documentary using your phone or a camera
- ✓ Write a blog post
- ✓ Write a news article and submit it to your local news sources
- ✓ Create a catchy hashtag (#) and start a twitter campaign
- ✓ Create and distribute factsheets
- ✓ Start a vlog or create other video content
- ✓ Make post cards, stickers, and posters with key messages to spread around
- ✓ Create t-shirts with messages
- ✓ Start a social media campaign on Facebook or Instagram
- ✓ Take lots of pictures during the event and host an 'Humans of New York' style exhibition afterward
- ✓ Create an artwork
- ✓ Host an event before/during/afterwards
- ✓ Collect personal stories
- ✓ Start an (online) petition in your country
- ✓ Join or host a side-event or panel discussion at the United Nations (or close by)
- ✓ Organize a (peaceful) protest



THE SKY'S THE LIMIT!

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AT THE UN

STRATEGIZE & PLAN

This is really an on-going activity, as it is important to regularly assess which advocacy strategies you want to use and whether they will be effective or not.

Strategize **BY YOURSELF/IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:**

Especially once you are physically at the UN it's a good idea to sit down at the end of each day and reflect on what went well and what went less well so that you can adjust your strategies and plan for the next day.

Strategize **IN YOUR CAUCUS/MAJOR GROUP:** Most caucuses and major groups will meet semi-regularly online in the months leading up to the UN process, and every day once the process actually starts. These strategizing sessions are a great place to share important information, align strategies, and plan for the days ahead.

Strategize **WITH(IN) YOUR DELEGATION:** Encourage your delegation to meet with you and your allies at the beginning or end of every day. Your delegation can inform you about the latest developments, and you can share your opinions and support the delegation to take action. If you are part of your delegation this is easier, but you can always approach delegates when they leave the negotiation room during a break.

PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE TEXT

If you are focused on advocating for certain language to be included in outcome texts, then you will likely be spending a lot of your time doing text 'mark-ups'. A mark-up is basically a highlighted and edited version of a draft UN text focused on which indicates which sentences you agree with, which sentences you would improve with different language, and which you think should be removed. Mark-ups are usually done whenever a new draft of the UN text is released for negotiation.

Many groups, networks and caucuses will have a special working group focused on language so do join these if you are interested in participating or in building your capacity on this do join. You can participate in one of these smaller working groups, or you can do your own mark-up of relevant sections, and then share these with your delegation.

WRITE & ENDORSE STATEMENTS

If you join a list-serve you will likely see many emails flying around your inbox asking your organization to endorse statements. If your organization agrees with the statement being put out you can usually endorse it by adding your organization's signature at the end of the document or electronic form. Endorsements are a great way to support other advocates and also to demonstrate what your organization stands for. Of course you can also take an active role and draft one yourself!

DELIVER AN ORAL STATEMENT

Depending on the event, the UN will sometimes let civil society organizations register to give an oral statement during a plenary session. Usually the oral statement slots are given away on a first come first serve basis, and you will be contacted in advance if you have been selected. When drafting your statement it is good practice to include other organizations or networks in this process (who can also formally endorse your statement), so that your speech reflects a broad voice of civil society organizations.

Some tips when preparing your oral statement:

- ✓ Write and share it with others in your network
- ✓ Have a strong and clear opening and closing statement
- ✓ Include personal stories, statistics and quotes
- ✓ Include a call to action (what do you want member states to do)!
- ✓ Practice reading it a few times in advance to ensure you feel confident on the day itself

In 2016 CHOICEr Karin van der Velde was selected to give a statement on behalf of the Youth Caucus, at the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) in New York. Giving a speech (aside from being really cool) can help organizations get their voice out there, as a lot of UN member states are present during the plenary sessions.



LOBBY YOUR DELEGATION

Because the negotiations are really a state-led process, if you're doing language advocacy it is important that you continuously try to lobby your delegation (or other delegations that are more supportive to your cause!) to support your issues. Most delegations do pay attention to what civil society is telling them, and they usually also appreciate it if you can provide them with language proposals and facts and argumentation to support this.

There are several ways to approach a delegation, for example you can plan in formal meetings with your delegation, send them input via email, or even approach them during bathroom and food breaks in the UN hallways. Most governments and delegations are on twitter, and you can also tweet them encouraging (or if they are not doing so well in your eyes, critical) messages.

