Youth Employment Advocacy Initiative

A guide for youth advocacy in Pacific Island Countries

Compiled by Vivian Koster

The YEA! Initiative was a joint partnership between the Pacific Youth Council and its ten National Youth Council members with PLP, SPC, ILO, UNICEF, and CYP.
Acknowledgements:

PYC would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following organisations to the YEA! Initiative:


We also acknowledge the contributions of the following people to the compilation of this guide:

### Abbreviations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CROP</td>
<td>Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific</td>
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<td>CYP</td>
<td>Commonwealth Youth Programme</td>
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<td>FOC</td>
<td>Forum Officials Committee</td>
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<td>FRSC</td>
<td>Forum Regional Security Committee</td>
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<td>I.C.E</td>
<td>Information, Communication and Education materials</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International labour Organisation</td>
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<td>NYC</td>
<td>National Youth Council</td>
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<td>PIFS</td>
<td>Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat</td>
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<td>PLP</td>
<td>Pacific Leadership Programme</td>
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<td>PPAC</td>
<td>Pacific Plan Action Committee</td>
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<td>PYC</td>
<td>Pacific Youth Council</td>
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<td>SPC</td>
<td>Secretariat of the Pacific Community</td>
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<td>TOR</td>
<td>Term of Reference</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children and Education Fund</td>
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<td>YEAI</td>
<td>Youth Employment Advocacy Initiative</td>
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Introduction:

The purpose of this guide is to assist young people, youth groups and youth-led organisations advocate for issues they feel are important and deserve to be on national, regional and/or international agenda. It is based on lessons learnt from the Youth Employment Advocacy Initiative (YEAI) of the Pacific Youth Council. The aim of this publication is to offer practical advice and basic tools that can be used in advocacy work.

Young people in Pacific Island countries, like those elsewhere, have for years decried lack of youth voice both in government and in civil society. A prevailing belief is that issues important to young people are not considered, and if they are, it is in token fashion, usually to check off the ‘youth involvement/engagement’ box. The YEAI challenges this belief. It lays down the gauntlet to young people to engage themselves in issues by using their own knowledge, skills, creativity, and energy. It recognises that the road is not easy but it is negotiable. Rather than allowing tokenism to occur, young people can themselves be involved in advocating issues.

Defining Youth in the Pacific Islands

Youth is both an age criteria and a social construct in Pacific Island countries. Each country has its own definition of youth and the age range can extend from 13-45 years. National youth policies usually provide both an age range and allocation for the social status of youth in the country. The latter generally involves elements such as being unmarried, not having children, unemployment, or being a student. This is a shifting definition in that society or the community will determine a person’s status based on what it sees as acceptable. For example, an unemployed person of 18 years with a child may be seen as an adult because they are a parent. On the other hand, a 40 year old unmarried, unemployed and childless person may be regarded as a youth.

Understanding the definition of youth in Pacific Island countries is important as it explains the make-up of youth groups and youth-led organisations. This can impact power relations in the group and determine who takes the lead role in advocacy work.

How does this Guide Work?

There are four parts to this Guide for Youth Advocacy in Pacific Island Countries.

Part One provides an overview of advocacy work. It provides guidance on getting started in advocacy work, and ensuring your message is delivered. It also looks at the benefits and obstacles of conducting advocacy work. Lastly, there are some notes on policy advocacy work in Pacific Island countries.
Part Two introduces the YEAI Initiative and provides a guided tour to the various elements that contributed to youth employment being on the agenda for the 2011 Pacific Forum Leaders’ Meeting in Auckland, New Zealand.

Part Three introduces basic tools that can be used by young people, youth groups and youth-led organisations for advocacy work. The first tool comprises two self-assessment questionnaires to test your and your group’s readiness to undertake advocacy work. It should provide you with an idea of those strengths that you can build on and those areas that need to be strengthened. The second tool is a role pyramid. This should help you recognise and decide what role you will play in the advocacy work. The final tool is a network map to help you find your partners in advocacy work.

