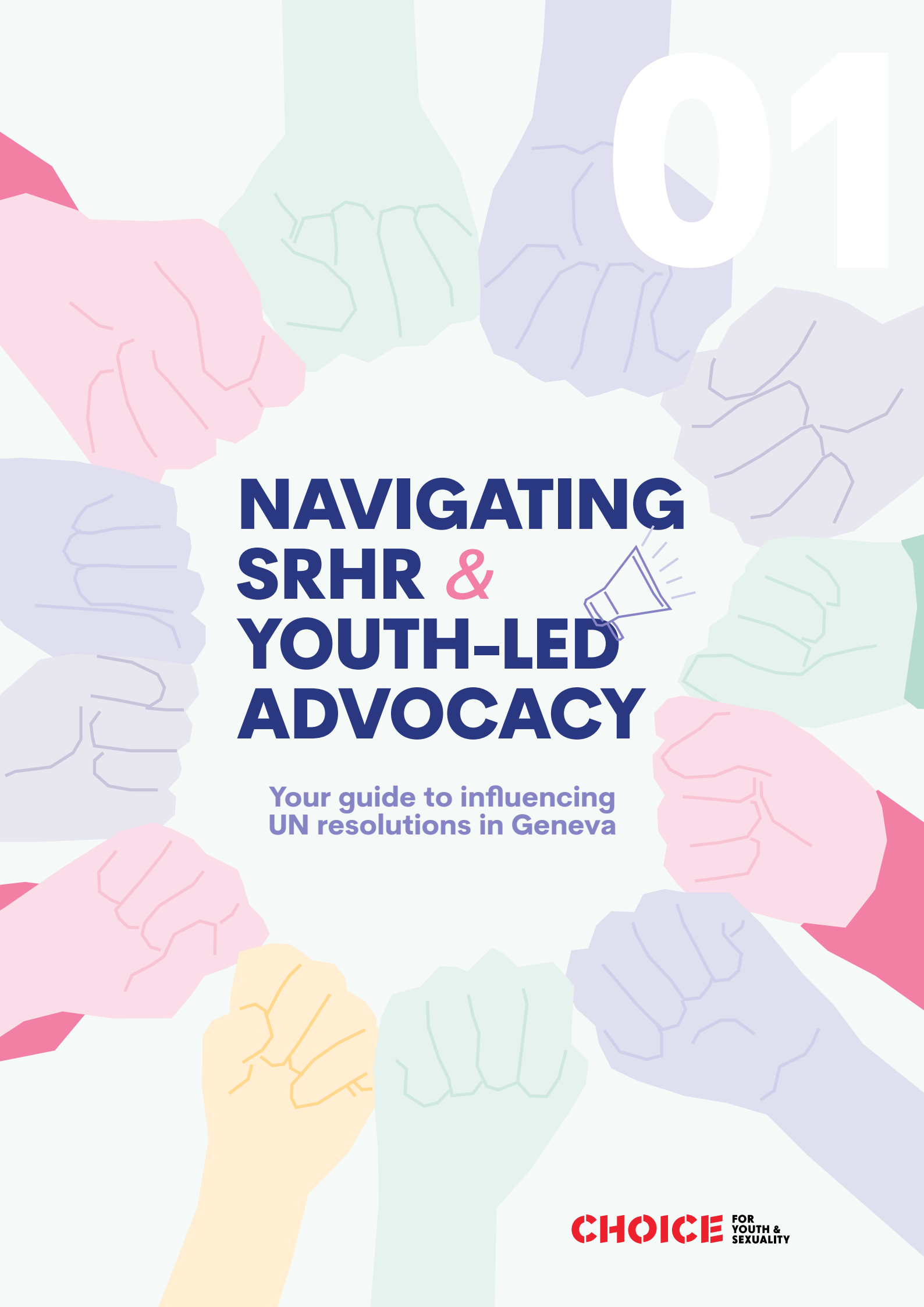




01

NAVIGATING SRHR & YOUTH-LED ADVOCACY



Your guide to influencing
UN resolutions in Geneva

TABLE *of* CONTENTS

01	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
02	INTRODUCTION	4
03	UNDERSTANDING THE UN SYSTEM IN GENEVA	7
04	RESOLUTIONS <i>101</i>	12
05	PREPARING FOR RESOLUTIONS	19
06	ENGAGING WITH DIPLOMATS & DECISION-MAKERS	23
07	I'M AT THE UN IN GENEVA!	28

ACKNOWLEDGE- MENTS

This toolkit was developed by **Yasmine Ben Abdessalem and Aizirek Erkebaeva**

CONCEPT AND TEXT: Yasmine Ben Abdessalem and Aizirek Erkebaeva

REVIEW AND FEEDBACK: International Advocacy Team of CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality

DESIGNED BY: dominiummaverick

PUBLISHED BY: CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality

DATE: 2024–2025

We thank everyone who contributed their ideas and feedback during the development process.

