



# YOUTH VOICES IN HEALTH ADVOCACY SPACES

A guide for you(th) in the childhood obesity advocacy space



# ABOUT

## About the Healthy Caribbean Coalition

The Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) is the only alliance of over 100 health and non-health civil society organisations in the Caribbean with a focus on non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

In 2018, the HCC, with funding from the NCD Alliance, developed a Civil Society Action Plan 2017–2021: Preventing Childhood Obesity in the Caribbean (CSAP) which provides HCC member civil society organisations (CSOs) with a framework for CSO-led action in support of national and regional responses to combat childhood obesity prevention. Youth has always been a central component of HCCs advocacy work.

In 2020, the HCC formally welcomed its youth arm – Healthy Caribbean Youth – a diverse group of young, enterprising health advocates passionate about promoting good health and supportive environments for children and youth in the Caribbean region.



## About the World Obesity Foundation

The World Obesity Federation (WOF) is a not-for-profit organisation which connects over 80 regional and national associations comprising over 10,000 professional members in scientific, medical and research organisations. World Obesity's mission is to improve global health by promoting the understanding of obesity and weight-related diseases through scientific research and dialogue, whilst encouraging the development of effective policies for their prevention and management.

Healthy Voices provides young people with the knowledge and advocacy tools to promote their positive engagement to address health-related challenges. Owned by World Obesity and born out of the work of two EU-level projects – STOP and CO-CREATE – it is an educational and capacity building platform and provides a space for blogs and discussions. It aims to provide young people with some tools and expertise about how to become actively involved in shaping their environments and become agents of change.



# WELCOME NOTE

This guide - **Youth Voices in Health Advocacy Spaces: A Guide for You(th) in the Childhood Obesity Advocacy Space** – is written for youth, by youth from across the globe. It presents a roadmap for young people who are ready or have already started to explore the world of advocacy, specifically advocacy that supports cultivating healthier environments for children and young people.

While the guide will use the topic of childhood obesity throughout as a case study, the suggested strategies can be applied to any advocacy topic.

The guide provides an overview of the importance of youth voices in advocating for healthier environments, practical strategies, and guidance that can be used to carry out both online and in-person advocacy work. The strategies presented in this guide were recommended by youth advocates, as they were critical in helping them along their various journeys. We hope that they will help you too.

## Who is this guide for?

- You(th) who may not have any previous experience within the advocacy space but are interested in getting started!
- You(th) who want to know more about successful strategies to strengthen their advocacy work to support the creation of healthy, safe, and sustainable environments.
- Youth Allies who want to explore ways to support youth on their advocacy journey.



To navigate this interactive toolkit click on the links above to get to the section you want.

Trouble accessing this functionality?  
View in [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#)

*We hope that some of the content presented in this guide will help you make the change you wish to see. We are excited to be a part of this journey with you!*

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# 1 ADVOCATING WITHIN THE CHILDHOOD OBESITY SPACE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

## What is advocacy?

First, we must understand what advocacy is. Advocacy refers to the actions made by people and groups that show support for a particular cause or on behalf of a group of people. The people performing these actions are advocates. Advocacy actions can range from desk-based research to public speaking and social media campaigns. It can be a small action such as telling a person on the street not to litter or something bigger such as organising a march or meeting with a policymaker about a situation of concern. Ultimately, advocacy aims to bring about a positive change or improvement in a cause.

Anyone, anywhere can be an advocate, including children and young people. We all have the right to stand up for the causes we believe in! Furthermore, the UN Child Rights Convention states that children have the right

**Advocacy (noun):** the act or process of supporting a cause, policy, or proposal; the act or process of advocating

**Advocate (verb):** to support or argue for (a cause, policy, etc.)

**Advocate (noun):** one who supports or promotes the interests of a cause or group

**Merriam-Webster**

to be heard in questions affecting their lives – including in questions related to health!

In this toolkit we will frame our advocacy actions and recommendations around one of the biggest public health challenges of the 21st century: childhood obesity. Over the course of the document, we will showcase some tips and tools to help you along your advocacy journey.

For more information read the:

[UNICEF, Voices of Youth  
Advocacy Guide](#)

[Youth Leaders for Nutrition  
Advocacy Toolkit](#)



## Let's talk about childhood obesity

### What is childhood obesity?

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines obesity as “abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health.”<sup>1</sup> Globally, the most accepted method for classifying childhood obesity includes the use of age-and gender-adjusted body mass index (BMI) centile curves which are available from the International Obesity Taskforce, WHO and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.<sup>2</sup>

Obesity is a chronic disease<sup>3</sup> that independently contributes to poor health outcomes and mortality, as well as increases risk for other chronic diseases including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and some forms of cancer. Childhood obesity can also have mental health consequences that lead to low levels of self-esteem, higher likelihood of being bullied, poorer school attendance levels and poorer school achievements. Other psychological impacts of childhood obesity include poor body image, increased levels of anxiety and stress, and depression.

Globally, childhood obesity numbers are nearly doubling every 10 years: the estimated number of children aged 5–19 years living with obesity has increased from 86 million in 2010 to 158 million in 2020 and projected to be 254 million in 2030!

Check out Figures 1, 2 and 3 for some childhood obesity rates for different parts of the world:

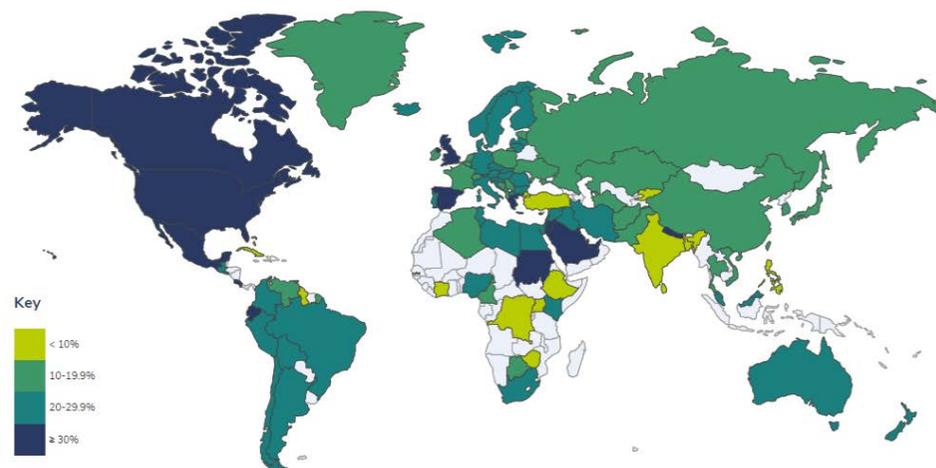


Figure 1. Girls living with either overweight or obesity. Data taken from the World Obesity Federation [Global Obesity Observatory](#) (2021).

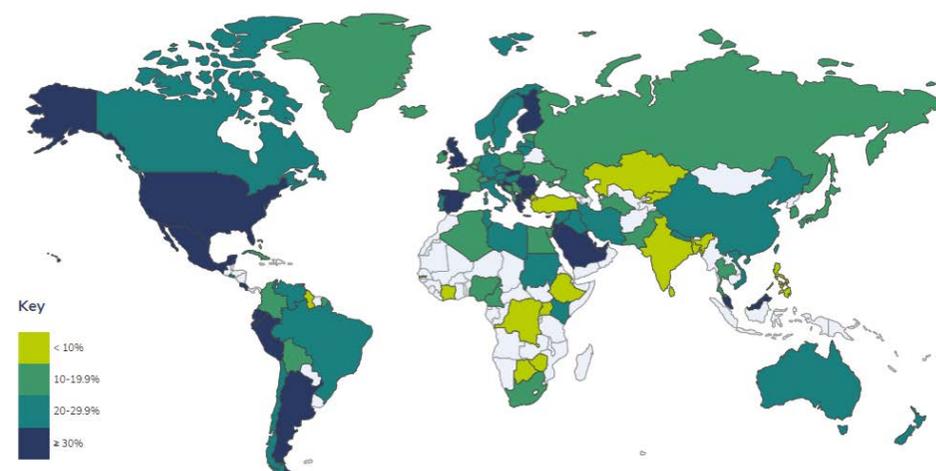


Figure 2: Global Map of Boys living with either overweight or obesity. Data taken from the World Obesity Federation [Global Obesity Observatory](#) (2021).

