



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

**HOW TO
INFLUENCE THE
DEVELOPMENT OF
QUALITY PHYSICAL
EDUCATION POLICY:
A POLICY ADVOCACY
TOOLKIT FOR YOUTH**



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United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

How to influence the development of *quality* physical education policy: a policy advocacy toolkit for youth

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Are you a youth activist? Are you committed to improving education and getting people active at the same time? If so, this quality physical education policy advocacy toolkit is for you!

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FOREWORD



The COVID pandemic provided a cruel illustration of the importance of physical activity. Death rates are higher among people with underlying health conditions like obesity, and there is also what some have called a parallel epidemic of mental health problems among those

forced into involuntary inactivity, particularly young people. For example, the US National Institute of Mental Health notes that, at 29.4%, young adults aged 18-25 years have the highest prevalence of any mental illness. Addressing these problems need comprehensive approach, but sports can make a great contribution.

Yet levels of physical activity were dropping even before the pandemic, with more than 80% of youth leading sedentary lifestyles. The situation is particularly worrying for adolescent girls: 84% of schoolgirls do not meet WHO recommendations on physical activity. Quality physical education is a low-cost/high impact action which yields dividends in health savings, educational outcomes and individual resilience. Participation in quality physical education lessons can reduce obesity by 30%, has been associated with 40% higher test scores, and can translate to a 30% reduction in depression and anxiety, particularly amongst girls and young women. It creates the virtuous cycle of increasing sports practice, and with it, contributing to a healthier society.

But young people have to empower themselves to improve their situation. At UNESCO, youth empowerment includes listening to what young people want, how they think they can achieve their goals, and identifying areas where our shared values and individual expertise and experiences can be focused to improve lives. We have seen time and again how you young people have the creativity, ideas and potential to make change happen – for yourselves, for your communities, and for society at large.

Like you, we often hear that “youth are the future”, but far less often: “so let’s listen to them before we make decisions that affect them”. Despite significant investment in grassroots youth engagement initiatives in recent years, young leaders around the world are telling us they still struggle to have their needs and perspectives included in formal policy development processes. And this despite the fact that youth participation in policy development has proven to increase the effectiveness and relevance of policy content, as well as to enhance implementation and impact.

This applies to policies intended to improve the health of young people and promote the activities that contribute to it. UNESCO’s *Quality Physical Education (QPE) Policy Advocacy Toolkit for Youth* has been developed, in partnership with youth, to address this gap in physical education programs, an activity that influences not only physical and mental health, but academic performance and social inclusion too.

The Toolkit provides practical tips for you, as young leaders, to advocate for and effectively contribute to the development of transformative physical education policy frameworks which respond to your needs and which align with policy outcomes more broadly in sport, education, health and equality frameworks.

We are confident that the *QPE Policy Advocacy Toolkit for Youth*, used with the other evidence-based resources in UNESCO’s unique QPE resource package, has the potential to accelerate COVID recovery efforts and help engineer a “new normal” which reflects the many perspectives and insights of youth alongside other stakeholder groups.

This is your opportunity to engage, take action and make your voice count.



Gabriela Ramos

Assistant Director General for Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO

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We would also like to acknowledge the leadership of Nancy McLennan who spearheaded all stages of this publication's development, as well as the commitment and contributions of Arilí Aguirre García and Victoire Aimé who assisted.

Equally, our utmost appreciation to the Toolkit's youth peer reviewers from the IOC Young Leaders Community, from UNESCO's Youth and Sport Taskforce, the Global Sports Week Youth Network, the Yunus Sports Hub,

and the SEED project: Babacar Djileh Dieng, Betsmara Cruz Lebron, Brianna Salvatore Dueck, Carolina Joly, Caroline Baxter-Tresise, David Thibodeau, Emilie Dejasse, Gabriela Matus Bonilla, Giulia Scacchi, Ishita Godinho, Jean-Claude Rugigana, Josefina Salas, Kim Jolyon Encel, Lakshman Rohith Maradapa, Laura-Maria Tiidla, Marisa Schlenker, Mathatho Manaka, Maureen Rosita Ojong Ebob-Besong, Ming-Tai Theo Chan, Niels de Fraguier, Oluseyi Smith, Paulina Fritz, Raluca Petre-Sandor, Rania Rahardja, Samantha Miyanda. Each of you provided us with inspiration, ideas and constructive feedback during the development process and we count on your continued engagement in the next phases of work.



TOOLKIT OVERVIEW: A CALL TO ACTION

“ As a young person, you have a major role to play. You can seize the opportunity to empower others while lifting yourself up to initiate policy change and make a positive impact. This toolkit will equip you with the right knowledge to foster change through the development of inclusive and quality PE policies. ”

Niels de Fraguier, Youth Advocate and IOC Young Leader, France

WHO?

This toolkit is designed to support young people advocate for and effectively contribute to the development of **quality physical education** (QPE) policy. Youth organizations and other civil society actors who work in youth engagement and/or education, physical activity and sport and who are not familiar with policy advocacy may also find the content useful.

INTERSECTIONALITY

- Term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to recognize multiple and intersecting forms of structural discrimination.
- An example of structural discrimination is the way policy processes or related institutions can exclude or marginalize people due to their individual identity (e.g. ethnicity, gender or socio-economic status).
- To counter structural discrimination, any inclusive policy advocacy campaign should promote the testimonies of those most marginalized (e.g. youth, women, LGBTQ+ community, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and/or rural constituencies) in the formulation of policy needs and proposed solutions.

WHAT?

This toolkit offers general principles for successful policy advocacy that can be adapted based on what best suits your national context and specific policy development processes. You will find sections presenting the value of youth engagement in policy development, tried and tested techniques to inspire impact-oriented advocacy strategies and practical checklists to navigate physical education (PE) policy development processes.

The content of the toolkit is particularly relevant for sport and QPE policy advocacy as it contains specific data on the benefits of investing, subject-specific resources and concrete examples from the [QPE policy revision project](#). The ideas and strategies outlined can also be used to support youth engagement in the development of overlapping policy frameworks e.g. health, education, gender equality.

Toolkit users are encouraged to take an **inter-sectoral and intersectional approach** to PE policy advocacy. Coalition-building across sport, education and health sectors will help pool limited capacities and ensure a coherent national vision in terms of policy design, commitments and budgeting. Inter-sectoral coherence will also maximize impact at the local and national levels.