What is the role of the UN in Geneva?

Welcome!

Have you heard about the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG)? It's one of the main UN hubs, and it's based in Geneva, Switzerland. What's cool about it is that it's home to both the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). That means UNOG is all about promoting and protecting human rights, for all –including young people! And a big part of that is focusing on SRHR to tackle important issues like health, gender equality, and reproductive rights.

What's particularly noteworthy about UNOG is that it offers more space for civil society engagement compared to UN headquarters in New York. This expanded access allows for greater participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society actors in UN processes. As a result, UNOG has become a crucial hub for resolution and language advocacy, especially on human rights issues.

But wait... What is a resolution, actually?

One of the primary tools of the UNOG for addressing global issues, including SRHR, are resolutions.

Despite the key role of resolutions in SRHR advocacy, they are not always inclusive and often fail to address the issues of diverse groups of young people. The voices of youth are frequently absent in language advocacy and the implementation of resolutions. This leads to the silencing of youth issues and creates barriers (economic, political, social, etc.) for young activists to participate in such critically important international events. Without youth participation, resolutions cannot sufficiently represent our needs and interests. And this is why it's so important to have youth activists in this space, why CHOICE is fighting the fight.

Resolutions are official documents adopted by UN bodies like the Human Rights Council. Resolutions can call for investigations, set new standards, and create obligations for member states to follow.

INTRODUCTION

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is here to support you in overcoming key challenges in understanding and navigating the complex UN Geneva resolution processes. Whether you're a youth advocate, part of an NGO, involved in a youth initiative or movement, or part of a civil society group, this guide provides the knowledge, strategies, and tools you need to effectively engage with the UN Geneva and advocate for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

What is the purpose of this toolkit?

This toolkit is all about empowering you as a youth advocate with the skills and strategies necessary for successful engagement in UN Geneva's resolution processes! It breaks down the complex world of UN politics and procedures, especially when it comes to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). We've packed it with practical steps to help you navigate the UN's systems and build strong, influential coalitions for effective advocacy.



**NOTHING
ABOUT US**

WITHOUT US

UNDERSTANDING *the* UN SYSTEM IN GENEVA

→ CH2

Several UN entities have their headquarters or local offices in Geneva, making it a central hub for tackling diverse global challenges, including health, human rights, international peace and cooperation, social and economic development.

Here are the key UN bodies relevant to addressing issues related to SRHR:

KEY UN BODIES RELEVANT TO SRHR	ROLE IN SRHR	STRUCTURE	FUNCTIONING
01 Human Rights Council (HRC)	The HRC is an intergovernmental body that promotes and protects human rights worldwide.	Consists of 47 member states elected by UN General Assembly, sessions held regularly.	Addresses SRHR through resolutions, special procedures, and Universal Periodic Reviews.
02 Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)	> UNAIDS leads the global effort to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. > It integrates SRHR into its strategies to address the intersections of HIV and sexual health.	Joint program of UN agencies, led by an Executive Director.	Implements strategies, provides technical support, and monitors global HIV/AIDS response.
03 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)	OHCHR is the leading UN entity on human rights which is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights and freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.	Independent office within the UN Secretariat, led by the High Commissioner.	Monitors human rights situations, provides technical assistance, and advocates for rights globally.
04 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	UNHCR protects and supports people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.	Headquartered in Geneva, with field offices globally.	Provides shelter, aid, and advocates for refugee rights, including access to healthcare services.
05 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Geneva Office	UNICEF promotes the rights and well-being of children worldwide, including their SRHR.	Part of UNICEF's global structure, focused on policy and program development.	It works on initiatives related to adolescent health, education, and protection.