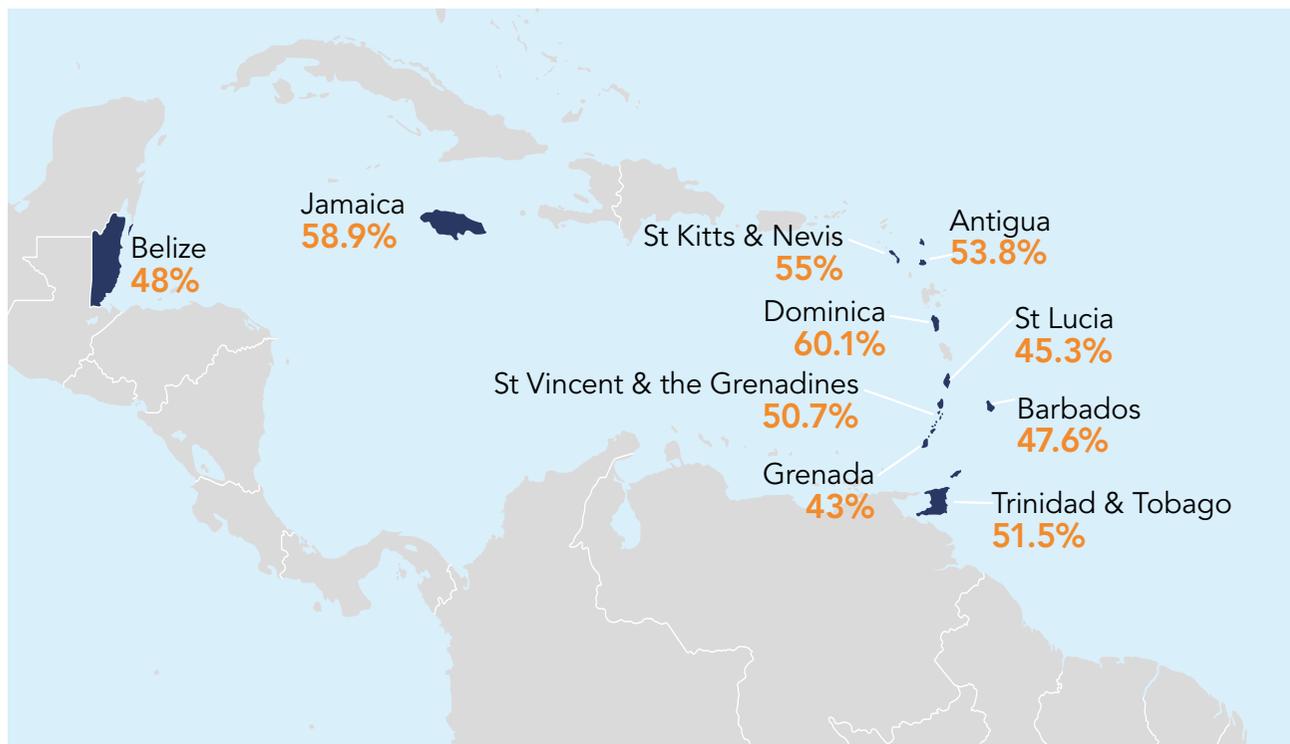


Figure 3. Prevalence of overweight and obesity in 10 Caribbean Countries<sup>4</sup>

Like much of the rest of the world, the small island developing states of the Caribbean are grappling with exorbitant rates of childhood obesity. This is largely related to the food landscape; most Caribbean territories import

over 80% of their food which is often ultra-processed and high in nutrients of concern. These products are, cheap easily accessible and heavily marketed to children.

*“Working in childhood obesity advocacy has really opened my eyes to the tremendous burden of childhood obesity where I live. Beyond the health impacts we’re also seeing the effects on the economy and social services sectors, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This highlights a need for advocacy from all fronts. The causes and effects of obesity are multisectoral. It should be everyone’s concern!”*

Kerrie Barker, Project Assistant,  
Healthy Caribbean Coalition

## Eating less and moving more doesn't work!

Many people think that obesity can be solved by "eating less and moving more." However, the root causes of obesity are much more complex. Obesity is heavily influenced by external socioeconomic, political, and environmental factors. These are known as the determinants of obesity.<sup>5,6,7,8</sup>

Often, when we talk about obesity, we place the responsibility on the individuals living with obesity. This simplifies the causes of obesity and can lead to weight stigma. Instead of focusing on obesity as solely an individual responsibility, we should look at the societies we live in and see obesity prevention as a societal responsibility. This can be done by considering issues such as how easily accessible unhealthy fast food is and the expense of healthier alternatives.

Unfortunately, children living with obesity typically become adults living with obesity and are more likely to experience a variety of long-term physical and mental consequences.

Therefore, it is imperative that action is taken throughout the entire life-course from pregnancy and early childhood to prevent, manage and treat obesity.

This is where advocacy comes in. We, as advocates, can contribute to addressing childhood obesity by advocating for governments, policy makers and other relevant bodies to implement bold policies and actions such as:

- Fiscal measures, including taxation on sugar-sweetened beverages and other ultraprocessed products; and subsidies on fresh fruits and vegetables
- The adoption of a zero-rated basket of goods that includes fresh food and vegetables
- Regulations that limit portion and package sizes and include the placement of front of package warning labels (such as the high-in octagon model) to help consumers quickly, easily, and correctly identify foods that are harmful to their health
- Restrictions on the marketing of food and beverages to children, particularly in and around schools and across digital platforms
- Provision of free and accessible potable drinking water in and around school and other environments frequented by children
- Provision of access to safe and appropriate physical activity
- Universal health coverage and strong health systems which include obesity prevention, management, and treatment
- Calling for the implementation of measures that avoid perpetuation of weight bias and stigma in schools, workplaces, healthcare settings and the media

For more information visit:

Healthy Caribbean Coalition:

[\*\*Childhood Obesity Prevention Portal\*\*](#)

World Obesity Federation:

[\*\*About Obesity\*\*](#)



## The importance of the youth voice in this advocacy space

**What is youth engagement? And why should youth play a central role in shaping the health and wellbeing of future generations?**

### The role of the youth advocate

Youth are often largely absent from decisions affecting their lives. National governments and international partners have largely failed to invest in the leadership capacities of young people to provide support and space for valuable engagement of their perspectives and talents. This is a significant omission in State's obligations to engage key stakeholders in policymaking processes.

Engagement of youth in advocacy initiatives presents a unique opportunity for us as young people to craft responses to current and future issues that directly impact us. As decisions made today will influence the world that we as youth will inherit, we must be involved in these dialogues.

When society recognises that young people, in our evolving capacities, are valuable agents of change in society's development, there will be a greater acceptance of the special yet fundamental need for youth advocates on critical youth issues.

Health presents itself as an integral area for youth to be active spokespersons, specifically regarding childhood obesity. Increasingly, we are seeing a desire for youth voices to be heard especially most recently around issues such as climate change.

While youth consultations have been a promising step in the policymaking process, there is still a way to go until we reach full, meaningful engagement where youth are able to affect decision making and have a meaningful influence over policy making.

Young people as youth advocates can share their lived experiences, perspectives and youth-focused research that can contribute to a more equitable response to childhood obesity.

Young people must hold policy makers accountable to their promises, while ensuring this is done in an ethical, equitable

*“Youth engagement is involving youth in whatever you plan for your community, because whatever you are planning, youth will be affected. It is prioritising young people's needs, involving, and empowering them when solving some of the problems in your community. We must seek their ideas before planning and implementing projects. It's planning and implementing for youth, with youth.”*

**Christophe Ngendehayo,  
International Federation of Medical  
Students Associations, Rwanda**

and mutually beneficial way. Sustainable mechanisms and national governance architecture that facilitate youth engagement in policymaking spaces like the World Health Organization\* Youth Council, NCD Child, CO-CREATE, CARICOM Youth Ambassadors and the like are critical as they provide platforms for youth to agitate and effectively participate in policymaking processes.

These structures call for meaningful youth engagement and getting rid of tokenistic engagement. Tokenism exists when there are unequal power relations that cause citizens to have a circumscribed role in decision-making.<sup>9</sup> Levels of youth engagement are demonstrated in Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation (see Figure 4).

There is a need for accountability mechanisms that provide effective platforms for meaningful participation of young people and positioning themselves as allies in the childhood obesity movement. For example, marginalised groups of young people would strengthen implementation, improve outcomes, and fulfil the rights of young people in shaping and monitoring decisions that affect them.