Part Four offers some concluding remarks on advocacy work in Pacific Island countries.
Part One: The Big Challenge – Being the Advocate

This Guide focuses on getting young people to provide themselves with a voice. It is about representing ourselves in the issues that affect us. It is about building the knowledge and the skills needed to effectively participate and engage in decision-making and in implementation of policies and programmes.

Advocacy is a process. It is about influencing change. This change can be in your youth group, your community, your district or province, your country, and internationally. It is about influencing change in people, in policies, and in practice.¹

Advocacy is about communication. It is about getting your message across clearly, concisely, and informatively. It is speaking, writing and acting on an issue.

Advocacy can be done alone, in a small group, or by a network of people and groups.

Advocacy is both exciting and routine. It is effective and time-consuming. It is about being and acting confidently. It is commitment and consistency.

Advocacy is dynamic, responsive and inclusive.

Getting Started – The basics

Your first basic step in advocacy work is research.

You may be passionate about an issue but that passion must be backed by knowledge. Research will help you identify the problem or core issue and possible solutions. It will also tell you what is being done in the area, in particular, national, regional and/or international efforts targeting your problem or issue. This will help identify the gap areas and therefore can provide possible areas for you to concentrate your advocacy work. It will also allow you to see what methods or approaches have been or are being used and whether this is working or not. This will strengthen the design of your intended advocacy work. As a result of good research, you will be able to provide an informative message, and it will also answer questions that may be asked about your ability to advocate on the issue.

You do not need a university degree to conduct research. We research everyday – we ask questions and find answers. Speak with young people and with your community, read the newspapers, listen to the radio, watch the television news, read pamphlets and brochures, use the internet, and read books in your local library. Record what you have learnt – write it down. Be sure you know what procedures must be followed in community meetings, in government offices, in parliament or in regional and international organisations. Do not assume anything – be very clear about your issue and about procedural requirements.

¹ See TearFund International Learning Zone (www.tilz.tearfund.org) for more information on advocacy.
If your group or organisation is able to secure funding for in-depth research, be very clear about what you want to find out. Your funding proposal will require you to justify your application – be clear about what you want to know, why you want to know it and when you want the information.

*Your second basic step in advocacy work is networking.* You do not need to be alone in your advocacy work. There will be others who are interested in what you are doing. These could be other people, other youth groups, your community, local and international organisations, and international development agencies like the United Nations. Networking allows you to pool your resources – your human resources, your knowledge and your financial resources in particular. It can provide a sounding board for your ideas and an opportunity to learn from others experiences. It also increases awareness of your issue. As you progress in your advocacy work, your network will grow.

*The third basic step in advocacy work is capacity building.* It is very important that you take a realistic look at your group’s skills. Recognise what skills you have and what skills you need. Seek advice and training. This is where your network can play a big part. The training can be an awareness programme on the issue, a sharing of research findings, and/or public speaking skills. If people have the capacity to actively and confidently engage and participate in decision-making then effective change can take place.
Delivering the Message

There are a variety of methods to getting your message out. We have already mentioned some such as awareness raising and networking. Mobilising young people and other youth groups is also important. It provides numbers in terms of getting the message out and is also an indication of support for the advocacy work.

Another important method is the use of media. This is both traditional media such as having your advocacy feature in newspapers, television or on radio; and modern media such as social networking websites, email discussions and text messaging. There is also the development of I.C.E materials such as posters, t-shirts, and wrist bands to name a few.

Lobbying is another method to delivering your message. You can lobby your community, government officials, and parliamentarians for support. You can set up meetings, send emails, and write letters to these people. You will share the information you have, and provide a clear position on the issue you are advocating.

Have a champion. This is someone who has a public profile and is respected. A champion can be the most effective method for getting your message across to as many people as possible. It can also positively impact the organisations and institutions that are willing to work with you. Your champion must be informed not only of the issue but also of the position you are taking. Do not assume that they will know your issue. Provide that information for them.
Benefits of Advocacy

Advocacy allows young people an avenue to communicate their ideas and needs.