06 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	> UNFPA works to ensure sexual and reproductive health for all. > It advocates for policies that uphold the rights of women and young people.	Works with governments and NGOs globally.	Provides technical assistance, advocates for policy change, and delivers reproductive health services.
07 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)	UN Women advocates for policies and practices that promote gender equality and women's empowerment, including comprehensive SRHR.	Dedicated agency within the UN system, led by an Executive Director.	Supports policy advocacy and program implementation to empower women globally.
08 World Health Organization (WHO)	WHO sets global health standards and provides guidance on SRHR policies.	Specialized agency within the UN system, governed by Member States.	Coordinates global health responses, provides technical assistance, and sets health policy guidelines.

To engage with these bodies, there are several sessions organized every year. But, if you want a quick overview of what could interest a young person who has a passion for SRHR, here are 3 events you could consider joining;

- 01| World Health Assembly:** Every May, WHO hosts this annual meeting in Geneva. It's a great chance to see global health policy in action, including discussions on SRHR. Keep an eye out for side events on youth sexual health issues!
- 02| Human Rights Council Sessions:** The HRC holds three regular sessions per year at the Palais des Nations. During these sessions, look for panel discussions and resolutions related to SRHR. Pro tip: Check out the UPR process to see how countries report on their SRHR progress.
- 03| OHCHR Expert Meetings:** Throughout the year, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights organizes expert meetings on various human rights topics, including SRHR. These smaller gatherings are great for diving deep into specific issues.

04| Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Geneva

Preparatory Events: While the main CSW session happens in New York, Geneva often hosts preparatory events. These are excellent opportunities to engage with gender equality and SRHR discussions at a more accessible level.

Remember, many of these events now offer virtual participation options, making them more accessible to young people worldwide. To stay updated on upcoming SRHR-related sessions and to register, check out the official websites of the UNOG.

What challenges does the UN organization (in Geneva) have when it comes to advocating for SRHR and youth rights?



Although each of these UN organs and organization promotes SRHR advocacy and supports youth voices in its mission, both activist experience and research shows that most UN organizations still ignore global political issues in an attempt to remain “neutral” or “apolitical.” This is evident in the stark reality that only 2.2% of delegates at the UN General Assembly were under 35 years old in 2021. Indeed, youth are often excluded from meaningful participation in international SRHR policy development. In fact, a UNESCO review found that structured, meaningful mechanisms for youth inclusion are lacking across most policy areas, and current youth engagement models are rarely evaluated for effectiveness.

Moreover, it is important to understand that SRHR advocacy and the promotion of youth voices cannot be effective without analyzing the global political situation, especially when more than 65 countries have liberalized their abortion laws **since 1994 through national political movements rather than UN initiatives.**

Also, financial and logistical barriers further hinder youth participation in SRHR advocacy at international forums. Geneva, a hub for many UN conferences, is among the most expensive cities in the world, making it challenging for young people—particularly those from low- and middle-income countries—to afford travel and accommodation costs. Even when funding is available, visa issues and bureaucratic obstacles often delay or prevent youth attendance, reducing the diversity of youth voices represented.

Challenges, but not only...!

Thankfully, there are ways to not be stopped by all the aforementioned obstacles, and to actually influence the process at the UNOG. One of the ways we are able to do so, is at the Human Rights Council. While CHOICE is usually present at the UN in all its forms and shapes (we've been to New York, Geneva, and Nairobi a couple of times to advocate!), the UNOG is by far the one where we can have the most impact via resolutions.

It is generally easier to influence UN resolutions in the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) compared to the United Nations Headquarters in New York (UNHQ) because of the unique access and participation opportunities for civil society in Geneva. At UNOG, civil society organizations (CSOs), including youth-led groups, have more access to informal negotiations and consultations with diplomats. This informal access allows CSOs to provide direct input, engage in dialogue with decision-makers, and potentially influence the language and priorities of draft resolutions.

In contrast, at UNHQ in New York, formal negotiations are more restricted, and access to negotiation spaces is limited for non-state actors. Civil society's influence is often constrained to side events or consultations outside the formal negotiation process, making it harder to shape the language of resolutions directly. This difference in accessibility between UNOG and UNHQ has led many advocacy groups to focus their efforts in Geneva, where they can play a more active role in influencing the outcomes of resolutions, especially in areas like SRHR.

As CHOICE, we mainly engage for SRHR progressive language and resolutions during the Human Rights Council!