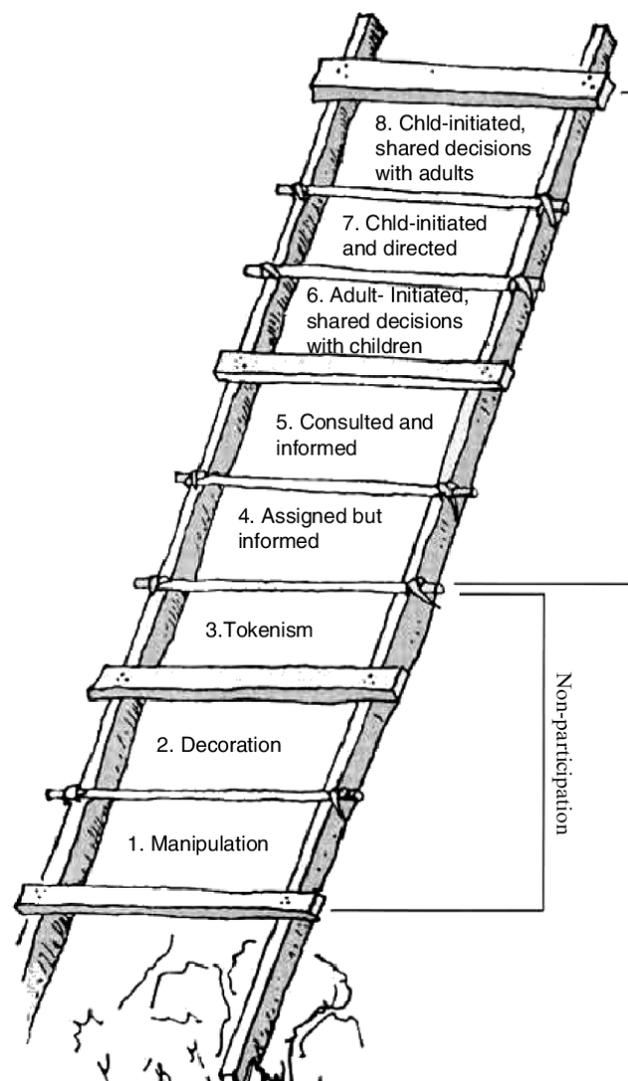


Figure 4 Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation: [UNICEF Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship](#)

The [Independent Accountability Panel's 2017 report "Transformative Accountability for Adolescents"](#)

outlined six recommendations to help fast-track actions to achieve the ongoing Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health 2016-2030 and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

1. Leverage accountability to achieve the SDGs
2. Make adolescents visible and measure what matters
3. Foster whole-of-government accountability to adolescents
4. Make universal health coverage work for adolescents
5. Boost accountability for investments, including for adolescents' health and well-being
6. Unleash the power of young people

## Right of the Child to Health and be Heard – Understanding the Human Rights Advocacy Lens

Adopted by the United Nations in November 1989, the **Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC)** has been ratified in all but one country.

This legally binding treaty outlines children's rights, governments obligations, and the responsibilities of non-State actors regarding children's fundamental human rights.

The CRC and its General Comments provide clear guidance and acts as a monitoring framework to guide and evaluate provisions of children's right to health. Recognising that children are entitled to a distinct set of rights in accordance with their unique needs, governments have a legal obligation to protect the rights of children from preventable causes of child mortality and morbidity and any default on those rights incur a legal sanction akin to criminal negligence. It is important that the right to health encompasses the prevention of diseases and ensures access to affordable, healthy, safe, and sustainable diets.

### Specific Rights

Article 3, paragraph 1 of the CRC places an obligation on public and private social institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities, and legislative bodies to take as paramount importance the best interests of the child.

The CRC strongly urges States to place the best interest of the child at the centre of all decisions affecting their health and development including the development and adoption of policies that affect the underlying determinants of their health.

Article 6 of the CRC highlights the obligations of State parties to ensure the survival, growth, and development of the child, including the physical, mental, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions of their development. The Committee on the Rights of the Child suggests governments should identify the risk and protective factors that underlie the life, survival,

growth, and development of the child systematically to design and implement evidence-informed interventions that address a wide range of determinants during the life course.

Article 12 of the CRC states that children have the right to be heard in questions affecting their lives. The UN Child Rights Committee has highlighted. This right pertains to both individual and structural and administrative questions.

Article 24, paragraph 2(f) speaks specifically to the need for the development of preventive health care.

This should address the main health challenges facing children within their countries. Preventative health care also speaks to the incorporation of structural and behavioural interventions.

With childhood obesity, governments have a responsibility to innovate and implement appropriate responses to the risk factors of childhood obesity, while meaningfully engaging young people. This includes, committing to funding youth-led advocacy efforts focused on childhood obesity prevention while also prioritizing rights-centered public education campaigns that focus on the whole of society approach needed to protect children's right to health.

## Who has the responsibility?

The protection of a child's right to health is the responsibility of all persons entrusted with their care and well-being. This includes the primary social institutions (e.g., families, schools, and church communities) as well as the government. In the case of obesity, it is a disease and risk factor greatly influenced by a person's environment. As such, all stakeholders have a role to play and must engage and support practices affecting children on a day-to-day basis.

The Committee, in their General Comment #15 on a Child's Right to Health, outlined the core obligations of States:

- Reviewing the national and subnational legal and policy environment and, where necessary, amending laws and policies;
- Ensuring universal coverage of quality primary health services, including prevention, health promotion, care and treatment services, and essential drugs;
- Providing an adequate response to the underlying determinants of children's health; and
- Developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies and budgeted plans of actions that constitute a human rights-based approach to fulfilling children's right to health.

We now have a better understanding of advocacy, the role of the youth voice in advocating for children and youth health and their right to health.

In this toolkit we will outline various tips and tools to help you along your advocacy journey. We will hear from some advocates already advocating for elements of a healthier environment.



Do you want to learn more about what youth engagement really means before reading onwards?

Watch a video developed as part of the CO-CREATE Project to [learn more](#).

## 2 DEVELOPING YOUR ADVOCACY PLAN

Here is the exciting part! Take some time to think about the issues that will drive your advocacy efforts. Children and young people face many threats to their health and wellbeing. What challenge will you choose and address through your advocacy efforts? Ensure that the matter is of importance to you and your community.

You can then begin thinking strategically on how you will address it. In the first instance, it is important to develop a plan to lead your advocacy work. This includes developing an understanding of your local context, determining the focus or goal of your advocacy, and selecting the appropriate tools and related messaging that you would like your target audience to see and hear.





# Understanding your local context

It is important to understand your local context because it can help you create a more specific advocacy plan, tailored to accomplish your objective.

To gather background information on this issue to fuel your advocacy, consider the following:<sup>10,11,12</sup>

- **Existing data:** Are there any data on your issue of concern that may be relevant for your work? For example: if your advocacy is focused on childhood obesity prevention, what is the most up to date research on the rates of childhood obesity in your region?

## Local Social Context and Target Group:

- **Local response to your issue:** is it recognised as a matter of concern in your country or region? Is the public aware of its implications? You can ask your community members and even check the media to get a sense of the general response.

- **Allies or persons who are, like you, advocating for healthier environments for children and young people:** Are there individuals or a group of people who feel similarly to you about your issue? Do you have a relationship with them? How can you connect with them?
- **Opponents or persons who may be against your advocacy work:** Who are the individuals or organisations that may oppose the work that needs to be done to address your issue? Are there any other stakeholders that you believe could oppose the implementation of policies that would help cultivate the environment that children and young people deserve?
- **Level or risk associated with this advocacy work:** Are you putting yourself at risk by advocating for this matter in your local context? Are there any security or safety measures that you need to take into consideration? It may be worth discussing this with your allies, especially those who may be long-time advocates.

## Local Educational context:

- **Access to information:** How does the average person in society access health information? What are the main modes of delivery?
- **Local curricula:** Are topics such as health, wellness and a multisectoral response to health covered in curricula in educational institutions such as primary, secondary or tertiary school? What about special education settings such as medical school?

## Local political context:

- **Policymakers or persons who make the rules in a country:** Who are the 'rule-makers' that make decisions and set policies related to the matter in your country? How are these decisions made? What is the process like? This is important information to consider, especially if your advocacy goal includes policy implementation.
- **Local actions taken to cultivate healthier environments:** Does your country have a strategy in place to address child and youth health? For

example, does your country have an obesity and/or NCD strategy in place? Are there any programs or initiatives in place focused on healthier environments? Are there any school-based programs or community-based initiatives? Has there been any related policy action taken? If so, what policy or law has been implemented? Has banning the sale and marketing of ultraprocessed food to children been implemented and enforced? What has the public response been to these actions?

The answers to these questions will help you to develop a deeper understanding of your unique context. You can use a SWOT analysis<sup>13</sup> like the one below to help identify the successes, challenges to date and opportunities that you can use to guide your own advocacy effort. A SWOT analysis allows you to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that your organisation might encounter when working on your advocacy project.

### Helpful to the objective

#### STRENGTHS

Who or what has successfully impacted your issue of interest?

#### OPPORTUNITIES

Who or what can facilitate action or activities related to your issue?

### Harmful to the objective

#### WEAKNESSES

What could be done to improve efforts surrounding your issue?

#### THREATS

Who or what hinders action or activities related to your issue?