Going to the media (or if you have the connections, going to someone higher up in the government) can be a very effective way to publically call out your delegation and put pressure on them to act differently. Remember though to think strategically: if you are seen as 'attacking' your delegation publicly they will likely be a lot less receptive to your input, so this should usually be done as a last resort and in agreement with other organizations in your network. If you do choose this route, follow-up is especially important!

CHECK OUT SIDE EVENTS OR HOST YOUR OWN!

Side events can be a fun way to learn more about relevant topics and of course also to meet new people. If you're looking to profile yourself or your organization, active participation by asking relevant questions and generally contributing to the discussion will help people remember you. You can think about things you may want to ask in advance, for example, about how the organizers and panelists involve young people in their work.

The UN will post an official list of side events ahead of time, but there are usually also many side-events being organized by different CSOs which are also definitely worth checking out. Be sure to check this list ahead of time and note down the ones you definitely don't want to miss! Remember that if you're in a group and there are several important events happening at the same time you can always split up and report key messages/information to each other later.

BE A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE

If you are focused on advocacy remember that your delegates are likely not all experts in the topics you are advocating for (this is where that evidence base comes in handy)! If you can't be in the negotiation room to present your arguments yourself, you can share your position points (and of course evidence to back them up) with your delegation to convince them and to help them push for your issues.

Of course you can also be a source of knowledge to those around you (especially to other young people)! A great way to do this is to prepare and distribute factsheets or to organize a side event or workshop to provide more specialized information and to help others formulate their argumentation, and if you are a more experienced advocate, consider taking someone less experienced under your wing.

SIT....AND WAIT

While the words 'UN Advocacy' might ring in images of running around the UN hallways with thrilling purpose, in reality most of your time will likely be spent sitting outside of a negotiation room waiting for a delegate to exit so that you can pounce on them for more information.

There are four main reasons to do this: (1) sitting in a large group of allies like a caucus or a major group means you can work together more efficiently and quickly strategize when new information comes to light, (2) there is a chance you can get inside information about the negotiating process and about the delegations positions, (3) to monitor 'the opposition' and send a signal to those in the negotiation room that there is a significant support base for your cause (4) to support (with text suggestions and evidence) but also to closely monitor your own delegation - after all they are there to represent your country!

Camping out outside of the negotiation room definitely sends an important message, and many of the larger caucuses and major groups will encourage members to sit outside of the negotiation room together, but don't feel pressured into spending all of your time sitting around and waiting!



DEBRIEF

- What did you achieve?

SHARE LESSONS LEARNED

Now that you're back home it's time to reflect on the events of the past few weeks and months. What went well? What could be done better? What needs to be improved? Which strategies were most/least effective? What would you do differently next time? Did you notice any knowledge gaps? Did you achieve all your goals? Were they realistic?

Sharing lessons learned is a vital part of the advocacy process - it's important that we know what others have done (both their successes and their failures) so that we can build on their progress and not have to start from scratch each year. One way to share lessons learned is to host an online or in person debrief with your network. You can also write an article or blog post, or create a video or vlog to share your experiences.

THINK ABOUT NEXT STEPS

Now that you've properly debriefed, it's time to think about concrete steps you can take to ensure that the gains you have made are not lost. So what's next for you? Are you going to invest in transferring knowledge to other advocates (within and outside of your organization) to ensure that more people are involved? If so how will you achieve this? What about engaging with your government to ensure there is follow-up to their commitments?

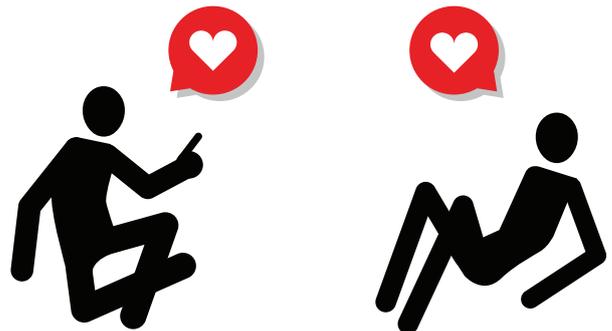
 Or maybe you've decided you want to get involved in the human-rights based processes in Geneva and want to learn more about this?