The toolkit draws directly on the findings of UNESCO's Quality Physical Education Policy Project. You can learn more about the project on the dedicated [webpage](#), as well as in the other publications in this series (see below). Youth were key stakeholders in the national policy revision exercises carried out within the framework of the QPE Policy Project. The project evaluation highlighted the key contributions of inter-sectoral partnerships and participatory policy development processes in the elaboration of robust, inclusive and impact-oriented policy documents.

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“ Youth should be involved in all policy processes to ensure inclusive participation and innovative solutions. To achieve this, we need tools that enable us, as young leaders, to take our legitimate spots at the table with all the relevant stakeholders to discuss, advocate and adopt Quality Physical Education at all levels. ”

Laura-Maria Tiidla, IOC Young Leader, Estonia

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WHY?

The need for this toolkit was expressed during multiple consultations held with young people who called for practical tools to support their engagement with partners and policy-makers. To ensure relevance and reflect the spirit of inclusion advocated, toolkit content was developed in collaboration with more than 40 youth leaders, policy advocates and grassroots activists from more than 20 countries with expertise in youth, sport, education and health.

Including a diverse range of youth perspectives and testimonies in the development of the national quality physical education policy instruments contributes to the relevance of policy content. As demonstrated in UNESCO's QPE policy project, young people's active engagement in each national [technical working group](#) ensured policy objectives were in sync with local needs and responded to capacity gaps identified by students participating in physical education lessons.

PUTTING THE *QUALITY* IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION



Quality physical education is distinct from physical education. The main differences relate to frequency, variety, inclusivity and value content. *Quality* physical education places emphasis on **peer-led learning** and **rounded skill development** which can enhance educational and employability outcomes. It is also about **whole body health** which includes physical and psycho-social wellbeing. QPE supports students to develop the physical, social *and* emotional skills which define healthy, resilient and socially responsible citizens. For a more detailed definition, please see **UNESCO's QPE Policy Guidelines**.

USEFUL RESOURCES

You may find it helpful to refer to the following materials when developing national advocacy campaigns. These materials can also be shared directly with national stakeholders and via social media to help build momentum for your campaigns:

- [QPE Policy Brief: making the case for inclusive Quality Physical Education policy development](#), which presents the case for investment in quality physical education to policy-makers and provides concrete recommendations regarding the engagement of youth, alongside other stakeholder groups.
- [QPE Policy Guidelines](#) which are designed to support Member States in developing and consolidating inclusive policy and practice, to ensure the physical literacy of every girl and boy.
- [QPE infographic](#) which presents the key data around the broad-based benefits of participation in quality PE programmes.
- [QPE video](#) which illustrates how QPE can contribute to international education and health agendas, support skills-building and lifelong participation in physical activity.
- [QPE Policy Project: Analysis of process, content and impact](#) which is a technical document presenting an analysis of the results of the policy revision processes in 4 country-contexts (Fiji, Mexico, South Africa and Zambia).
- [QPE policy project webpage](#), which provides an overview of the policy project and contains direct links to all of the above resources.



INTRODUCTION

The next sections explain what is meant by policy advocacy, the reasons why youth engagement is vital to the development of impact-oriented policy frameworks, and present the main components of effective policy advocacy strategies.



QPE AS A LOW COST/HIGH IMPACT INVESTMENT

Sustainable development begins with active, healthy and physically engaged citizens. The importance of good health and the inadequacies of existing health infrastructures have been brought into sharp focus during the COVID pandemic. Addressing health gaps will be critical to recovery efforts.

Schools are a natural entry-point to transform behaviours related to healthy lifestyles and inclusive practice. As such, investment in an innovative and integrated delivery of education, exercise and good nutrition should also be considered as key components in recovery efforts.

COVID 19 has changed your lives in profound and myriad ways. As such, it is crucial that your voices are reflected in “building back better” post-COVID, particularly in the development of robust policy frameworks. By engaging in policy advocacy and development, you will be able to achieve more sustainability for your work and make sure our “new normal” makes sense for your constituencies.

KEY COMPONENTS OF INCLUSIVE, IMPACT-ORIENTED POLICY DEVELOPMENT

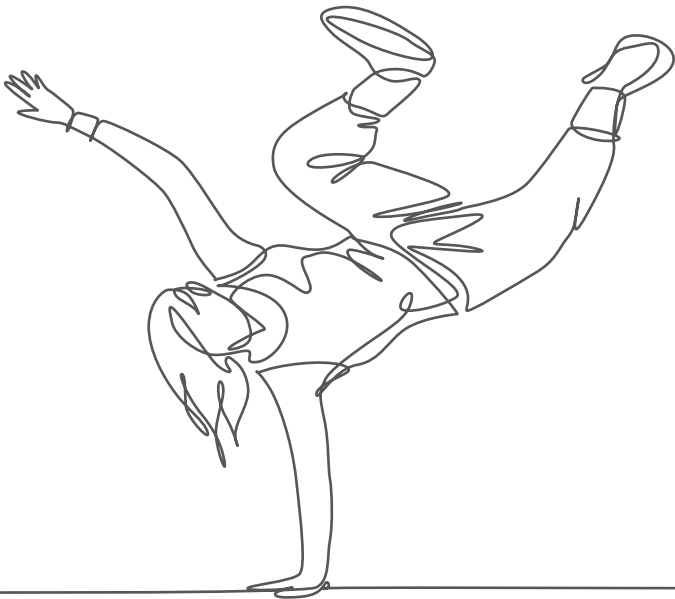
Local ownership: Policy should meet the local needs and work within local processes.

Participation: All relevant stakeholders should be encouraged to participate in the policy development process.

Inclusiveness: All should feel they have a stake in the policy, including representatives of disadvantaged populations.

Gender sensitivity: Policy development should be viewed through a gender lens.

Empowerment: Policy should empower at-risk or marginalized populations.



BENEFITS OF INVESTING

- ✓ Regular participation in physical activity **reduces the risk** of heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs);
- ✓ Investments in prevention and control of NCDs offer a **high return for countries at all income levels**, contributing to economic growth; in the long term, NCD prevention offers a higher return on investment than NCD control;



INVESTING IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
CAN SAVE UP TO

USD 2,741

PER YEAR PER PERSON

- ✓ Participation in daily physical activity including tailored programmes like QPE can **reduce obesity by 30%** and has been associated with 40% higher academic test scores;
- ✓ Sport and PE's benefits are associated with lower rates of anxiety and can translate to a **30% reduction in depression** and other chronic mental health conditions. It also contributes to lower levels of stress, increase self-esteem and confidence, reduce risk of suicide, substance abuse and risky behaviours;
- ✓ Quality PE contributes to developing **skills and values** which build socio-emotional, mental and physical resilience and support critical thinking;
- ✓ Quality Physical Education drives inclusion and supports empowerment of girls and persons with disabilities, encourages intercultural dialogue and understanding, and challenges stigma.