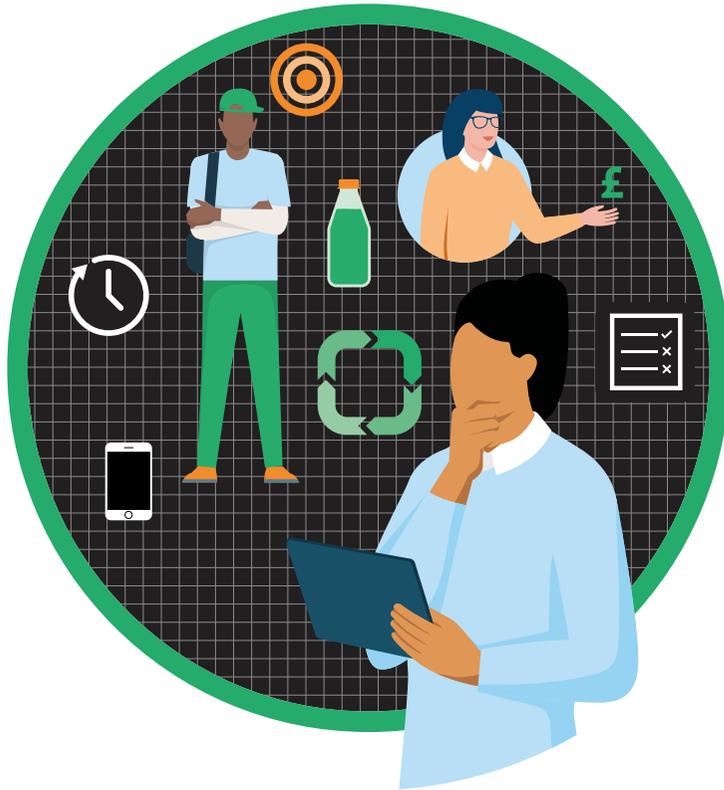
*“Advocating for children’s health rights became one of my pursuits as I recognise children’s vulnerability, especially in the face of pervasive industry marketing and the ease of access to ultraprocessed products over healthier options, in environments like schools, where children should be safe. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of regulatory measures in the Caribbean to protect our children.*

*In 2020, I began drafting the HCC-commissioned model Policy for regulating the availability and marketing of unhealthy beverages and food products in Caribbean schools, I was keenly aware of its utility as a timely and strategic resource for Caribbean governments, to ease in-country implementation and also for regional harmonisation in regulating school food environments. Overall, the model Policy has the potential to move Caribbean States closer to satisfying their obligation to protect, respect and fulfil the rights of the child, notably children’s right to health and to adequate nutritious foods.”*

Kimberley Benjamin, Attorney-at-law and member of Healthy Caribbean Youth, shares her experience in developing guidance that will be key for shaping healthy school environments in the Caribbean. Research is a very important part of advocacy!

## Advocacy Plan Checklist:

- Understanding the matter
- Understanding your local context
- Local response to your matter**
  - List of Allies
  - List of Opponents
  - Determine the level of risk associated with this advocacy work in your local context
- Political context**
  - List of policymakers
  - Overview of the local policy making process
  - List of actions taken to address your matter to date
- Educational Context**
  - List of information systems used to access information
  - Examples of instances where the matter is covered in local curricula



## Defining your project objectives

**You've done the background research and you're now eager to lead an advocacy project related to your matter. Critical to any good project, however, are clearly defined objectives to accomplish your goals.**

As you think about how you'd like to contribute to addressing your issue of interest, like childhood obesity, consider the following:

### **What exactly would you like to achieve?**

It's important to keep your expectations specific, relevant, and realistic. Remember, most issues are complex, so don't feel pressured to address all contributing factors or bite off more than you can chew. Start by focusing on one of the root causes and take some time to think about how well it addresses your issue.

### **Who will your project help?**

Be as specific as possible. What age group does your target population entail? What subset of those children will be included

(e.g., students at one primary school, or living in a particular community?) Engage your target population since the idea is to do things with them, not for or to them.

### **Who will adopt and implement what you are advocating for?**

Often, advocacy is about reaching out to a stakeholder and getting them to change (or not change) a policy. Therefore, it is important for you to know who has the power to adopt and implement the change you are advocating for. This can include policy makers who influence national policy or business stakeholders to change how businesses are operating.

### **How will you and everyone else know if it worked?**

Frame your objective in measurable terms to help you stay focused and motivated.

### **How much time will you need?**

Set a reasonable timeframe and do your best to stick to it. Keep your resources and assets in mind.

## Planning Tip

Consider establishing SMART objectives that will make it easier to monitor your project as it progresses, and evaluate its success:<sup>14</sup>

**Specific.** Does your objective specify how much of what is to be achieved by when, e.g. 10% reduction in childhood obesity by 2025?

**Measurable.** Can the information concerning the objective be collected, detected, or obtained?

**Achievable.** Is it feasible to pull off the objectives?

**Relevant.** Do the objectives fit in with your overall advocacy goal or your organisation's overall goal and mission?

**Timed.** Are your objectives time-bound? Do you have specific timelines for your objectives and related activities?

The Specific, Measurable and Time-Bound parts are usually stated in the objective, while the Achievable and Relevant pieces are more abstract and require reflection.

Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-Bound
What is the issue you'd like to impact, or who is your target population and who is your advocacy target? What is the action you'd like to take and what do you want to achieve?	How much impact represents success and how will you quantify your progress towards your target?	Can you realistically achieve your objective with your current resources without risking burnout? Will you need additional resources and are they accessible? Do you perhaps need to scale down or up?	Does your objective align well with other projects addressing the same issue? Does your objective align well with a debate in the media?	When do you want to complete your project?



## Outlining your project's scope

Now that you've clearly defined the objectives of your project, it's time to define the activities required to reach the project's objectives and consider what resources are required to successfully complete it. Carefully think about the following as you design your project and create a budget (if applicable):

### How will you achieve desired results?

Reflect on your project's objective(s). What actions and activities can directly contribute to the project's objectives? Be specific. Think quality over quantity and keep your project's time frame in mind. It's also important to define how the results of these activities will be tracked. If you haven't already done so, now may be a good time to learn from the successes and challenges of similar youth-led initiatives implemented by your allies.

### Who will you need?

Human resources are essential to every project. Do you have a team with the

required skill sets or do you need to organise training or recruit more team members. Have you identified individuals or other organisations that can help you plan or implement your project? These allies may also be able to help increase your project visibility, add credibility and amplify your message. Remember, there's strength in numbers. You increase your chances of accomplishing a great deal more through collaboration.

### What will you need?

Maybe you'll need a graphic design tool to create engaging content for your social media campaign or supplies to make a poster. Plan these out to better leverage your network and existing resources.

### How much will it cost?

Conduct some research so your estimations are as accurate as possible and explore alternatives to keep your project cost-effective. Especially if you intend to approach a donor for funding, make sure your budget accounts for the activities you've outlined.



# Funding

You now have a plan for your advocacy project and a budget. How will you acquire the money you need? Consider companies, foundations and organisations that have funded similar projects. Maybe there are opportunities to receive funding from your local or national government, so be sure to explore those too. Regardless of who your donor is, keep the following in mind when applying for funding:

- Make sure you fulfil all the donor's requirements.
- Be clear, concise, and compelling. Your donor needs to understand why your issue is one worth addressing. Be passionate, but also use facts to tell your story. Your research on your issue and its impact locally will come in handy here.
- Most times, there is an application form, a proposal template, or a list of instructions you are expected to follow. Follow the directions very carefully.
- If you have questions when applying for grant programmes, you can reach out to the donor.

- Don't underestimate the time and dedication it takes to craft a strong application. Draft the application and have people review for feedback. Don't forget to check your spelling and grammar!



## PRO TIP

Ask your allies about potential funding resources. Here are a few organisations that often offer grant opportunities to support youth focused-work throughout the year; before applying, ensure that the grant aligns with your advocacy priorities:

- [AstraZeneca \(Step up!\)](#)
- [Global Health Advocacy Incubator \(Advocacy Fund\)](#)
- [Grand Challenges Canada](#)
- [NCD Alliance](#)

## PRO TIP



Engaging in advocacy is still possible if you don't have access to funding! Digital advocacy such as writing op-eds, blogs and participating in online events can be just as efficient and often requires no other resource than your time and dedication.

If you've planned a social media campaign, make the most of free graphic design tools like [Canva](#), [AdobeSpark](#) and [DesignWizard](#) to create attention-grabbing visuals.

If your advocacy project has been funded, congratulations! It's finally time to set your plan in motion. As you gear up to coordinate your project's resources to meet its objectives, give some thought to the following:

- You've already assessed the human resources needed for project implementation but be sure to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all team members. Often, it can be smart to talk through the expectations you have for yourself and each other.
- As your project unfolds, it is very likely that you will run into some challenges. Try to plan by asking yourself, 'what could go wrong and how would I handle it?' Remember, risks aren't just technical or financial. The opposite side can jeopardise the success of your project too!
- If your donor wants a report, make note of the requirements, including templates or formats, and ensure that the information needed is captured appropriately.