CH3 <

RESOLUTIONS¹⁰¹

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

■ _____

As we mentioned, the primary way to influence processes at the UNOG, and to advocate for progressive SRHR and youth language, is via working on resolutions. Below, we outline what you need to know about the structure of resolutions!

Understanding the [structure] & language of resolutions

STRUCTURE

A resolution is essentially one long sentence divided into **two** main parts:

Preambular paragraphs (PPs)

These set the context and background for the resolution.

Operative paragraphs (OPs)

These contain the actual proposed actions or recommendations.

LANGUAGE

Resolutions use formal, diplomatic language with specific verbs and phrases.

Preambular paragraphs start with participles or adjectives like

"Recalling," "Noting," or "Concerned"

Operative paragraphs begin with action verbs in the present tense, such as

"Calls upon," "Requests" or "Decides".

FORMATTING

Each paragraph is separated and usually numbered (for operative paragraphs) or lettered (for subparagraphs).

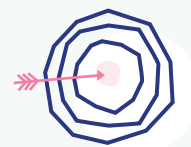
Techniques for drafting

effective language



> Be clear and concise

Use straightforward language to avoid misinterpretation, but also be smart about where you use each term (placing it in an earlier paragraph versus later, placing it in a listing, or at the beginning of a sentence, etc).



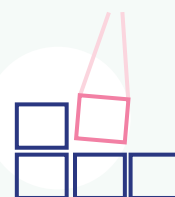
> Be specific

Provide details on who should take action, what action should be taken, and when it should happen. The resolution should be as 'SMART'¹ as possible.



> Use strong verbs

Choose verbs that convey the desired level of urgency or commitment. For more information on how to give your resolution a stronger sense of urgency and legitimacy, and picking the rights verbs, check out our UN Language Guide.



> Build on existing language

Reference previous resolutions, agreed language or international agreements to add legitimacy to the resolution. If the language is entirely new, it's important to justify its inclusion by linking it to current global needs or emerging issues, ensuring it meets the criteria for relevance and feasibility within the UN framework.

¹ | **SMART** is an acronym commonly used to set effective goals or indicators, ensuring they are clear and achievable. Each letter represents a specific criterion:

S → Specific: The goal should be clear and specific, defining exactly what needs to be accomplished.

M → Measurable: It should include criteria to measure progress and determine when the goal has been achieved.

A → Achievable: The goal must be realistic and attainable, given available resources and constraints.

R → Relevant: It should align with broader objectives and be meaningful to the person or organization setting it.

T → Time-bound: The goal should have a clear deadline or timeframe, creating a sense of urgency and a schedule for completion.

Timing is key

Getting your language included in resolutions

The pre-zero draft, zero draft, and final text represent different stages in the development of a UN resolution, each offering different opportunities for advocacy and to introduce new ideas and language:

01 PRE-ZERO DRAFT

This is the earliest stage of drafting, often based on initial consultations and inputs from a core group. It's a preliminary outline or collection of ideas that will form the basis for the zero draft. At this stage, advocates can shape further the direction of the resolution. Here, our input (as civil society and advocates!) is as strong as it can be, as some states see us as experts on specific matters be it on SRHR, youth, education and for other organizations on climate, etc.

02 ZERO DRAFT

This is the first official draft of the resolution text, prepared by the co-chairs (informally called penholders) of the negotiation process. It serves as the starting point for formal negotiations among member states. The zero draft typically includes civil society inputs, as well as the states' inputs which create avenues for contentious issues, disagreements and compromise. This stage is crucial for us advocates to ensure our priorities are included or defended in the initial text.

03

(REV 1, REV 2) REVISED DRAFTS

Following the zero draft, there may be one or more revised drafts. These drafts incorporate changes based on state negotiations and offer advocates opportunities to protect essential language. However, for us, the focus at this stage is typically on maintaining existing language rather than introducing new concepts, as the text moves closer to finalization.

04 FINAL TEXT

This is the agreed-upon version of the resolution after negotiations are complete. It represents the consensus reached by member states and is adopted by the relevant UN body. At this stage, changes are typically only for technical corrections.

In SRHR advocacy, setting **SMART** goals can make initiatives more actionable and help track progress over time. For example, a SMART goal could be: "Increase youth participation in SRHR policy discussions by 30% over the next 12 months by securing funding for travel and accommodations."

TIPS & TRICKS

for influencing a resolution

COLLABORATE AND

NETWORK!