Advocacy for young people is about taking part in decisions that influence and affect their lives. It offers a voice to all youth, particularly those who are marginalized and vulnerable.

Advocacy empowers young people to understand the world of decision making, its processes and structures of power and authority. It is about supporting the rights of youth to participate in the political, social and economic development of their community and country.

For Pacific Island countries, advocacy work is a chance to build a cadre of engaged young people committed to being agents of change, not just recipients of change.

Obstacles to Advocacy

There are many issues affecting young people of Pacific Island countries. However, opportunities to engage or influence the attitudes, policies and systems that govern their lives are limited.

Young people must negotiate general cultural norms that dictate that a young person be submissive and silent. A young person is expected to ‘know their place’. They must also struggle with stereotypes such as being ‘trouble-makers’ and ‘carefree’. Young people are also seen as lacking experience and credibility in general.

Another obstacle to advocacy work is lack of knowledge on issues and on conducting the work. This is why research is so important. Good research and training does not leave any ‘weak’ areas for critics to pinpoint.

Some notes on policy advocacy work in Pacific Island countries

There are two levels for policy advocacy work in Pacific Island countries – the local and the regional level.

The local level involves your government, in particular the ministry responsible for the issue you are advocating. It is important to be in regular communication with this ministry.
The majority of Pacific Island countries have similar government decision-making structures.

- The highest level of policy and decision making in the country. They enact legislation that are presented to them by the Prime Minister and the government.
- As is the case with the Westminster system the PM is the leader of the country. They are the last gatekeeper for national policy. With their approval motions are put forward to cabinet or parliament for discussion, passing and enacting.
- Each ministry is specialized. They are required to present to the PM progress and proposed changes required in policy and or law.
- The Minister’s right hand person. Usually responsible for the operations/day to day decision making of the Ministry. They usually have the Minister’s ear and is the Minister’s gatekeeper.
- The Directors/Chief Executive Officers oversee the programme/thematic areas within the Ministry’s scope of work.

Step 1: Know all there is to know about the issue in your country and what work is being done to address it – this includes policies, projects, working groups, and research.

Step 2: Build a relationship with your Ministry and establish contact points. If you are an organization, a good starting point would be to make a presentation to the Ministry about the work you do.

Step 3: Develop your policy paper (taking the advice of Ministerial contacts) and make the submission through your contact points.

The regional level involves the Pacific Islands Forum. While there are many intergovernmental organisations in the Pacific Islands region, these are largely technical bodies. **The Forum on the other hand is not only a political and policy-making body but the only regional intergovernmental organisation which meets at Leaders’ level.** Getting your issue supported and endorsed at the Forum Leaders’ Meeting means it becomes part of the region’s priorities for development in the upcoming year. National government mandates are influenced by development priorities agreed to at the Leaders’ Meeting. Donor agencies also take their cue from the Forum Leaders’ communiqué. For civil society this means that funding may be made available for that sector. The principles of regional cooperation and integration upheld by Forum member countries ensure that at least for the upcoming year, implementation on all priorities will commence and its progress reviewed.
Part Two: The YEA! Initiative

The Youth Employment Advocacy Initiative (YEA!) was born in November 2010 at a meeting of 6 Pacific Island national youth councils’ convened in Samoa by the AUSAID Pacific Leadership Programme. The purpose of the meeting was to look at what the situation for young people was on the ground and to determine actions that could be taken. Delegates from Samoa, Niue, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Tonga identified youth employment as the key issue. They decided that the first step in tackling the issue was to advocate its importance to island leaders. Tuvalu and Vanuatu national youth councils volunteered to be flag countries for the YEA! It was also decided that advocacy would be spearheaded by the Pacific Youth Council – a regional non-governmental youth organisation. In a nutshell, the YEA! Initiative worked toward securing endorsement and support for addressing youth employment at the highest level of policy and decision making in the region, the Forum Leaders’ Meeting.