COSTS OF NOT INVESTING

- ✗ Insufficient physical activity is a **key risk factor for NCDs**;



PHYSICAL INACTIVITY
CONTRIBUTES TO

5 MILLION

PREMATURE DEATHS ANNUALLY

- ✗ Physical inactivity causes **more deaths than smoking**;
- ✗ Adolescent **girls are less physically active than boys**: 84% of schoolgirls and 78% of schoolboys do not meet WHO recommendations on physical activity which is fueling an inactivity crisis and spike in NCDs;
- ✗ Across the adult lifespan and in countries of all income levels, the **health burden** from NCDs is higher in women than in men which perpetuates gender inequality;
- ✗ Physical inactivity costs the global economy close to **70 billion USD: 54 billion in healthcare expenses and 14 billion in productivity losses**.



81%

OF STUDENTS 11-17 YEARS
WORLDWIDE DO LESS THAN 60
MINUTES OF EXERCISE PER DAY

What is policy advocacy?

Policy advocacy aims at shaping both policy processes and policy content through engagement (direct and indirect) with policymakers. This may mean establishing new legislative frameworks, working to enhance existing policies and/or challenging pieces of legislation that impact negatively on rounded youth development, educational outcomes, employability and/or healthy lifestyles. This may also mean organizing at community and/or local levels to advocate the value of participatory policy development which reflects local needs and addresses capacity gaps.

Policy advocacy is an important component of youth political engagement. Engaging in targeted policy advocacy with your peers means influencing the content of educational legislation, curricula and practice to make sure it is relevant and makes a real difference to your lives, your testimony of physical education and the skills you develop as part of a quality programme. It also provides an opportunity to alert decision-makers to policy gaps and active, inclusive teaching and learning practices. This information can enhance policy content and practice to accelerate socio-emotional skills acquisition, build psycho-social resilience and boost intellectual and emotional capital.



ASSESSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT: THE FIVE STAGES OF POLICY CHANGE

Policy advocacy is a dynamic, ongoing process. Have a look at the stages of responsiveness described to determine where your country is today. Understanding this will help you determine the focus of your first phase of advocacy, design an effective strategy and support a transition to the next stage of policy responsiveness.

For example, if you determine your country is at the 'access responsiveness' stage, then you know your first actions are advocating the broad-based value of investment in QPE to decision-makers and the need for your government to publicly pledge its commitment to the core components of QPE (see pages [24](#) and [27](#)). If your country has already recognized the value of quality physical education programming in official communications, but this hasn't been reflected in policy frameworks or practice, you are at the stage of 'agenda responsiveness'. This means you need to create further momentum to escalate QPE up the political agenda. This can be achieved through concerted advocacy with "like-minded" groups in youth, sport, education, and health sectors.



ACCESS RESPONSIVENESS = is your government willing to listen? Have decision-makers publicly stated commitment to the core components of quality physical education ([see page 9](#)) in press releases or other official communication?

Scale: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

AGENDA RESPONSIVENESS = is quality physical education included on the political agenda? Are ministries of sport, education and health cooperating to deliver quality physical education?

Scale: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

POLICY RESPONSIVENESS = were young people engaged at all stages (planning, development, implementation) of national physical education policy? Have your needs and the needs of youth in general been adequately reflected in your national PE policy instrument?

Scale: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

OUTPUT RESPONSIVENESS = has your national PE policy framework been enforced? If not, can you easily find information on why not or the next steps for implementation?

Scale: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

IMPACT RESPONSIVENESS = can tangible impact be connected to policy implementation? If not, could this weakness be connected to the need to revise content in a participatory way with a diverse range of stakeholders?

Scale: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 = NOT RESPONSIVE AT ALL 10 = EXTREMELY RESPONSIVE

What are the key components of effective policy advocacy?

Policy advocacy is most effective when accompanied by cohesive and tangible demands. To maximize policy influence and impact, strategies should foresee the engagement of different stakeholder groups alongside the structures, systems and decision-makers which sit behind policy development. Stakeholder groups in your country may include school-aged youth, parents, teachers, school principals, PE specialists, health specialists including nutritionists, education specialists, athletes, representatives of the private sector and public authorities.

If a policy advocacy campaign is to be effective, local needs and testimonies of young people, as well as education practitioners, should inform policy advocacy objectives from the outset. Advocacy strategies should be intersectional and tailored to each local context.



TRIED AND TESTED: TAKEAWAY FROM THE FIJIAN EXPERIENCE

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A bottom-up, intersectional approach worked very well during Fiji's QPE policy development process. The national QPE team's fluency in multiple languages, including *iTaukei* and *Hindustani* which are spoken mainly in the North of the country, ensured that traditionally marginalized ethnic groups and rural communities were closely engaged in the process and that their needs were reflected in the national policy document adopted.

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The Fijian national team also engaged high-level authorities, such as the Prime Minister, from the outset of the process. This facilitated the final validation of the policy content. In addition, weekly consultation meetings were held between the technical team and political decision-makers to discuss the progress made. This open and inclusive approach to communication built multi-stakeholder trust and supported a constructive dialogue between actors which will continue in the implementation of the policy.



Why should young people engage in policy advocacy?

Youth policy engagement is a central tool for individual and collective empowerment. This begins with your active engagement in community consultations and decision-making. Engaging at a local level ensures you are well informed and that your policy advocacy campaign reflects the needs of your peers. It also gives you a chance to acquire a wide range of relevant policy skills, particularly through participation in local decision-making processes and interaction with community leaders.

You, as young leaders, drive movements to empower your peers and ensure that the delivery of education is tailored to the varied needs and competencies of intersectional student populations. Concerted activism by young leaders and youth organizations has already created an awareness of the need to adjust teaching and learning practices to ensure no child is left behind. However, the *meaningful* engagement of young people in formal policy development processes remains inconsistent.