EARLY

The pre-zero and zero draft stages offer the best opportunities to introduce new ideas and language. Advocates should focus on building relationships early on with key diplomats, networks and providing input during consultations leading up to these drafts. Don't be afraid to reach out, and be proactive by joining email chains and WhatsApp groups working on this too!

COLLABORATE

The drafting process allows time for us to identify ally states and form coalitions with other NGOs to support specific language or positions.

STRATEGIC ADVOCACY VIA POLICY BRIEFS

As the text evolves from zero draft to final version, advocates can track changes and focus their efforts on defending priority language or proposing alternatives for problematic sections. At this stage, you can offer policy briefs to delegations on specific topics or technical expertise to convince them to retain a certain language, or proposition.

SHAPING THE LANGUAGE AGENDA

For example, suppose there is a youth resolution focused on global health. During the drafting of the zero draft, youth advocates might aim to include sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as a key topic. By doing so, they're not just focusing on specific language but shaping the overall agenda for subsequent discussions—essentially setting the stage for SRHR to be a primary focus rather than, say, climate or digitalization. This early inclusion influences what issues related to youth will be discussed, increasing the likelihood that these topics will remain central to discussions throughout the negotiation process and will more likely make it into the final resolution.

STRATEGIC ADVOCACY VIA POLICY BRIEFS

Understanding the progression from zero draft to final text helps us to recognize when to push for ideal language (when it is worth it) and when to accept compromises to maintain core priorities. At the end of the day, we are all just trying to be diplomatic, and learn to be strategic on what to compromise on!

Let's Practice

Compare these two resolutions, which one do you think is stronger in terms of structure and language?

RESOLUTION A

The Human Rights Council,

- + Recognizing the importance of youth participation in decision-making processes,
- + Encourages Member States to consider involving youth in policy discussions;
- + Suggests the creation of youth councils at the national level;
- + Calls for further study on the impact of youth engagement in political processes.

RESOLUTION B

The Human Rights Council,

- + Reaffirming the critical role of youth as agents of change and key partners in achieving sustainable development and peace
- + Urges Member States to ensure meaningful youth participation in all levels of decision-making processes, including in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programs that affect their lives
- + Calls upon Member States to establish or strengthen national youth councils with adequate resources and mandate to influence policy-making
- + Requests the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop, in consultation with youth-led organizations, a set of guidelines for Member States on implementing youth-inclusive governance structures
- + Decides to appoint a Special Rapporteur on Youth Rights to monitor and report on the situation of youth globally, with a particular focus on their participation in public affairs

Points to think about

- + Which resolution uses more assertive and action-oriented language?
- + How do the structures of the two resolutions differ?
- + Which resolution provides more specific and concrete actions?
- + How does each resolution address the inclusion of diverse youth voices?
- + Which resolution do you think would be more effective in promoting youth participation, and why?

PHASE 01

BUILDING YOUR KNOWLEDGE BASE

UNDERSTANDING UN TERMINOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Familiarize yourself with the specific terminology used within the United Nations, especially **contentious terms** and **"red lines"** that can be important in negotiations and discussions. For instance, terms like "reproductive rights" versus "reproductive health" can have different implications and may affect the tone and reception of your advocacy. You can also learn more about UN language advocacy, by reading our toolkit *"The Advocate's Guide to UN Language"*!²

REVIEWING EXISTING RESOLUTIONS AND KEY COMMITMENTS FROM STATES

Study the resolutions that have already been passed, as well as the key commitments made by member states. For example, the resolution **"Accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: eliminating domestic violence"**³ adopted by the HRC on 2 July 2015 became the first-ever UN resolution to incorporate the terms "comprehensive sexuality education" (CSE) and "intimate partner violence" (IPV). By reviewing this and other resolutions, we can analyze the advocacy steps and language used by participating countries to reach consensus.

To do that, we often rely on:

- + *UN advocacy tool*⁴
- + *UN Human Rights Resolutions Portal*⁵

PREPARING *for* RESOLUTIONS

CH4

Before (and during) your time in Geneva, it's super helpful to feel ready and confident! Getting prepared to work on resolutions means building up your knowledge and planning some smart advocacy moves. This section breaks down the key steps and tips you'll need to prepare and speak up for SRHR resolutions: what to learn, what info to look for, and which strategies can help you reach your goals, and more.