In December 2010 a partners’ meeting was called to begin the planning for YEA! The partners involved were Pacific Youth Council (PYC), Pacific Leadership Programme (PLP), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and UNICEF. At this meeting it was decided that an advisory committee would be formed to guide the PYC in its work, and a coordinator would be hired to ensure the success of YEA! The Advisory Committee comprised representatives of PLP, SPC, UNICEF, International Labour Organisation (ILO) as the lead UN organisation on employment, and a technical specialist with expertise on the Forum Secretariat.

In February 2011 PYC held its Leaders Forum for the Presidents’ of its 10-member national youth councils in Suva, Fiji. It was an opportunity to introduce the YEA! There were also skills training sessions and information sharing by partners to the YEA! The technical
specialist also presented information and a map to negotiating the Pacific Islands Forum. It was also noted that the date for the Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC) meeting had been released, 2-3 June 2011 (the technical specialist was able to get this information). The FRSC was identified as a key committee for YEA! as youth employment is firstly a security issue. Importantly too is the FRSC is the pathway to the Forum Officials Committee (FOC). The FOC is the governing body of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the gatekeeper of policy issues placed on the Forum Leaders’ Meeting agenda. There are a four ways to get on the Forum Leaders’ Meeting Agenda: Ministerial meetings, the Forum Officials Committee, the Pacific Plan Action Committee, and through country initiatives. It is important therefore to know when these committees and ministerial meetings occur. It was decided that the first option for the YEA! Initiative was to go through the Forum Officials Committee which was only accessible via FRSC. Knowing the dates for the FRSC meeting meant that the YEA! timeline could be adjusted if need be.

In February 2011, the ILO organised the YEA! Initiative retreat in Sigatoka, Fiji. It was an opportunity for the partners, advisory committee, and the YEA! coordinator to gather information and undergo training. A key resource person was the technical specialist who mapped out avenues available to get YEA! on the Leaders’ agenda. At this meeting a timeline and an advocacy strategy were developed. At this point too, moves had begun to hire a consultant to undertake a regional desk study on youth employment and produce country reports on Tuvalu and Vanuatu. A research team was identified and hired from the University of the South Pacific. A specific Terms of Reference (TOR) with timelines was agreed to between the YEA! coordinator and the team. One of the requirements was the provision of drafts to the Advisory Committee for commentary and revision if necessary.

In March 2011 the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) and ILO held a Pacific Region Conference on Investing in Youth Employment in Port Vila, Vanuatu. One of the outcomes of this Conference was the finalisation of a Youth Employment Strategy. It was a good opportunity to launch the YEA! Initiative, especially as Vanuatu was one of the flag countries. The YEA! coordinator, a PYC Board member, and the technical specialist also delivered skills training to the Vanuatu National Youth Council on youth employment, public speaking, and lobbying. This training was then put into practice by conducting country advocacy with the Ministries of Youth, Labour and Foreign Affairs. The latter was important as the FRSC, PPAC and FOC were attended by foreign affairs people either from the Ministry or by its representative in Fiji – the high commissioners and ambassadors. The National Youth Council (as part of its training) had been asked beforehand to make arrangements with the respective directors, permanent secretaries and ministers. At this time the date for the FOC meeting was released – August 2011.

In May 2011, PLP held its Annual Partners Convention in Brisbane, Australia. Among the delegates were the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum and the Director General of the Secretariat of Pacific Community. PLP had also invited their national youth council
(NYC) partners to the Convention. PYC together with the YEAI coordinator ensured that the NYC delegates were prepared with information on youth employment to lobby the Secretary General and Director General. They also prepared the youth advocate who was to deliver a keynote speech. This was an added bonus as she was part of the YEAI research team. She provided the opportunity to have YEAI shared directly and with all delegates. The NYC delegates held dialogues with the Secretary General, the Director General, and with members of the private sector that were present.