To systemize youth policy engagement and trigger transformative policy change in the area of *quality* physical education, strategic advocacy by youth stakeholders at local, national and regional levels is required. There is also a need to overcome disconnects between policy-makers and youth groups which marginalize your testimony in formal policy development processes. The first step to overcoming these disconnects is to better understand the potential of youth policy advocacy, the inclusion of your perspectives in policy frameworks and the practical steps which will support a systemization of this in national processes.

Policy advocacy provides numerous benefits. Strategic advocacy and policy engagement by young leaders, who are direct beneficiaries of the policy, means content will be focused on real needs. When young people engage in policy development, the diversity of respondents during public consultations, particularly from traditionally marginalized groups, also increases. This enhances policy focus, relevance and inclusiveness. It can also support the introduction of new and innovative education models which centre peer-led, active, values-based learning. These kinds of student-centered, future-proofed education models will be of significant value to the psycho-social resilience of young people.

When youth organizations or networks of young leaders engage in formal policy development processes, movement credibility (public and political) and access to decision-makers can also increase. This enhances the legacy and impact of campaigns, has the potential to sensitize large numbers of people and can result in the institutionalization of transformative understandings of education, activity and rounded development that recognize the potential of a “whole school” approach and lessons which are tailored to a diversity of students.

THE WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

The whole school approach involves addressing the needs of learners, staff and the wider community, not only within the curriculum, but across the whole-school and learning environment. It implies collective and collaborative action in and by a school community to improve student learning, behaviour and wellbeing, and the conditions that support these.

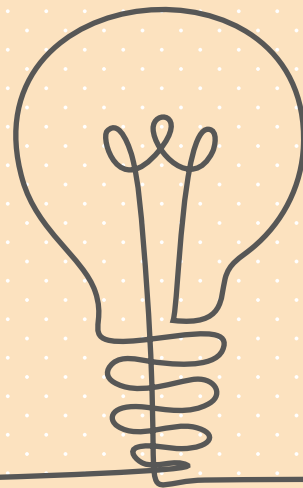
TRIED AND TESTED: TAKEAWAY FROM THE UN YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY CAMPAIGN

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Transformative change can be achieved in stages. Start with the small things: reach out to who you know; network with local and regional researchers, experts and institutions; advocate an open and collaborative ethos; build spheres of influence upwards until policy-making circles are accessed.

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In the context of the United Nations campaign Young People Today, numerous young people from Eastern and Southern Africa were engaged in advocacy efforts, consultation meetings, ministerial-level discussions and work in the High-Level Advisory Group. This resulted in an improved understanding of young people's needs and, specifically, enhanced provision and accessibility of sexuality education and health services.

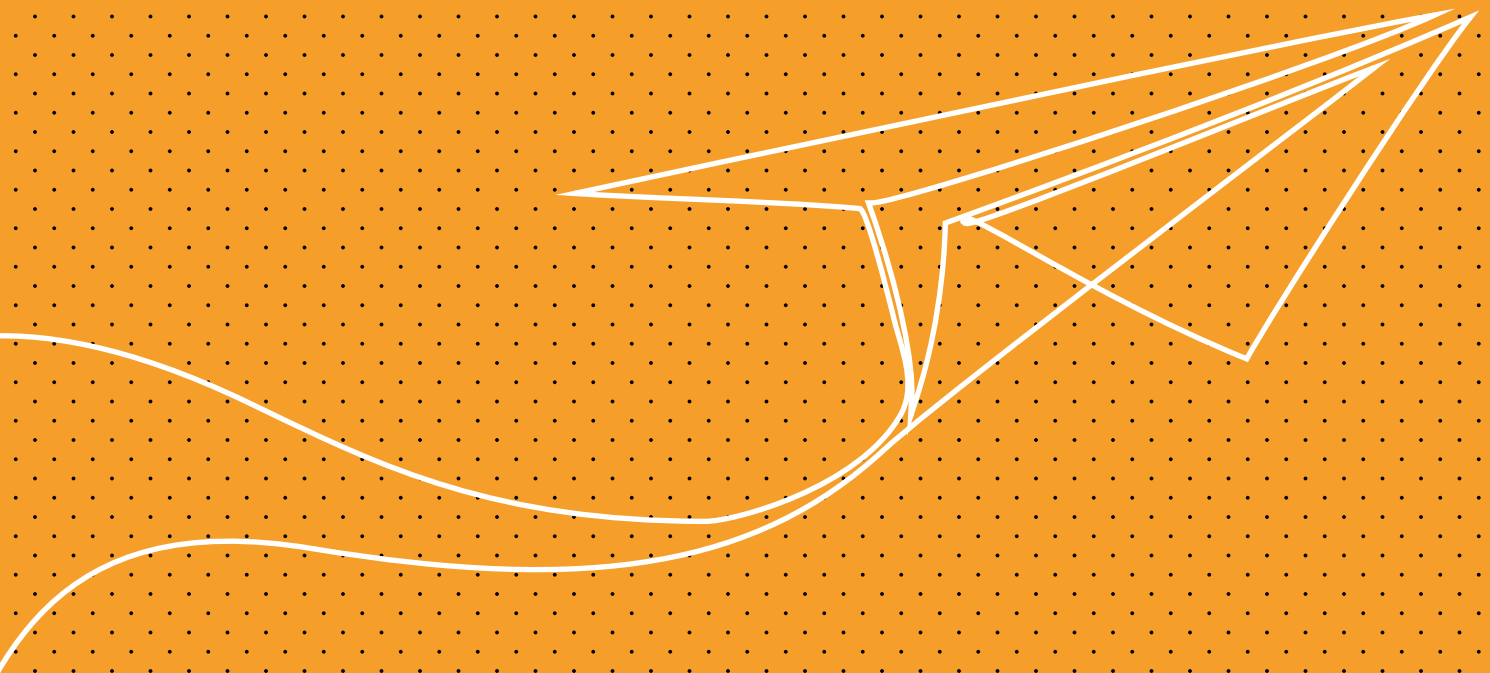


INCREASING ACCESS AND INFLUENCING POLICY OUTCOMES

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The next section will help you design policy advocacy strategies and strategically engage a compact of partners to maximize your impact and influence.

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To trigger transformative change, you need to **connect spheres of influence!**

“ It is important we keep in mind that multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work facilitates the implementation of policies, programmes, projects and activities. We cannot work alone, we must build a strong team so the impact is amplified. This toolkit reminds us that engaging with different partners helps us go further. ”

Gabriela Matus Bonilla, IOC Young Leader, Guatemala



LAYING A FOUNDATION FOR EFFECTIVE POLICY ENGAGEMENT

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Understanding your current political landscape is necessary to successfully influencing policy process and content. Knowing which roles, responsibilities, commitments, committees and constituents are relevant to physical education policy development will help you build consensus among diverse stakeholder groups. This consensus will support the public and political momentum needed for policy change and for policy-makers to operationalize your policy advocacy “asks”.