² <https://www.choiceforyouth.org/assets/Toolkits/youth-led-advocacy/UN-Language-Tool-2017-1.pdf>

³ https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/29/14

⁴ Created collaboratively by Fòs Feminista and the Sexual Rights Initiative, this tool is designed to empower advocates and delegates by providing easy access to UN resolutions, expert guidance, and technical resources. Its purpose is to help advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) on the global stage and to hold governments accountable to their commitments.

The tool offers two main features:

1. A searchable database of adopted intergovernmental documents and expert guidance related to SRHR.
2. A curated glossary of key SRHR terms, with examples of agreed-upon language, definitions, and additional resources.

This tool is a valuable resource for anyone working to promote SRHR by providing essential information and language needed to navigate and influence UN discussions effectively.

⁵ The Human Rights Resolution Portal provides information on, and access to, all resolutions ever passed by the Human Rights Council, and all resolutions adopted by the General Assembly's Third Committee since 2006.

01

Building up your knowledge is key – especially because of something called rationale. In UN advocacy, ‘rationale’ is basically the logical reason and justification behind the words and phrases we want to add to resolutions or other UN documents. When you’re pushing for new language or defending existing language in a UN resolution, a strong rationale is super important for a few reasons:

- + Rationale is what helps persuade member states to back the language you’re proposing. It shows why certain terms or ideas should be included and makes a strong case for why they matter (scientific proofs, treaties previously signed, or even showing that this language used to be ‘agreed language’). This is especially important if the language is new or might be controversial to some member states.
- + A good rationale can help create unity among countries with different views. By explaining the concrete reasons behind the language, advocates can tackle any concerns and find common ground. This matters in the UN, where resolutions need broad support to pass.
- + A clear rationale also shows how the language fits with current UN priorities, international law, and human rights standards. Connecting to these bigger frameworks strengthens the case and shows how language contributes to UN goals.
- + When proposing new or potentially challenging language, a solid rationale can even address objections in advance. By preparing for counterarguments, advocates can stand stronger in their position.

PHASE 02

DEVELOPING YOUR ADVOCACY STRATEGY IN RELATION TO RESOLUTIONS

IDENTIFYING YOUR KEY MESSAGES AND THE IMPORTANT LANGUAGE THAT YOU AIM TO DEFEND/STRENGTHEN

Start by figuring out the main messages you want to share and the specific language you want to protect or improve in the resolutions. For example, if you’re advocating for comprehensive sexuality education, your key message could be highlighting how teaching young people about sexual health can help lower the rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancies.

02

MAPPING POTENTIAL ALLIES, MOVABLE MIDDLE AND OPPONENTS

- + **Potential Allies:** Identify countries or regions that are likely to support your advocacy efforts. For example, some countries in South America might be strong allies in advocating for SRHR.
- + **Moveable Middle:** Identify which states are undecided or could be persuaded to support your position
- + **Non Allies:** Recognize the countries or entities that are likely to oppose your advocacy. For example, some countries might oppose comprehensive sexuality education due to cultural or religious beliefs. But it's good to keep in mind that some states are much more flexible than we might think!

IDENTIFYING YOUR KEY MESSAGES AND THE IMPORTANT LANGUAGE THAT YOU AIM TO DEFEND/STRENGTHEN

Take a close look at where different countries stand on your issues. This means finding out which countries are supportive, which are against it, and which are unsure. You could create a visual map or table to show how states feel about SRHR policies. Keep in mind that a country might support you on one issue, like youth participation, but oppose you on another, like SRHR. For example, we once worked with a country that was a strong ally for SRHR, except when it came to abortion, showing how complex and nuanced these positions can be.

CREATING AN ACTION PLAN AND TIMELINE

Put together a detailed action plan that outlines what steps you'll take to reach your advocacy goals. If a Human Rights Council (HRC) session is happening in March, start planning your advocacy activities a few months before that to make sure your messages get to the right people on time. Figure out if the first or second week (or both, if your capacity allows it!) of the session is better for your actions, based on the agenda and which important delegates will be there.

ENGAGING *with* DIPLOMATS



& **DECISION-
MAKERS**

Engaging with diplomats and decision-makers is very important if we want to make a real impact on resolutions. They are the ones who hold the power to influence policy changes, so staying connected with them can help us advocate effectively for the issues we care about.