By June 2011 the research team had completed its work and a policy brief was prepared, with the advice of SPC, for submission to the FRSC. A key element of this policy brief was that it followed the format of the Forum papers, and left little room for revision. The technical specialist had advised the format. She indicated that the more concise the paper the less likely it will be left out of the FRSC meeting papers and the Leaders’ Meeting papers if it should go that far.

The capacity building of NYCs had continued through the YEAI process with Tuvalu, Tonga, and the Solomon Islands receiving that training. The CYP, whose offices are in Honiara partnered with PYC to provide training in the Solomon Islands. It also lobbied the Solomon Islands government for support at the upcoming Forum meetings. Other countries were also lobbied at home by the respective NYCs and through their embassies in Suva. The latter was an important feature of the lobbying as PYC learnt that those countries with embassies or high commissions in Fiji usually sent their ambassadors or high commissioners to the Forum meetings.

In June 2011, after lobbying and providing all the information needed, Tuvalu sent a request to submit an agenda item to the FRSC. The prevailing practice was that a country could request an item placed on the agenda. The other countries that had been lobbied were prepared to support this request and to support the placement of youth employment on the Leaders’ Agenda. However, Tuvalu’s request was denied. Therefore, Plan B had to be put into effect – going to the PPAC meeting.

In consultations with SPC it was decided that they as members of the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) would submit the policy brief for discussion at the CROP Heads meeting in August 2011. The papers from CROP were sent to PPAC for discussion then onto FOC. The CROP meeting was a week prior to the PPAC meeting which was itself a week prior to the FOC meeting. The policy brief was discussed and accepted at all three meetings and youth employment got put on the 2011 Forum Leaders’ Meeting Agenda.

The 2011 Forum Leaders’ Meeting was held in September in Auckland, New Zealand. To visibly impact Leaders’, the PYC produced t-shirts with the message ‘Say Yes to Youth Employment’. These t-shirts were included in the Leaders’ information packs, and were worn by the YEAI partners present at the Forum Officials’ Side-event. The Side-event had three sessions of which one was Youth. A panel discussion on youth employment was held.
The panellists were the Director General of SPC, a representative from ILO, Vanuatu NYC, the UNICEF Youth Ambassador, a government representative from Nauru, a Pasifika youth representative from New Zealand, and Mr. Tana Umaga as a rugby legend and champion of young people. The UNICEF and SPC State of Pacific Youth 2011 Report was also launched at the Side-event.

The Forum Leaders’ Communiqué for 2011 included the following on youth:

Regional Youth Initiative:

24. In welcoming the 2011 Urban Youth in the Pacific: Increasing Resilience and Reducing Risk for Involvement in Crime and Violence report prepared by the Forum Secretariat and UNDP, Leaders acknowledged the need for greater action in mainstreaming youth issues nationally and regionally, increasing employment and other meaningful opportunities for youth, and including the voice of youth in decision making. Leaders endorsed the Key Guiding Principles contained in the report. They also commended ongoing and complementary work in the region on youth and conflict issues, including the recent Wansolwara Youth Peace-building Conference and the important matters highlighted in their Statement.

25. Leaders underlined the important role of government, the private sector and technical and vocational training institutions in urgently addressing youth unemployment. Leaders also recognised the need for the development of a regional framework for youth employment, the contribution that labour mobility offers, and emphasised the importance of having annual labour and employment statistics that are disaggregated by gender and age. Leaders also highlighted the vital importance of sport in assisting young people to stay healthy, contribute to society and develop into leaders of their communities. In this regard, Leaders welcomed Australia’s Sports Outreach Programme.
The YEA! Map

Nov. 2010: Youth Leaders Meeting in Apia
- NYC Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Niue.
- Youth employment as key issue!

Dec. 2010: Partners Meeting, PYC, PLP, SPC, UNICEF

Advisory Committee: PYC, PLP, SPC, UNICEF, ILO, Technical Specialist
- Coordinator of YEA!