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Action: establish advocacy objectives

Effective policy advocacy centres on cohesive and tangible demands. Once you have assessed what the [QPE policy responsiveness](#) of your country is, the next step is to develop action-oriented advocacy objectives. Objectives should connect to the identified problem (i.e. absence of a policy framework, policy gap, poor implementation). You can find out more about how to determine this by reviewing how to [undertake a national situation analysis](#).

Framing objectives strategically is an effective way of achieving public and political backing. This means you should develop tailored messaging to engage as many different audiences as possible. This may mean broadcasting your messaging through multiple media (see pages [27](#), [37](#) and [40](#)). It may also mean framing or quantifying the value of investment in quality physical education in terms of extended education, health and employability outcomes as presented in the introduction and documented under [benefits of investing/costs of not investing in QPE](#). Equally, it may mean connecting your messaging to international frameworks e.g. the [United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the [WHO's Global Action Plan for Physical Activity \(GAPPA\)](#), [UNESCO's Kazan Action Plan \(KAP\)](#), and others.



Checklist:

What do you want to achieve (i.e. new legislative framework, revision of existing policy)?

Why is it important (i.e. the negative impacts of the current situation)?

What narratives need to change?

Which aspects of QPE are decision-makers already convinced of, if any, and which aspects are not visible in national PE policy?

What messaging would resonate with the public?

Checklist:

What current events, movements or international agendas can be connected to your objectives to strengthen impact?

Who can make it happen (objectives may focus on specific stakeholders)?

What do they need to hear (think strategic issue framing...)?

How can it be achieved (think concrete actions set against a realistic timeframe)?

Who can you start working with to kick-start this process?

HOW TO: MAKE A POLICY BRIEF WORK FOR YOU

- A policy brief is a useful reference point for any impact-oriented advocacy strategy as it can contain statistics and recommendations to reference in your campaign messaging.
- The QPE policy brief presenting the case for inclusive quality physical education policy development highlights the importance of investing in integrated sport-education-health vision building, the connections between a *quality* physical education policy and extended education, health and employability outcomes, and the necessity of horizontal and vertical partnerships, including with youth, at all levels of the policy development process.
- The value of young people engaging in policy development can be presented to governments alongside the [benefits of investing in quality PE](#). Connected data can be used as a basis for briefings and/or meetings with officials. You can refer to statistics referenced in this toolkit, as well as the *tried and tested* tips. It is also important to source examples from your own country context or region. This will ensure your campaign for national policy change is tailored to the needs you have identified in your consultations and mappings (see pages [21](#), [29](#) and [41](#)).
- The policy recommendations listed in the QPE Policy Brief can be used to frame your advocacy “asks”. They can also be used to propose concrete actions during working meetings or during the written consultation phase of the policy development process e.g. ‘engage young people, and other groups traditionally marginalized from formal policy development processes, via interactive, online and in-person consultations and events to enhance the relevance of national PE policy content and increase local ownership’.
- You can amplify your messaging by disseminating the policy brief to your networks and encouraging colleagues to advocate the same recommendations and evidence during meetings. This supports a cohesive campaign. You can also identify specific events or time periods where your government may be more receptive to policy recommendations from civil society groups e.g. during national consultations, during an educational policy summit, on international days such as World Teacher’s Day (October 5), after cabinet reshuffles, prior to or following national elections.
- A policy brief can also be used as a framework of analysis to undertake your own policy scan or [national situation analysis](#), to [write press releases](#), articles, blog posts and other public engagement on [social media](#).

TRIED AND TESTED: TAKEAWAY FROM THE ZAMBIAN EXPERIENCE

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A continuum of engagement throughout the policy development process means monitoring the impact or momentum of advocacy activities periodically or at specific junctures. By reflecting on and reassessing actions/objectives you will be able to identify areas that require more targeted efforts or new strategies altogether.

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For example, if not enough people are aware of an issue (e.g. lack of sufficient budget for infrastructure or inadequate measures for inclusive practice or need for specialized PE teacher training), you may want to engage media to reach a wider audience. You may also need to strengthen your support base by inviting more civil society organizations and/or members of the business community to join your campaign.

In Zambia, the media was an important advocate for the QPE policy prior to its validation at Government level. Having the support of the media ensured that the general public was aware of the policy changes, and related rationale, before the policy was implemented. This partnership between the government and media was initiated by inviting six representatives of national channels ([Zambia News Agency](#) and Prime Television) to a National Stakeholders workshop. Engagement with representatives from national media grew exponentially following this workshop to include local TV channels, as well as radio and press coverage.

Action: undertake a national situation analysis

A detailed mapping of existing political commitments, laws and policy frameworks can help determine the most appropriate path for change. This mapping, often referred to as a national situation analysis or a policy scan, means undertaking a critical evaluation of existing policy. Reading available policy documents and identifying gaps/strengths will support the development of policy alternatives. These, alongside an analysis of political will, should inform your advocacy strategy. Political will can be mapped by reviewing pledges, commitments in national strategies and plans, press releases and the workplans of relevant policy institutions. The QPE policy brief on making the case for inclusive quality physical education policy development can be used to guide analysis.

Desk research (i.e. a structured online search) is the easiest way to collect data on policy, capacity and political will. This information should be complemented by consultations (in-person, online, written, verbal) with different youth groups to connect gaps and needs with an **intersectional** lens. Partnerships with academics and/or research networks can support this process by gathering evidence, assisting with the analysis and developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for strategy implementation (see pages [33](#) and [34](#)).



HOW TO: GET POLICY-MAKERS TO LISTEN TO YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

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Each national situation analysis or policy scan should conclude with a series of **SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound)** recommendations which:

- Identify areas for improvement in each specific area (policy development, content, implementation)
- Set objectives for future policy priorities and strategies
- Propose indicators to measure policy change
- Draw on international good practice, conventions, declarations and recommendations

QUESTIONS TO DEVELOP SMART RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Which recommendations are feasible and most likely to be effective?
- What are preferred options and potential trade-offs?
- How will different options affect different population groups?
- What resources will be needed to implement each option?