When your project ends, you'll want to take some time to reflect with your team. You should essentially document whether, why and how the project achieved its objective. Doing this offers a great opportunity to enhance future initiatives with lessons learned. Ask yourself (and your team):

- What worked well and what didn't?
- What recommendations can we offer to anyone considering a similar project?

Remember that advocacy can be challenging and that advocacy successes often take a long time to achieve, so be proud of what you have accomplished, even though you did not reach all your objectives.



## Shaping your advocacy message

You are on your way to shaping a strong, well-thought advocacy plan with a clear goal, objective, and activities to advocate in your local context. One of the key elements of advocacy is your messaging, specifically the content of the message and how it is delivered. Reviewing these two components are critical to ensure that your message is meaningful for who you want to engage. Before developing your messages<sup>15</sup> you should (1) revisit your advocacy goals and objectives and (2) consider your audience.

### Planning tip for advocacy work on digital platforms:

Always be mindful of the intention of your message - consider who your audience is and what you're asking them to do. Are you trying to inform the public about your advocacy efforts (e.g., getting people to sign a petition or join your advocacy campaign - otherwise known as digital marketing?) or are your efforts focused on policymakers and demanding change (otherwise known as digital advocacy)?

### Digital advocacy

*Digital advocacy describes efforts to mobilise people towards a cause, whether it's a policy or product using technology e.g., social media and digital applications.*

### Digital marketing

*Digital marketing is the promotion of products using the internet and other forms of digital communication.*

There are common threads between both advocacy and marketing as they equally aim to influence public perception on a given topic and/or product.

Once you have your goal, objective and audience confirmed, you can consider developing content. Keep in mind messaging should be:

- credible, clear, compelling, concise, consistent, and convincing.
- simple and persuasive, remember you want your audience to support your cause.

## Creating responsible content

Often, both language and imagery tend to overemphasise specific behaviours such as sedentary activities or excessively consuming junk food, portraying people in a negative context and associating them with negative adjectives. When advocating, especially for healthier environments, it is important to be mindful of how language is used. Here are some tips for creating responsible content especially when referring to or depicting obesity and people living with overweight or obesity.

## The dos and don'ts when talking about obesity.

The type of language used when talking about obesity is extremely important. It is common to see obesity talked about in a negative way which risks reinforcing stereotypes, simplifying the causes of obesity, and contributing to weight stigma.

**People-first language (PFL)** refers to putting an individual before the medical condition. For instance, you should say 'a person with obesity' as opposed to 'an obese person' or any other

critical labels. People-first language helps avoid dehumanising individuals living with chronic diseases, and ensures we are not labelling an individual with their disease.

Words and phrases to avoid	Alternative language and considerations
✗ Obese person	✓ Person/individual with obesity
✗ Obese subject/participation	✓ Subject/participant with obesity
✗ Obese children	✓ Children with obesity



Figure 5 World Obesity Federation: The ROOTS of Obesity

**Use of labels and adjectives:** The words used to refer to people living with obesity should be carefully considered.

Examples of words and phrases to avoid	Alternative language and considerations
✗ 'Fat'	✓ Neutral phrases such as 'individuals with higher weight/BMI' or 'people living with obesity'
✗ 'Fatty'	
✗ 'Chubster'	
✗ 'Chubby'	✓ Use people-first language
✗ 'Flubby'	
✗ 'Flab'	✓ Use accurate facts and figures
✗ 'Supersized'	
✗ 'Mammoth'	✓ Be clear on what the problem is rather than leaving it open to interpretation
✗ 'Large size'	
✗ 'Curse'	
✗ 'Strain'	✓ Avoid ambiguous language
✗ 'Plague'	✓ Be explicit on the health consequences. For example, 'Obesity can affect our health in x, y and z ways.'

**Language used by the media:** It is important to notice moments when the media uses negative adjectives and labels in their headlines and the impact it has. Often, these put the blame directly on individuals which may increase weight stigma.

**Avoid the use of medical jargon:** To help the public understand the complexities of obesity and avoid weight stigma, plain language should be used. The use of medical jargon can be a barrier to people understanding obesity and may lead to more weight stigma.

**Writing in different languages:** Many of the underlying principles outlined above are relevant in languages other than English, however direct translations are not always accurate. When writing in languages other than English it is suggested that you apply the principles outlined in this document and adapt them as appropriate

For more information, read World Obesity's language guidelines [here](#).

## Recommendations:

- Use people-first language
- Adopt positive language about obesity and people with obesity
- Avoid the use of language that is derogatory or pejorative
- Use easy to understand language to illustrate that obesity is a health condition
- Recognise the wider causes of obesity where relevant. Refer to figure 5 for some of the roots of obesity
- Avoid the use of language that implies individual blame

## Images and obesity: recommendations

The most common negative images consist of showing isolated body parts, most frequently an abdomen alone. Some other negative portrayals include people with obesity engaging in sedentary behaviours such as sitting down, watching TV, or eating junk/unhealthy food. The use of such images can reinforce stereotypes about personal responsibility and blame. They also tend to present people with obesity as miserable, distressed, or sad.

More positive examples of images used to talk about obesity include the presentation of unhealthy foods without a consumer to help highlight the role of the obesogenic environment that contributes greatly to the rising numbers of obesity and takes away the focus from individual accountability. Other positive examples include showing people with obesity smiling, looking confident in well fitted clothing and who aren't engaging in stereotypical behaviours as the ones described above.

### Using images of food

We would not encourage using images that show people consuming unhealthy food or beverages as it may reinforce stigmatising perceptions that people with obesity are greedy and regularly make unhealthy food choices.

Images and videos showing healthier foods convey messages of well being and optimism, directed at creating healthy food environments as opposed to promoting ultra-processed foods. The image below helps portray more system-wide changes to help reduce rates of obesity, rather than personal ones to stigmatise individuals.



Figure 6. World Obesity Federation. 2021.  
[Image Bank | World Obesity Federation.](#)

### Using images of physical activity

Too often, images show people living with obesity engaging in unhealthy and sedentary behaviours, fuelling false presumptions of their weight-loss journey. Instead, we should focus on conveying the proactive efforts that people trying to lose weight take by engaging in exercise and leading active lifestyles. The image below is a perfect example of the kind of imagery we would encourage you to use!



Figure 7. World Obesity Federation. 2021.  
[Image Bank | World Obesity Federation.](#)

## Recommendations:

- Use positive images which accurately support individual's stories without exacerbating misconceptions about people with obesity
- Pictures of people with obesity should include their whole body rather than specific body parts with the head removed
- Images that perpetuate stereotypes, such as people with obesity being sedentary, looking sad or isolated from other people, should be avoided
- Call out the use of negative images, particularly in the media

## ACT

### 1. Write to the media to highlight the issue of weight stigma

The media have an important role to play when it comes to ending weight stigma.<sup>16</sup> The content of many stories contains negative stereotypes that are often portrayed through negative language and images.

### 2. Share stories or ideas to address weight stigma.

This can be extremely empowering and a way forward in addressing the issue of weight stigma. Examples of stories can show how positive language and imagery can empower patients. By talking about the issue, itself, we are taking a step to address weight stigma.

### 3. Consider the words and language you use.

World Obesity has an image bank filled with non-stigmatising images. They are completely free to use and very easy to download. You can consider using the images in presentations, reports, and other materials you may produce as part of your work. You can access it [here](#).



## Message delivery

At this stage, you have your messages that are clearly aligned with your goals, objectives and tailored to your audience. Now it's time to determine the best tool or combination of tools to convey your message. Some of these tools include social media, print media and even direct communication with policymakers. There are several tools that can be used including social media, print media and even direct communication with policymakers.

### Social media

Social media gives you a platform for making your messages more accessible and for networking with wider audiences nationally and internationally. It is becoming an increasingly popular tool in advocacy as it is free and easy to use. It can be useful for:

- Getting messages out to large numbers of people
- Promoting activities and events
- Getting support for a specific call to action/petition

- Directly targeting politicians
- Reaching consumers and organisations alike
- Keeping up to date with others' activities

Tweet, share, post, comment, 'like', 'favourite' all things to do with #ChildhoodObesity. You can follow us @WorldObesity and @HealthCaribbean on Twitter for the latest updates.

### Developing social media messaging

When developing messaging for social media consider

- What is important to the people you are speaking to? Is it nutrition policies? Community-based physical activity programs? Think about what matters to your audience.
- What are the key messages that you want to get across to your audience?
- What kind of language would be most appropriate?
- What social media platform is best to reach your audience?