TRANSFER KNOWLEDGE

As a youth-led organization this is something that we always emphasize and spend a lot of time on. You've probably learned a lot these past few months, so it's important make sure this knowledge isn't lost and that others can benefit from your experience as well. There are many ways to transfer knowledge, you can choose to write a report or a blog post, film a vlog, provide a training or workshop, become a mentor, or you could even create a tool (like we have done here) to share the knowledge and skills you've gained with a wider audience. Don't forget to share your reflections and other important information on relevant listservs / google groups for people didn't attend the event but who may still be eager to learn from your experiences.

START STRATEGIZING FOR NEXT YEAR

It's never too early to start planning ahead! After debriefing and noting down your lessons learned start to think about what you can do already to prepare for next year. For example, if you were missing a lot of data, now's the time to go out and start building a proper evidence base. Perhaps you want to start advocating with your government to have a young civil society representative join their delegation next year. Or maybe you felt like there weren't enough side-events talking about young people and you want to come up with your own interactive event for next year, you can already sit down and think of who you want to invite to speak, what kinds of methodologies you want to use, and of course allocate some budget to ensure that you can host a great event. Start planning!



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FOLLOW UP

- From Words to Action!

The work doesn't stop after a UN event is over - now is the time to build on the progress you have made. If you've focused on advocacy it is important to follow-up and ensure your government upholds the commitments they have made at the UN.

HOST/ATTEND A DEBRIEFING

After debriefing and compiling lessons learned for yourself or within your own organization it's time to do this within your broader network. Some governments will host an official debriefing for civil society where they explain the outcomes of the process. This is the time to ask critical questions about your government's position and also how they are going to ensure effective follow-up!

DOCUMENT & SHARE COMMITMENTS

One of the main problems we face in our advocacy at the UN is that the commitments governments make in international or regional spaces almost never seem to translate into concrete action on the ground. One possible reason for this is that a lot of key stakeholders (like relevant Ministries, the media, politicians, the general public) actually have no idea what's happening at the UN. It's very important, therefore, to ensure that you take the time to document and distribute these agreements with a broad audience and in doing so hopefully also apply greater political pressure on your government to start implementing their commitments.

One way to do this is by creating youth-friendly and easy to understand resources that explain to the general public what your government has committed to, why these commitments are important, and how you think your government can implement them. You can think about sharing these commitments with the relevant Ministries (especially if you think they might be uninformed about what your country is doing internationally), with other organizations and NGOs, and of course also with the media and the general public.

ENGAGE THE MEDIA

The media can play a vital role in holding your government accountable for the commitments they make, so definitely don't be shy about engaging them. Sometimes all it takes is a sensational headline like "Country X promises to deliver on [issue] at the UN!" or "All talk and no action! One year after UN Commitments Government X has failed to make progress on [issue]!" to kick-start your government into taking action.

Start off by mapping what kinds of media are available and which audiences these engage; for example, are there any popular YouTubers or vloggers in your country who could be open to speaking about your key issues? Or maybe there are radio and TV shows that can reach a very broad audience? Or social media channels that have a large following? Or maybe there are even famous national celebrities who could generate attention for your cause.

You can engage with the media in different ways, for example, you can provide them with a briefing on what happened at the UN (including which commitments were made, who supported what, why is this important, and what this means for the national context), you can write an article or blog post which they can edit and publish, you can share relevant materials and factsheets, and video and photo materials with them.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR GOVERNMENT

Lobbying your government shouldn't stop at the UN; now that you're home see if you can set up meetings with the relevant ministries and other key stakeholders to convince them to actually take action on the commitments they have made. You (and other organizations) can offer your government technical assistance on how they can effectively implement their agreements - for example, if your government has signed a resolution committing to provide comprehensive sexuality education for all young people you can offer to help the Ministry of Education and/or Health develop a new curriculum based on the UNFPA guidelines (or your own!). You could also do budget advocacy, and show your government the importance of allocating more budget for your specific issue, for example, by demonstrating the positive impact that spending more resources on training health care workers on how to provide youth-friendly services can have on decreasing rates of STIs, unwanted pregnancies etc.