Feb. 2011: PYC Leaders Forum — skills training, YE info, negotiating PIF (FRSC — June 2011)

Feb. 2011: YEA! Retreat
- Partners, Advisory Comm., Coordinator — training & info from technical specialist
- Research team — USP - Desk study on Youth employment and country reports

April 2011: Pacific Youth Economic Empowerment Meeting Vanuatu (CYP and ILO)
- LAUNCH OF YEA!
- Vanuatu NYC training, country advocacy
- POC — August 2011

May 2011: PLP Annual Leaders Convention
- NYC Dialogue with SPC DG, PIF SG
- Private sector
- Youth advocate on YEA!

June 2011: Policy Brief
- NYC Capacity Building — Tuvalu, Tonga, Solomon Islands

June 2011: Tuvalu request to FRSC rejected

August 2011: SPC tables policy brief at CROP
- CROP tables papers at PPAC
- PPAC tables papers at FOC

FORUM LEADERS’ MEETING AGENDA
Part Three: Tools for Advocacy

The following are some basic tools you can use to test your readiness to conduct advocacy work.

**Tool 1: Skills Self-assessment**

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<th>The skills I have are:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>?</th>
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<tr>
<td>I am a good public speaker</td>
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<td>I am able to talk to others in formal functions</td>
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<td>I can write formal letters</td>
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<td>I can use email</td>
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<tr>
<td>I know email etiquette or manners</td>
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<td>I can gather information</td>
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<td>I can conduct an organised meeting</td>
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<td>I participate in a meeting</td>
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<td>I listen to others</td>
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<tr>
<td>I ask for help</td>
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<tr>
<th>The skills our group has are:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>We have a clear vision of what we want to do.</td>
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<td>We have a clear plan of how we want to do it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have the people and the money to do this advocacy.</td>
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<td>Our members regularly participate in our activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have allocated money for this advocacy in our budget.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have the time to advocate on this issue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have the knowledge to speak on this issue.</td>
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This tool should give you an idea of how ready you and your group are to conduct advocacy work. It is important that you are realistic and truthful about yourself and your group’s abilities. If you have ticked No or ? then you now have a better idea of what training is needed to prepare you for advocacy work.
**Tool 2: Resources Assessment**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The resources I have or our group has are:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>Access to a telephone</td>
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<td>Access to a telephone directory</td>
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<td>Access to a computer</td>
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<td>Access to a working printer</td>
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<td>Access to the internet</td>
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<td>Access to the radio</td>
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<td>Access to television</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Access to newspapers</td>
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<td>Access to magazines</td>
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<td>Access to a library</td>
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Tick the box that applies to you

This tool makes you think about the resources you have access to. It also requires you to think about the level of access you have – whether it is reliable access or not. It can also act as a guide for seeking assistance – you could ask for a computer or for internet access. Networking and collaboration with other groups and organisations does not have to be on a large scale. It can be something as basic as access to the internet for research or to send out emails.

If you don’t have access to these resources or have limited access, remember that advocacy can be done by giving a speech or writing a letter.
Tool 3: Roles Pyramid

An effective group recognises its true skills set. You as an individual and as a group need to ask yourselves the questions outlined in the pyramid to determine the role you can play in the advocacy work. Be realistic. Think about your strengths and weaknesses, and the real time you have to work in these roles.
Prepare a list of people and organisations that can help your advocacy work. List how they can help and in which areas of work – planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluation.
Part Four: Concluding Remarks – taking up the challenge

At the beginning of this Guide a challenge was laid down to young people to engage themselves in the issues that affect their lives. Young people can drive advocacy work. It is not easy but this does not mean it is impossible.

Advocacy is a process. It requires knowledge, skills, resources and time. It involves creativity and energy. These are all elements that young people possess. Therefore, there are no excuses for young people not being good advocates. The more young people involved in advocacy work in Pacific Island countries the greater the youth voice.

There is a need to share knowledge about what works, and what needs improvement or needs to be discarded. Document the lessons learnt at each stage of your advocacy process, and share these with young people, and with other youth organisations. This knowledge will improve our work, increase our effectiveness and ensure that we continue to advocate for the issues and change. This Guide is a small example of that documentation and sharing.