## How to create a social media campaign:

### 1. Account

Create an account on a social media platform such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, or any platform that is popular among your social groups.

### 2. Hashtags

Identify existing hashtags that focus on the issue and consider creating new hashtags. Hashtags allow people to easily identify your issue and track initiatives taking place.

### 3. Content

Produce and share evidence-informed content. Whether it is articles, memes, photos, videos or music, social media is a great way of sharing content. Make sure what you share speaks to your issue and encourages discussion.

### 4. Engage your followers

- Host live chats, this is an easy way to bring people together to talk about different things including the complex nature of childhood obesity. Use the opportunity to engage with your allies and opponents.
- Organise a social media Twitter chat where many people and organisations post the same message at the same time. Remember to use hashtags; these make it easier to moderate the discussion.
- Collaborate with social media 'influencers', individuals who have a large following and powerful impact on social media which can help gain traction for your advocacy project.

### 5. Timing

Identify the best times to post on social media depending on when your target audience will be on social media. This will help your content be seen, liked, and shared.

### 6. Interact

Respond and communicate. By responding to messages and comments you receive on social media, you create an important space for dialogue which is important in building your platform.

### 7. Be safe

Protect yourself on social media. There can be a lot of negativities on social media, and you should know how to stay safe. Make sure you have strong passwords and that you protect your accounts, report any inappropriate posts, and maintain a civil dialogue with people.

Here are some **tips** for developing content and systems for managing digital advocacy efforts.



*“Remember that you’re speaking on behalf of an issue, you’re speaking on behalf of a group and with persons who you may or may not identify with. So, if you personally are affected by the issue, and you become an advocate for your community, and yourself, that is one thing. But if you’re not, if you’re an ally, to the conversation to the community, then it’s important to understand that you will never truly appreciate as much as you converse with as much as you interact with, understand, and accept and acknowledge. First and foremost, you’re speaking on behalf of people. So be careful of how you represent the issue. Be careful of how you represent the community and to invite and involve them as much as possible, because that will help you to create better and targeted interventions to creative problem solving.”*

Christopher Laurie, Project Assistant,  
Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados.

## Social Media Campaign checklist:

- Develop campaign goal, objective, and related messaging
- Determine audience
- Select platform
- Develop your message
- Take your message further: Use hashtags and tag influencers or allies. (tagging policymakers is critical, especially for digital advocacy discussed below)
- Consider engaging with your followers
- Evaluate and monitor campaign (consider reach and engagement of posts)
- Remember to put strategies in place to protect yourself on social media

## Letters to policymakers and influencers

In your advocacy, you want to consider different ways to get your issue noticed by people who have the power to implement policy and make a change. This can be done via social media through well-constructed messaging and tagging policymakers. Another powerful way is by sending a letter or email directly to them.<sup>17</sup>

A letter to an **elected official** can be used:

- to express how a particular issue affects you or a group of persons
- to express support or opposition for a proposed policy
- to recommend a policy to address your issue based on WHO/UNICEF best buy practices
- to demonstrate to an official that the population are aware of an issue and have an interest in the outcome

- to thank an official for the efforts that they made toward an outcome that you are passionate about...and so much more.

The **timing** of letter is very important, there may be times when they are more effective including:

- Upcoming vote on policy of interest
- Upcoming elections or party conferences
- You want to respond to a policymaker's action or a change in policy
- Immediately after a policymaker has done something that warrants attention (whether positive or negative). For example, if a policymaker has either opposed or shown support for a health protecting policy.

After you have considered the timing of the letter, and you've decided that this is a good strategy, you want to ensure that you get your **message across to your local or national policymaker**. Critical items that you should consider adding to your letter include:

- Purpose for writing
- Summary of the issue/decision being made
- Description of the what the changes will mean to you and to others (always remember to think of the most vulnerable and if you don't identify with a particular group, ensure that you take the time to listen to their lived experience and what they need)
- The action that you hope the official will take

Remember that you can use social media to promote the message in your letter even further. You can for example write a social media post about your letter and the content of the letter, so that even more people become familiar with your message.



**Here** is more information on writing letters to elected officials.

## Checklist for writing letters:

- Is it the right time to write this letter?
- Identify the recipient and correct mailing or email address
- Determine the reason for writing the letter (for example: urgent implementation of school nutrition and physical activity policies, encouraging country-wide policy-level change like the implementation of front of package nutrition warning labels and SSB taxes)
- Ensure that you have critical elements of the letter as noted in content section above
- Double check for spelling and grammar
- Follow up if you have not heard from the recipient

## Press releases

### What is a press release?

A press release is a short news story written in response to an announcement, publication of new resources, launch of a project and more. The objective of a press release is to get the attention of journalists and get their support in disseminating your work.

### Writing your own press release

Before you start.

- Have a legitimate news angle (announcing something new and/or timely)
- Relevance: is what you have done relevant?
- Is there a particular date that you want to get your press coverage e.g., to tie in with the launch of your new project or campaign? Think ahead and make sure you send it to the press with sufficient time.
- Know your audience – e.g., newspaper, radio, magazine.

**Date and embargo.** Date your press release, particularly if it is not for immediate release. Include an embargo date (date by which you want your press release released to the public) and time clearly in red at the top of the release, and indicate time zones, particularly for international press releases.

**Catchy headline.** A clear and catchy headline (and email subject line when you send out the press release) will attract journalists seeking good stories. Your headline should be as engaging as it is accurate.

**Summary.** Emphasise the key points that you want included in any news stories. Get the message of your press release out quickly. Every important point should be addressed in the first few sentences. The subsequent paragraphs should be for supporting information.

**Use the introductory paragraph.** Sum up the story in 50-100 words – it could be all that gets read! Stick to the facts. Explain who you are, what you are announcing, where it is taking place, when it's happening, plus possibly why and how. These questions communicate the story arc. "Who, what, where, when why".

**Empirical evidence.** Leave the artistry to the journalist - your press release should be filled with factual numbers that support the significance of your research or other announcement. If you are claiming a trend, you need proof to back it up. Quantify your argument and it will become much more compelling.

**Include a quote.** by a person who conducted research, is an expert in the area or is affected by what you are addressing This adds a human element to the press release, as well as being a source of information. Remember to make sure that the quoted person is available for further interviews if required.

**Length.** Keep it short, about 1-2 sides of A4. Also include graphics for extra information which may be useful to the journalist and will also serve to grab their attention.

**Contact information.** Make sure that the journalist can get in contact with you should they have any queries or require further information. It is also good to provide them with some information about your organisation or project, as well as any links to relevant information which they may find useful.

## Media interviews

Remember, the goal is to bring awareness and raise your voice, highlighting issues that need to be addressed to make a change. In addition to using social media, print media and adding an extra personal touch with a written letter, there may be opportunities for you to share your message and calls to action via broadcast media (radio, tv or even via a podcast). Here are some tips when preparing for a radio interview.<sup>18 19</sup>

### Tips to consider pre-interview:

1. Prepare, prepare, prepare!
2. Know your audience. Get a sense of who you will be delivering your message to, this will help you in determining what messages you should prioritise as well as the tone and language to be used in your interview. Be mindful of using overly technical language as you want everyone to take something away from your interview.

3. Think about what you would like to see in the media coverage and plan. Prepare 3-4 key messages.

- Have your facts ready!
- Think about challenging questions the reporter/host may ask you.

### Tips to consider during the interview:

1. Be relaxed and speak confidently
  - Speak with confidence and enthusiasm (smiling helps)
  - Listen to the question
2. Don't feel pressured to discuss a topic that you're not comfortable discussing
3. Stick to your talking points. Have about 3 talking points prepared and find all opportunities to guide the discussion
4. Assume everything is on the record, whenever you speak with a reporter (even in the preparation stages) be in "interview mode"

## Post interview:

- 1.** Landing a media interview is a big deal! So first, give yourself a pat on the back! Then, take a moment to reflect on the experience. Is there anything you'd handle differently or made clearer? Talk it over with family and friends and keep any pointers in mind as you prepare for future interviews.
- 2.** Send a follow-up, Thank You note to the reporter. They offered an opportunity and a platform to share your story, so be sure to express your gratitude. Address key points you want to reiterate or include any you might have missed. Remember to include any other information you promised to send after the interview (eg. links to campaign website or relevant social media pages), and your contact details for ease. Additionally, feel free to ask the reporter when the interview is scheduled to be released and if it's at all possible for you to vet beforehand!
- 3.** Sometimes journalists may have follow-up questions, so be sure to regularly check your phone/e-mail in the days post interview.

- 4.** Once the interview is released, share it with your networks! If you weren't able to see a draft, perhaps send another thank you note to the reporter, this time sharing what you liked the most about the piece!