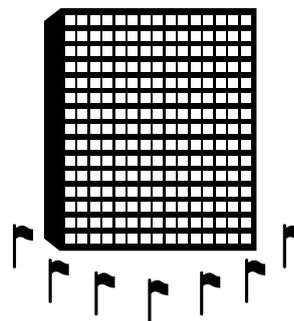
See if you can get your government to agree to consultations with young people from across the country, so that they can come to understand their lived realities and the challenges they face. If you offer to help arrange this, make sure that you include a diverse group of young people, including young LGBTI, young people living with disabilities, young people living with HIV, young people from rural and urban settings etc., to ensure that a wide range of opinions are taken into account.

Remember that you don't need to do this alone. Link up and partner with other similar-minded NGOs to increase your resources and add weight to your advocacy; together we are always stronger than alone!

MONITOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGREEMENTS

Advocating with your government to take action is only half the battle, it's important that you and your government also monitor and evaluate how these agreements are being implemented. Again the media can play a very big role here by praising your government for their successes and calling them out on their mistakes. Remember that it is important to meaningfully involve the key stakeholders (i.e. the people who are being impacted by these policies and programs) in this evaluation process!

- ✓ Create youth-friendly factsheets and briefings explaining the agreements made and what this means at the national level
- ✓ Develop Press releases and encourage the media to monitor Governments' implementation of commitments.
- ✓ Hold working groups with other civil society partners to coordinate implementation strategies.
- ✓ Hold regular meetings with relevant ministries and government stakeholders
- ✓ Offer technical assistance to help implement the agreements
- ✓ Encourage the government to meaningfully consult a diverse group of young people to inform their policies, programs, and budgets
- ✓ Monitor and evaluate what is being done
- ✓ Share updates via (social) media



WHAT TO PACK?

UN buildings almost always have free Wi-Fi available, so definitely bring along any technology you can use to access the internet (WhatsApp is a great way to stay in touch without going over your own data subscription). If you're planning on doing some hardcore advocacy (i.e. you're going to follow the negotiation process like a hawk) keep in mind that you might be spending most of your day (and unfortunately, often your nights) sitting outside of a negotiation room – this can get quite tiring so make sure you have plenty of snacks and water, and bring along some work or entertainment to keep you occupied (you might even want to bring a change of comfy clothes if you plan on sitting there all evening). Keep in mind that restaurants in the UN will close in the evening, and that you cannot (re)enter the building after a certain point.

Most people at the UN will be wearing formal wear and suits, but there will be plenty of people who are dressed a little more casually so don't feel pressured to go out and buy a whole new wardrobe before your trip – pants, blouses, blazers, and longer skirts and dresses will be just fine (in fact it's not uncommon to see one or two people in jeans!). Do remember that there will be people from all over the world walking around at the UN, so do try to make sure you don't wear anything too revealing to avoid offending anyone. Because you likely won't be spending all your time at the UN don't forget to bring along something more casual / comfortable in case you want to go sight-seeing or hang out with your newfound friends outside.

- ✓ Visa (depending on where you're from the procedure for getting a visa can be quite long and complicated, so definitely start on time!)
- ✓ Passport
- ✓ Laptop/phone/tablet/e-reader
- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Chargers / powerbanks
- ✓ Adapter(s) – these are usually also available at the airport/ in local stores
- ✓ Hotel reservation / Travel Itinerary
- ✓ Local currency (US dollars) to pay for transport to the hotel
- ✓ Medication (Make sure to check you can bring them in as well, sometimes you will need a signed letter from your doctor)
- ✓ Toiletries
- ✓ Earbuds for sleeping (New York streets can be quite loud!)
- ✓ Business cards (and a place to store those that you receive)
- ✓ A notebook and pen to take notes with
- ✓ Bank / credit card
- ✓ Weather-appropriate clothes (heavy/light coat, scarf etc.)
- ✓ An umbrella
- ✓ Comfortable and dressy shoes
- ✓ Re-fillable water bottle
- ✓ Print outs of any materials (like factsheets, annual reports etc.) that you want to bring with you

SO YOU'RE GOING TO THE UN!

Start advocating in New York
A Beginners Guide

This Factsheet was created by CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality as part of the Right Here, Right Now! Partnership'

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CHOICE FOR YOUTH & SEXUALITY

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RIGHT HERE
RIGHT NOW

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