Checklist:

What is the existing political and legal landscape (think commitments, conventions, laws, electoral cycles)?

What are the areas for improvement (policy development, content, implementation)?

What are the policy objectives? What do you want to achieve specifically?

How can you measure policy-change? (indicators)
You can consult the QPE Theory of Change model in the QPE Policy Project Analysis

Checklist:

What are the priorities of young people and youth organizations consulted? Do they vary according to a young person's identity (i.e. gender, disability, ethnicity, economic status, geographic position, religion)?

How do the testimonies gathered in your consultations connect to the identified policy problem?

Is there political will to revise policy or address policy gaps?

What commitments has your government made to improve quality physical education and/or undertake a whole government approach to sport education in schools?

Checklist:

Has your country ratified relevant international agreements and conventions which could be used as a framework for advocacy?

Do accountability mechanisms exist (working groups, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, inspectorates)?

Which actors could be interested in partnering to support your organization in mapping the national context (think of contacting universities, PhD students, research networks, thinktanks)?

Action: identify advocacy audiences and build coalitions

Effective policy advocacy should be targeted and tailored – there is no such thing as one size fits all. By identifying responsible authorities and stakeholder groups, you can identify who is accountable and who is interested in engaging. This is key to determining a collective course of action for a policy advocacy coalition. When deciding who does what, you should pay particular attention to powerful allies and opponents. This way, your future advocacy initiatives can engage them directly as active influencers and/or pre-empt their push-back.

Coalition building facilitates a joined-up response to the policy problem you have identified. A group of stakeholders advocating a cohesive and concrete set of policy recommendations has more potential to influence decision-makers. Trust can be built between organizations by sharing knowledge and being open to overlapping objectives. This is why your policy advocacy strategy should be inclusive, prioritizing a collaborative and open ethos between coalition members.

In Mexico, the national QPE team purposefully made connections with other projects, including Nike's [Designed to Move](#), which was adapted by UNICEF for implementation in schools in South Africa. These connections created a learning continuum between policy and practice.

Developing critical friendships with decision-makers and influencers can also support progress towards advocacy objectives and, ultimately, policy change. If you approach government officials and powerful sport-education-health influencers with evidence-based recommendations which aim at enhancing the participatory nature of policy development processes and present the benefits of a whole government approach to quality physical education you can initiate powerful insider alliances. This can create further opportunities for policy-oriented research and concerted advocacy which can deliver transformative policy change over time.

THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF STAKEHOLDER GROUP TO CONSIDER:

- **Primary targets** include *decision-makers* who have the power to make the changes you want: ministers of finance/youth/sport/education/health in charge of gender equality, elected officials, legislators, mayors etc.
- **Secondary targets** include *influencers* who have connections with decision-makers: business leaders, members of parliamentary committees or national education committees, representatives of policy institutions, educators, lobbyists, academics.
- **Tertiary targets** include *individuals and organizations who can create momentum* around the need for policy change and who may have overlapping agendas: members of civil society groups (youth networks, sport networks, health networks, education networks, BAME groups, inclusion activists, disability activists), media outlets and the general public.

HOW TO:

“WIN FRIENDS” AND CREATE MOMENTUM FOR POLICY CHANGE

Non-confrontational advocacy using an educational approach rather than direct critique can support critical alliance building and drive incremental, context-specific change in policy planning, development processes and in terms of accountable implementation.

Creating cross-sectoral and cross-party alliances can bolster support for an integrated youth-sport-education-health agenda and get decision-makers to listen. This includes open exchange with influencers and leaders who do not always share the same ideologies or objectives. It is only through collaboration with like-minded and oppositional stakeholders that transformative policy change can be achieved.

Youth-led integrated vision building between sport-education-health communities of practice will be fundamental to successfully achieving your QPE policy advocacy objectives. Sharing knowledge and strengthening cross-sectoral networks can facilitate a sense of solidarity and cohesive identity, support intersectional learning and build trust between youth-sport-education-health stakeholder groups.



Checklist:

Which individuals/organizations have a stake in policy change and which have a stake in maintaining the status quo?

Which organizations are working on similar or overlapping issues?

Are there existing policy advocacy coalitions which could be engaged?

What can each actor/organization contribute (expertise? advocacy? finance?)?

TRIED AND TESTED: TAKEAWAY FROM THE MEXICAN EXPERIENCE

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During the Mexican QPE policy revision process, coalitions were established with local NGO partners (“We want active Mexicans”) as well as the private sector (Nike Mexico – the Mexican Federation of Football, and the Carlos Slim Foundation) which proved highly effective in terms of project advocacy. Once the QPE communication campaign was launched, this coalition of partners from public and private sectors significantly increased social media imprints. Combining expertise from the coalition members also meant the QPE team were able to launch a series of advocacy tools to promote the importance of the policy revision and engage the public in the work.

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A video was produced, a series of articles were published and press releases were all developed collaboratively by the Ministry of Education, the National Institute of Public Health and the National Council for the accreditation of higher education (COMACAF) with input from the Carlos Slim Foundation and Nike.

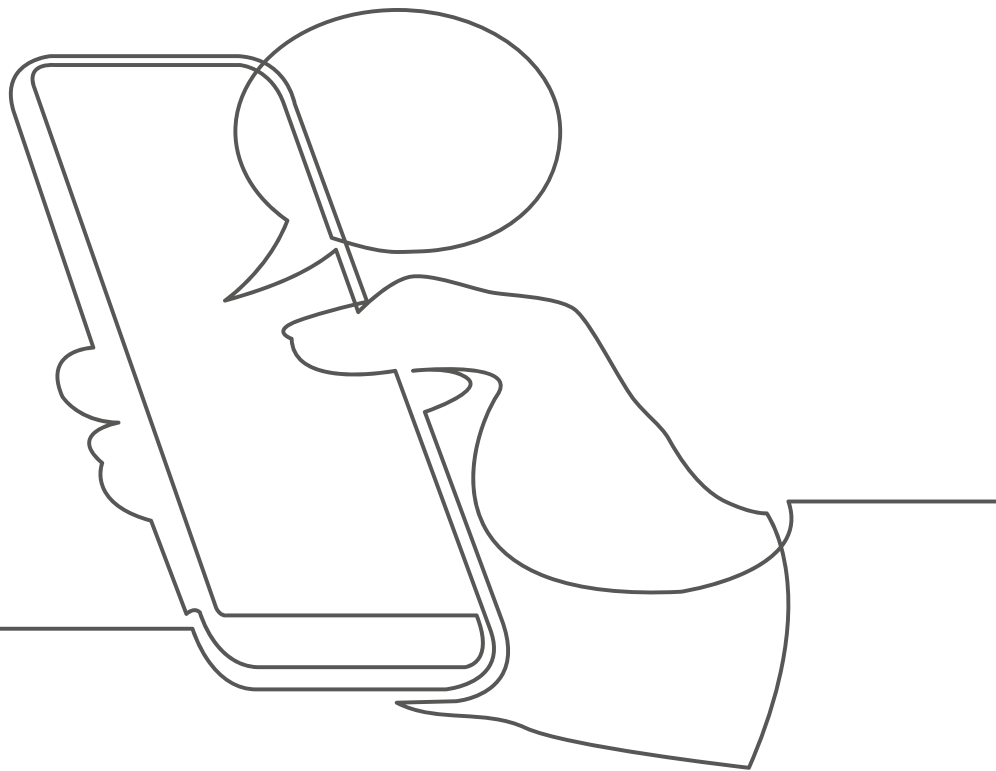
The diverse perspectives of the various stakeholders also helped identify policy gaps and provide solutions, including the adaptation of existing materials, curricula and opportunities for private sector investment in school-community pathways.