# 3 ADVOCACY EXPERIENCES: LESSONS LEARNED

Young people around the world are committed to re-writing the current narrative from one that is for youth to one that is written by youth, through strong advocacy efforts to enact change at national and local level. Below are a few case studies to show how youth around the world have successfully advocated for the development of healthier, sustainable, and safe living environments for everyone, now and in the future.

## The CO-CREATE Youth Task Force: turning ideas into action

The CO-CREATE project\* brings together young people and researchers to co-create policy ideas that hold promise to halt the rise in adolescent obesity. By focusing on upstream factors and systems change the project aims to promote a healthier food and physical activity environment.

Youth alliances were established in the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the UK, and Norway. In the alliances, young people

received training in fields such as public health, advocacy, and research methods. Equally, researchers understood how youth perceive questions concerning public health. Together they have discussed, learned, and gathered data, through Photovoice, systems mapping and interviewing, to support the development of policy ideas that support young people to make healthy decisions in the local communities where they live. For example, youth alliances have worked on creating healthy food trucks, programmes that let youth use their school gym after school hours, and sugar tax schemes.

After an inspiring, educational, and creative year, the idea to establish a regional CO-CREATE youth group was born. Ten

\*The project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Work Programme 2016- 2017: Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research, and the bioeconomy) under grant agreement No 774210. CO-CREATE (2018-2023) aims to reduce the prevalence of obesity among adolescents in Europe through policy actions to promote a healthier food and physical activity environment. CO-CREATE's vision is that before 2025, the rise in adolescent obesity will have come to a halt. The project brings together a consortium of 14 international research and advocacy organisations, across 10 countries to generate new insights to childhood obesity, and its relation to implementation of policies. For more information on CO-CREATE visit: [www.co-create.eu](http://www.co-create.eu)



representatives from the youth alliances indicated their interest – and the CO-CREATE Youth Declaration Task Force came to fruition.

The Task Force had its first meeting in June 2020 and worked throughout the year to draft a declaration expressing the youth in CO-CREATE's common vision. The group

received training from CO-CREATE staff in fields such as developing political demands, systems thinking, and advocacy. Based on the members' experiences from the youth alliances as well as discussions at the Task Force meetings, the youth group formulated the four following demands, targeting policymakers in Europe:

- 1) Stop all marketing of unhealthy food to children under the age of 18 years
- 2) Secure all children high-quality, practical based food and nutrition education in school
- 3) Implement a sugar-sweetened beverage tax to make unhealthy foods more expensive
- 4) Offer all children and adolescents free, organised physical activities at least once every week

The drafted declaration was then sent out to all youth alliance members, who were invited to an adoption meeting. Here, the declaration was unanimously adopted. Since the adoption of the CO-CREATE Youth Declaration, the Task Force has worked actively to promote their demands through social media, participating in webinars, symposiums, and events such as the EAT@Home broadcast. Believing that youth have the power to change the world, the youth group will carry on their work advocating for healthy societies for all!

## Healthy Caribbean Youth - Civil Society's Support for Meaningful Youth Engagement

Healthy Caribbean Youth, the youth arm of the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC), is a Caribbean-based group of young enterprising health advocates from diverse backgrounds who are passionate about promoting good health and supportive environments for children and youth.

Healthy Caribbean Youth's goal is to empower young Caribbean people to become strong advocates for a healthier Caribbean and future leaders in the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases NCDs. The Healthy Caribbean Youth's work is guided by three pillars, Advocacy, Networking and Capacity Building which are core to the HCC's [Strategic Plan](#) and [Transformative New Agenda](#).

Even before Healthy Caribbean Youth was officially launched in October 2020, the HCC has always prioritised the youth voice. Youth play an integral role in the whole of society approach needed to tackle the world's issues, including the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. Youth engagement is monumental in ensuring that discussions and policies to protect the health of children and youth are crafted with them in mind. HCC continues to advocate for youth engagement in high-level policy-making spaces.

1 in 3 Caribbean children lives with overweight or obesity. Like many small island states, countries of the Caribbean import most of their food which has contributed to the increased availability of ultra-processed food products, which are often more accessible than fresh food. Across the region, there are few health protective policies in place to ensure that the healthiest choice is the easiest choice.

School environments, which should be protected spaces where children can learn and thrive, are often laden with ultra-processed food because of the absence of policies

to regulate the environment. Children are often also exposed to pervasive marketing of these unhealthy products. There are also few inclusive and safe physical activity opportunities for children and insufficient mental health support and treatment services for in schools. These are the issues that drive Healthy Caribbean Youth advocacy - issues that once addressed with policy backing and sustainable support – will make for healthier children and youth.

The support, mentorship and capacity building opportunities provided by the Healthy Caribbean Coalition and wider networks has been a key contributor to the success of Healthy Caribbean Youth. By prioritising youth engagement, youth allies within the HCC network have facilitated spaces that allow Healthy Caribbean Youth to amplify their voices and contribute to conversations about NCD action through participation in regional and international webinars, and composing articles and opinion editorials that centre on [meaningful engagement](#) of youth people in policymaking spaces, [the unique experiences and needs of young](#)

people living with NCDs, promoting the health of young people during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, children's right to health, transformational food systems, cultivating school environments that prioritise **mental health** and **physical activity**, as well as many other innovations that propose double and triple duty actions to tackle the world's most pressing issues.

Healthy Caribbean Youth have also had the opportunity to contribute to strategic documents that guide regional NCD prevention and control, and lead related region-wide campaigns, like the Now More Than Ever Campaign: We need to Protect our Children social media campaign, in consultancy roles.

Youth have been asked to serve on Advisory boards within international organisations including the World Obesity Federation, UNICEF and NCD Child, and participate in planning committees for global events including the Global Youth Meet on Health.

Healthy Caribbean Youth have been leading research, in exploring the unique **physical activity** and **food environments** in the Caribbean region, as well as managing the **accountability mechanisms** to track policymakers implementation of childhood obesity prevention policies and protocols in the Caribbean.

This sort of youth-driven advocacy would not be possible without safe spaces to craft the knowledge and skills across the spectrum of NCD prevention and control, and the freedom to shape our own campaigns and movements.

## What has been the key to Healthy Caribbean Youth's success to-date?

**Multisectoral Team.** Healthy Caribbean Youth believe in a whole-of-society approach to tackling childhood obesity. Membership consists of persons from all backgrounds - law, nutrition, physical activity, mental health, public health, education, statistics - creating a diverse group that can learn from and support each other.

**Funding.** Healthy Caribbean Youth benefits from having some leaders who are paid and have dedicated time to growing the team.

**Organisational Pillars.** Healthy Caribbean Youth's 3 pillars (advocacy, capacity building and networking) are key to ensuring that all activities are catered to shaping strong youth advocates who meaningfully engage in the advocacy spaces they occupy.

Healthy Caribbean Youth is an inspiring tale of what can grow from youth-allies and civil society leaders who truly value the youth perspective, creating safe spaces for young people to learn, make mistakes, ask questions, build confidence, and thrive within the Childhood Obesity Space.

## Bite Back 2030 – youth voices in policymaking spaces

Changes to the food system over the last 30 years are having a dramatic impact on child health. The UK's high streets are flooded with fast food outlets, television screens and social media bombard users with advertisements, and not enough schools are providing pupils with quality, nutritious meals. Right now, 1 in 3 children now leaves primary school overweight or obese which can lead to other major health problems later in their lives such as diabetes and heart disease. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has highlighted the injustices in the food system and sharpened the focus on the impact obesity has on health outcomes, but it has also given us an opportunity to deliver positive change.

Bite Back 2030 put young people at the forefront of national conversation about child obesity - because it's their voices which matter

the most. Bite Back 2030 empowers the voices of young people, those with lived experience of the drivers of obesity, to call for change. Bite Back 2030 also supports young people in delivering powerful, youth-led campaigns which drive change in the food environment. This means making healthier foods affordable, readily accessible for all, and using marketing and advertising to give healthy options a starring role in children's minds. By redesigning the food system, young people can protect the health of future generations.

Bite Back 2030's fresh approach has led to the UK Government announcing an end to advertisements of junk food both online and before 9pm on TV. The Youth Board Chair Dev Sharma realised during the first lockdown that he was seeing far more adverts for junk food than before the pandemic and went on to mobilise his friends and young people across the country to speak to their MPs while the Government was due to decide on the policy.

The passion and hard work of the youth voice paid off as they were listened to, and the UK

Government will be the first in the world to restrict junk food advertisements from Spring 2022.

The aim at Bite Back 2030 is to halve childhood obesity by 2030 by advancing the issue of childhood obesity, promoting child health and changing our food system. The youth voice must be at the centre of the conversation, so Bite Back is building youth-led campaigns and putting talented young people on national media to achieve change -including young people who have lived experience of being disadvantaged because of where they live and the lack of opportunity to be healthy to those in power. COVID-19 has pushed nearly 500,000 more children into food poverty and young people's voices will fail to be listened to unless we shift the focus onto their health. Young people can turn things around.