The first step in engaging with diplomats and decision-makers is to identify the key individuals and missions relevant to your advocacy work. This means doing some research on the member states that play a big role in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and figuring out who their representatives are at the UN. Start by checking out the membership of important UN committees and working groups that focus on health, human rights, gender equality, and more.

Pay special attention to:

Permanent Missions

These are the primary points of contact for member states at the UN. For instance, if advocating for gender-sensitive healthcare policies, identify which missions have historically supported or opposed such measures.

Relevant Diplomats

Look for diplomats who have a background or interest in health, human rights, gender equality, LGBTQIA+ advocacy, disability rights, or/and racial justice. For example, a diplomat who has previously worked on women's health initiatives may be more receptive to SRHR advocacy.

TECHNIQUES/ TIPS FOR REACHING OUT & BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS:

+ CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Understand and recognize the diverse cultural contexts that influence perspectives on SRHR issues. We are all here to learn from each other!

+ LANGUAGE OPPORTUNITIES

HRC sessions are conducted in the official UN languages, which may pose difficulties for some activists in participating equally in communications and advocacy. Contacting colleagues from friendly organizations who can assist with translations into other languages could present an opportunity to build stronger connections. For example, at CHOICE, we have colleagues who speak Spanish, Russian, Kyrgyz, Dutch, French, Hindi, and many more!

+ EFFECTIVE USE OF DATA

Use reliable sources and evidence to support your arguments, including data that highlights intersectional and decolonial approaches. (e.g. how SRHR issues affect different groups)

+ BUILDING COALITIONS

Identify and collaborate with other organizations or groups that share your goals and mission. A united, intersectional front can amplify your message and demonstrate broad support for your initiatives.

+ OFFERING EXPERTISE

Position yourself or your organization as a resource by offering expertise, information, or assistance on issues of mutual interest.

It is always important to prioritize your mental health and remember that your efforts are always enough, as you are already doing significant work in srhr advocacy!

PREPARING & DELIVERING EFFECTIVE PITCHES

When it comes to advocating for your issues, delivering effective pitches to decision-makers can feel intimidating. However, most of the time, it leads to positive outcomes or at least a pleasant discussion. A great pitch can grab their attention and make them want to support your cause.

Here's how to prepare and deliver pitches that hit the mark:

♥ **Use Inclusive Language**

Use language that is accessible and inclusive for different groups of people.

♥ **Evidence-based Arguments**

Support your pitch with data and evidence. For instance, share studies that show how access to reproductive health services can lower maternal mortality rates and improve public health overall.

♥ **Know Your Audience**

Do your homework on the diplomat's country and their views on SRHR. Tailor your pitch to match their priorities. For example, if you're talking to someone from a country that supports women's rights, highlight how SRHR policies fit in with what they care about. Also, be mindful of any sensitive topics that might turn them off, like LGBTQI+ rights. Bringing up controversial issues could end your pitch before it even starts, potentially costing you an ally who might support other parts of SRHR.

♥ **Clear and Concise**

Keep your pitch focused and straightforward. Highlight the key benefits and positive impacts of SRHR initiatives. When you talk to diplomats, it's important to be clear about "what's your ask." Think about what you can offer them, like a policy brief or an invitation to a side event, or ask for specific actions, such as signing a document or advocating for certain language in discussions.

FOLLOWING UP *and* MAINTAINING CONNECTIONS

from one session

Building and maintaining relationships with diplomats is a crucial aspect of effective UN language advocacy, but it requires a pragmatic and adaptable approach. Since diplomats usually change roles every 1-2 years, advocates need to be ready to make new connections while also using the ones they already have. This constant turnover shouldn't discourage you; instead, it's a chance to grow your network and refresh your advocacy strategies. Staying in touch with diplomats who are leaving can be really helpful, as they can often introduce you to their successors, giving you a great opportunity to build new relationships.

When you engage with diplomats, focus on sharing concise and relevant information that speaks to their specific interests and concerns. Keep in mind that diplomats handle a lot of issues, so make your advocacy memorable by offering unique insights or solutions. Also, pay attention to the diplomatic calendar and time your outreach around key decision-making periods. Lastly, while it's important to keep things professional, don't underestimate the power of personal connections. Showing genuine interest in a diplomat's background or experiences can help you build a lasting rapport that goes beyond their current role. And don't forget to keep in touch with them; get their business cards, emails, or LinkedIn contacts!

→ to another

CH6

I'M AT
the UN
in GENEVA!