Action: use social media and online working tools to increase inclusivity and impact

Social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, are valuable tools to promote your campaign messaging, increase interest in quality PE and engage a diverse range of partners from public and private sectors. Having people who specialize in communications and or/social media marketing on your policy advocacy campaign team is always an asset.

Using shared content development platforms (e.g. Google Docs) and group organizing tools including video conference apps (e.g. Skype, Zoom) can also be a low-cost/high impact way of increasing your

reach and ensuring the content of your campaign is as representative as possible. Online content development platforms and teleconferencing software can be used to organize consultations, including with hard-to-reach populations, and to host trainings and webinars. These actions are all important in achieving an inclusive and participatory policy advocacy campaign. These platforms can also support knowledge exchange within your campaign team and with other like-minded groups. In essence, collaborative content development ensures a campaign's cross-cutting relevance, its intersectionality and its credibility.



TRIED AND TESTED: TAKEAWAY FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

In South Africa, the broad-based engagement of civil-society stakeholders and private sector representatives in the QPE policy revision process was maximized by the delivery of online training and grassroots consultations through a dedicated online platform. The use of social media was included in the project's communication strategy with the aim of increasing the visibility of the project goals. Other innovative ideas to promote and engage stakeholders included an #Active4life **magazine**, containing recommendations on healthy habits and related resources, which was launched in partnership with schools across the country.

Checklist:

Are there existing groups or social media campaigns which could be connected to your campaign?

Are there social influencers or communications experts who could be engaged in your campaign?

What online content development tools will best support your policy advocacy campaign objectives and what steps need to be taken to establish these?

Which social media platforms offer the best visibility for your policy advocacy campaign (think of connecting to existing Facebook pages and Twitter hashtags)?

HOW TO: ORGANIZE AND AMPLIFY ADVOCACY

Informal, in-person meetings can facilitate cross-sector alliances which build consensus, map mutual benefits of policy change, gather testimonies and help plot a common action plan to address identified policy weaknesses.

- Call “closed door” meetings with **primary and secondary targets** to present the QPE policy brief making the case for inclusive quality physical education policy development, analyze findings from the **national situation analysis** and propose ways of addressing legislative gaps.
- Organize a consultation workshop with youth-sport-education-health stakeholders.
- Host a focus group with students and education practitioners to ensure policy advocacy aligns with needs, particularly for vulnerable communities (e.g. girls, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities) and that the national situation analysis has not missed any key community issues. When possible, ensure that the communities identified as vulnerable take a leading role in designing focus group content, facilitating discussions and writing-up or validating outcomes.
- Establish roles and responsibilities for members of your advocacy coalition based on individual expertise and build non-hierarchical, intra-movement solidarity through diverse knowledge-exchange initiatives: coffee mornings, WhatsApp groups, video calls, workshops or webinars and conferences.
- Mobilize civil society groups, media outlets and the general public with educational campaigns on social media, the distribution of practical materials, roll-out of training sessions, press coverage (articles, interviews, opinion pieces, press releases) to launch a national debate. You should ensure messaging is inclusive and determined collectively in advance of any launch. Bringing multiple stakeholder groups behind your targeted messaging will create a tipping point for policy-level action. You could consult the QPE communication plan for inspiration.
- Join existing coalitions and/or launch a new alliance. Establish a collaborative action plan which draws on common objectives to minimize conflict, ensure effective advocacy and maximize limited resources (human and material).

- Try to mobilize project champions to promote your QPE advocacy “asks” via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc. These people can increase the reach of your work and key messages.
- Share dynamic photos of your policy-related activities on social media and/or with UNESCO HQ. These photos can be great advocacy material to be used to create traction with online influencers.
- Organize in-person and online events. This is a great way to facilitate knowledge exchange, strengthen networking and promote advocacy activities. Connecting with different stakeholders is the first step to convincing them of their important role in QPE policy development.