# 4 RESOURCES TO HELP YOU ON YOUR ADVOCACY JOURNEY

## YOUTH DECLARATION & CALLS TO ACTION

### Caribbean:

[We Need to Act Now to Protect Caribbean Children and Young People](#)

[A Civil Society Call to Urgent Action for the Caribbean to Accelerate Nutrition Policies for the Creation of Healthy Environments](#)

[Caribbean Congress on Adolescent and Youth Health Roadmap](#)

### Europe:

Read the [CO-CREATE Youth Declaration](#)

Drafted by eight members of the CO-CREATE Youth Task Force, the Declaration urges policy makers and stakeholders to address the challenge of adolescent overweight and obesity so that everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy life.

### Global:

Read the [GYM 2021 Youth Declaration](#)

The declaration was drafted after HRIDAY India's 4th Annual Global Youth Meet on Health. The conference co-organised with the World Health Organization Regional Office for South-East Asia addressed 'Meaningful youth engagement for leading action on Universal Health Coverage and Sustainable Development Goals'.

[A WHO-UNICEF Lancet Commission - A future for the world's children?](#)

## YOUTH SPACES

[Healthy Voices](#) is a website that provides young people with the necessary knowledge and advocacy tools to promote their positive engagement to address health-related challenges.

[Healthy Caribbean Youth](#) features voices and advocacy efforts from youth across the Caribbean

[NCD Child](#) is a global multi-stakeholder coalition championing the rights and needs of children, adolescents, and young people who are living with or at risk of developing non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Their resource hub provides research and tools on managing and advocating for the needs of children living with NCDs.

**Act4Food** focuses on amplifying the youth ideas and solutions in changing the world's food system.

### Listen to World Obesity's Youth Voices for Healthy Choices Podcast

Hosted by patient and student activist Faith Newsome, [this podcast](#) will take you on a journey around the world taking in stories from experts and young changemakers working to address childhood obesity. Faith is joined by Claudia Batz from the World Obesity to explore some of the challenges and solutions when addressing obesity, as told by young people on the front line in Portugal, Austria, India, Mexico, the Caribbean, and the UK.

The series is available on World Obesity's youth-oriented capacity-building platform Healthy Voices and is available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

## DAYS OF ACTION

### World Obesity Day 2021

World Obesity Day is celebrated annually on March 4th. World Obesity Day 2021 aimed to broaden the campaign audience, whilst

ensuring that advocates, policy makers and healthcare professionals had a message and moment that they could use to push for real change. World Obesity Day 2021 made a significant contribution to shifting the dialogue around obesity with policy makers and the wider public. The theme 'Every Body Needs Everybody' was chosen in November 2020 for its message of unity and common purpose, whilst also acting as a call to action for both individuals and groups.

### International Youth Day

International Youth Day is celebrated annually on August 12th. It is an opportunity to celebrate and mainstream young peoples' voices, actions and initiatives around the world and ensure their meaningful, universal, and equitable engagement.

### World Children's Day

The Child Rights Convention was adopted by the UN on November 20th, 1989. The day is often called the "birthday" of the Child Rights Convention and is an opportunity to celebrate and mark the importance of the special rights that children have.

## MESSAGING

### Use World Obesity's [Image Bank](#) of non-stigmatising imagery

World Obesity's image bank brings us one step closer to combatting weight-stigma by making it easier to choose appropriate photos when talking about obesity. The gallery of free-to-use images are unbiased, respectful and a great resource to use when calling out inappropriate use of imagery in the media.

### Writing Resources:

#### [Effective Email Communication](#)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Indonesia Youth Council for Tobacco Control [Guide for Meaningful Youth Participation in Tobacco Control](#)

[Healthy Voices Youtube Page](#)

# CLOSING NOTE TO YOUTH ADVOCATES

We are hopeful that this toolkit will assist you on your advocacy journey! Advocating for environments that support children's health and wellness is invaluable. Give yourself kudos for expressing an interest or even actively participating in this sort of advocacy work!

We'll be honest, the advocacy journey can be tough with unexpected challenges that may delay your work and cause you to rethink and reshape your advocacy strategy, but there may also be some game-changing opportunities that may accelerate your work.

You may not witness immediate results or achieve your goals within your pre-determined timeline but understand that meaningful change takes time. The policies and initiatives that you advocate for today will have a lasting impression on your generation and future generations to come.

Remember to be patient, enjoy the process, prioritise your wellbeing and reach out for support when you need it.

Lastly, know that you are part of a powerful group of youth advocates from around the world leading the charge!

We believe in you.

Take care,  
Claudia, Danielle, Kerrie, Margot, Pierre, and Tamie

*“Youth are at the forefront of the world’s most pressing issues – including childhood obesity prevention efforts and advocating for healthy environments. If we want to enact change at the local, national, regional and global level, we need to re-write the current narrative from one that is written for youth to one that is written by youth. Through this toolkit, we aim to support youth-driven advocacy efforts and make it easier for youth to stand-up for what they believe in, a fundamental human right?”*

Toolkit Team

## 6 ABOUT THE TOOLKIT TEAM

### Kerrie Barker

Kerrie is a young, West Indian, public health advocate with a background in global health and

management. She joined the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) in 2019 as a Project Assistant on their Childhood Obesity Prevention Project. Alongside this, she assists with the management of Healthy Caribbean Youth, the youth arm of the HCC.

Kerrie enjoys working with children and youth, and volunteers with other youth focussed organisations, outside of her role with HCC. She is an aquaphile, and if you can't reach her, she's probably in the water.



### Claudia Selin Batz

Claudia is an emerging public health professional and a youth advocate with 3 years of experience in global and public health, currently a Policy and Projects Coordinator at the World Obesity Federation and a Core Team Member of Young Leaders for Health. At World Obesity, she supports the dissemination, communication, and utilisation of outputs from 2 EU consortium childhood obesity projects (CO-CREATE & STOP), and the development of youth-friendly materials, briefings, and resources to help policymakers and others seeking to implement obesity-related policies in their countries. Claudia's work contributes to increased health literacy and elicits and brings the perspectives and skills of young people into the strategic design and delivery of health-related programs and policies. She is a member of the Young Forum Gastein network and is currently participating in the Salzburg Global Seminar Public Policy New Voices Europe fellowship program. She writes and speaks fluent Turkish.



### Pierre Cooke Jr.

Pierre is a youth advocate and fierce defender of children and human rights. He is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Law and hopes to practice on the international front. Pierre joined the HCC family in 2018 when he was invited to be a spokesperson for youth and youth issues on the team. He was subsequently appointed 'Youth Technical Advisor' in 2019.

Pierre is involved in various youth and community organizations in Barbados and the region. He also has an international reputation as a budding international law enthusiast and human rights youth advocate. He also enjoys reading, working out and visiting cafes.



## Tamie Marie

Tamara is a healthcare management professional with a keen interest in public health advocacy.



Born in the Nature Isle of Dominica but raised in the Helen of the West Indies, St. Lucia, she currently works at a hospital in New York but remotely volunteers with the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) and the Saint Lucia Cancer Society (SLCS). At SLCS, she supports digital awareness and advocacy efforts around cancer prevention. At HCC, she led the conceptualization of a campaign aimed to promote healthy food environments for children and young people and is part of the coordinating team for HCC's youth arm, Healthy Caribbean Youth (HCY).

## Margot Neveux

Margot is a Senior Policy Manager at World Obesity Federation. Margot holds a Bachelor of Arts in Global Health and International Comparative Studies from Duke University and an MPH from Imperial College London. Margot has been with World Obesity since 2018 where she oversees the organisation's global advocacy and childhood obesity portfolios. Dedicated to making the voices of youth more prominent in global NCD plans and responses, Margot has been actively working towards increasing youth representation and engagement in World Obesity's work through several projects and initiatives.



## Danielle Walwyn

Danielle is a health advocate and physical activity enthusiast from the beautiful twin-island state of Antigua and Barbuda. She is currently the Advocacy Officer of the GHAI Childhood Obesity Prevention Project at the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC). As the Advocacy Officer, Danielle works with the HCC Team in executing the regional obesity prevention project which builds support for the adoption of healthy food policies across CARICOM while also strengthening the voices of civil society and advocating for those who are most vulnerable. She is part of the coordinating team for HCC's youth arm - Healthy Caribbean Youth. Danielle holds a master's degree from Queen's University, Canada, with a specialization in Health Promotion. She is a certified fitness instructor who is passionate about getting people moving and takes every opportunity to remind everyone that every movement counts!



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Endnotes

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