Youth participation transforms policy planning, process and content

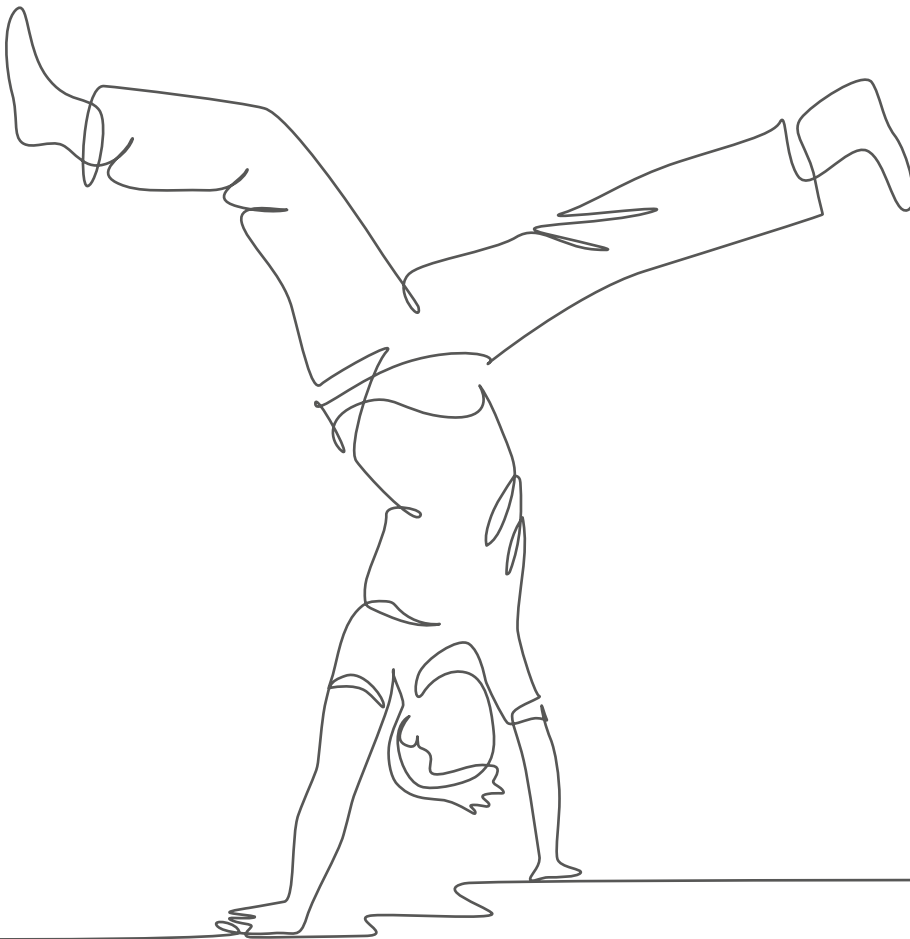
Making impact-oriented contributions to your national policy development means operationalizing your expertise and connections to transform policy thinking, process and content. This is your opportunity to ensure national processes of consultation are inclusive, informed by young people's experiences and testimonies and reflective of international good practice.

The "identity", structure and tactical approach of an advocacy campaign connects directly to its impact on policy. Policy advocacy campaigns which engage both professional movement organizations and individuals are more likely to impact policy. A "power up/power down" model and the democratic allocation of leadership responsibilities on a revolving basis can reinforce a sense of campaign solidarity and cohesion which, in turn, contributes to political influence. It also creates a broader sense of ownership and reflects the kind of participatory approach your policy advocacy campaign aims to promote.

THERE ARE NUMEROUS WAYS YOU CAN MAKE YOUR MARK:

- Organize consultations (online, in-person, written) and focus groups with marginalized stakeholders to increase the diversity of people participating in the policy development process. By doing this, you will ensure the policy reflects the concerns and needs of vulnerable groups. Be creative in your approach to engagement. This may mean producing crib sheets or graphic versions of feedback forms to engage persons with disabilities or with differing levels of education.
- Advocate, negotiate and facilitate the direct engagement of all young people, particularly vulnerable student groups, in formal policy development mechanisms. Including a range of perspectives will hone policy content and increase relevance.
- Lead alliance building between youth-sport-education-health stakeholder groups to present a cohesive case for change and assure a joined-up response during consultation phases. This includes coordinating written evidence, initiating collective conversations and encouraging a cross-fertilization of ideas between groups which are not traditionally **aligned**.

- Participate actively in institutional mechanisms including cross-party groups, parliamentary committees and working meetings which are concerned with the development of a new policy/ revision of the existing policy. Being present in these groups will provide an opportunity to present evidence regarding legislative gaps, practical options for strengthening legislation and innovative models for QPE programming. You can refer to the evidence-based recommendations in the QPE Policy Brief on making the case for inclusive quality physical education policy development to shape your contributions.
- Facilitate the input of international expertise during the policy consultation phase. Associating your policy demands with international expertise can increase credibility and traction. An outward looking approach can also enrich national movement expertise, help anchor policy advocacy in good practice and evidence the positive results of a whole government approach to the development of quality physical education policy. For example, during the QPE policy revision process in Fiji, engaging the Japan Sport Council as a peer reviewer of the first national QPE policy proved successful. Among other things, Japan advocated the importance of setting evaluation criteria for PE as a school subject, the need to add clarifications around educational goals tailored to each grade level, and the value of highlighting linking learning outcomes to other subjects. All these recommendations were included in the PE policy adopted by the Fijian government.



HOW TO: INSTITUTIONALIZE YOUR AGENDA

- Sometimes political traction is the result of targeted and strategic campaigning. Sometimes it is about being ready to take advantage of “windows of opportunity” to accelerate impact. “Windows of opportunity” include a major political reorganization, cabinet reshuffle, favourable world events, sea change in public opinion. Keep your options open and be ready to make any scenario work for you.
- Engage the media and general public in “teachable moments” to influence government priorities and actions. “[Teachable moments](#)” can be used to strategically broadcast your message about the need for integrated youth-sport-education-health vision building and the benefits of investing in *quality* physical education to a wide range of stakeholders. This might mean social media campaigns, the development of infographics or videos, interviews with journalists and/or press releases. Messaging should be educational rather than confrontational, using a specific incident or public event to highlight gaps in existing policy frameworks and/or broader benefits of integrated youth-sport-education-health policy praxis.
- Create institutional gateways between young leaders, youth organizations and government bodies. This might be the strategic secondment of personnel to policy institutions or putting yourselves forward for political positions, sitting on national education committees and/or actively participating in relevant national policy networks in the fields of sport, education and health.
- Be open and collaborative. Learn from each other and from previous actions both positive and negative. This means making the effort to share information, leadership and credit. This deliberate deployment of collectivity not only maximizes limited resources (human and material) but amplifies messaging and reflects an emancipatory and inclusive advocacy goal.
- Keep engaging and advocating after the quality physical education policy instrument is adopted. Robust legislation must be accompanied by rigorous strategies for implementation which include allocated budgets, outreach and communication initiatives and training for a diverse range of actors from youth, sport, education, youth and health sectors (for more information see the [QPE Guidelines](#)).



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We hope the content of this toolkit empowers you to launch an effective PE policy advocacy campaign in your country. Your voices and perspectives are key to any positive, transformative change!

Good luck and remember to share your experiences with us via sport@unesco.org and on social media via the hashtags [#QPE](#) [#Active4Life](#) [#QPE4Life](#)

QPE RESOURCES:

- [QPE Policy Brief: making the case for inclusive Quality Physical Education policy development](#)
- [QPE Guidelines](#)
- [QPE infographic](#)
- [QPE video](#)
- QPE Policy Project: Analysis of process, content and impact
- [The QPE policy project webpage](#)