➤ WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

ATTENDING INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

The toolkit primarily focuses on how to influence UN resolutions through language advocacy, emphasizing the critical role of attending informal negotiations. **These informal consultations are where the real “magic” happens in UN advocacy work.** It’s during these sessions that you can observe states interacting and negotiating, provide direct input, and connect with other civil society representatives.

While informal consultations are a key way to advocate for language in resolutions, they’re not the only option. There are other effective methods you can use, such as joining side events or interactive dialogues, which we’ll dive into later in this section. These alternative approaches can really boost your advocacy efforts and give you even more chances to shape UN language and resolutions.

ENGAGING IN INTERACTIVE DIALOGUES

Interactive dialogues at the Human Rights Council are a great chance for youth activists to connect with like-minded people, diplomats, UN representatives, and other important players on topics like SRHR. These sessions let you learn about the different views of various states and civil society organizations. However, it’s good to approach these dialogues with a critical mindset.

Even though they’re called “interactive,” a lot of speeches and responses are often prepared ahead of time, which can limit real conversation. Still, these forums are valuable for asking questions and getting insights into official positions. Having some well-thought-out talking points and questions ready can really boost your participation. During the session, it’s important to practice active listening so you can respond in a relevant way to what’s being discussed, even with the format’s limitations. After the dialogue, reaching out to participants can be very beneficial! It’s a chance to keep the conversation going, exchange contact info, make friends, and build relationships that last beyond the event.

SIDE EVENTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

+ Organizing your own side event to influence a resolution

Firstly, if you’re thinking about organizing your own side event to influence a resolution or make your voice heard, start by defining what you want to achieve. What’s the key issue you’re passionate about? Gather a team of allies or other youth organizations who share your vision—it’ll strengthen your efforts and make your message more impactful.

Now, when it comes to the details, if your event is in person, you'll need to secure a venue. For virtual events, pick a reliable online platform. Promote your event far and wide—social media is perfect for this. Get the word out and make sure people know why they should join. And don't forget about safety. Have a plan in place to handle any disruptions and try to ensure your and everyone's well-being throughout the event.

+ Participating in others' events

In addition to attending interactive dialogues, you can also take on more active roles to amplify your advocacy efforts. One such opportunity is becoming a panelist at side events, which allows you to share your expertise and perspectives directly with a diverse audience.

However, it's important to remember that you can say no. Sometimes, partners or colleagues may be very enthusiastic and encourage you to moderate or speak on a panel. It's perfectly acceptable to decline if you feel that the topic is outside your area of expertise or if you have safety concerns.

That said, participating in these events can also be a fun experience that broadens your knowledge and enhances your public speaking skills. Weighing the pros and cons can help you make the best decision for yourself while still engaging with important discussions in your field.

Another effective strategy is co-sponsoring events to support youth-led networks or other civil society allies. This not only demonstrates solidarity but also helps build stronger coalitions around shared goals.

Attending events organized by other organizations and initiatives can be a great learning experience and a chance to network. Before you go, do a bit of homework. Check out the event's agenda, who's speaking, and what the main goals are. This will help you be prepared and make the most of your time there. **While you're at the event, dive into discussions and make connections if you feel comfortable doing so!**

A NOTE ON HYBRID & REMOTE ADVOCACY BEING IN GENEVA FROM AFAR

Some [disadvantages] when it comes to remote advocacy

In the context of influencing resolutions at the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), hybrid and remote advocacy has become increasingly important, especially in recent years, with COVID regulations, and inflation making it harder to reach Geneva.

This shift to remote and hybrid advocacy, has both expanded opportunities and presented new challenges for advocates.

Here are some disadvantages we wanted to reflect upon:

- ✱ **The lack of personal interaction. In-person meetings and informal chats are super important for building relationships, earning trust, and influencing decision-makers.** Without the chance for those spontaneous encounters and side conversations that usually happen during UN sessions, it can be tough for remote advocates to network effectively and get support for their causes.
- ✱ **Technical and logistical issues are also big hurdles for remote advocacy.** Since it relies a lot on technology, there can be all sorts of complications. Unstable internet connections or tech glitches can mess up communication, and time zone differences can make scheduling meetings and events a real headache. Plus, not everyone has access to the tech and equipment they need, which creates inequalities that can make advocacy harder, especially for advocates in rural areas.
- ✱ **On top of that, remote advocacy often doesn't have the same impact and visibility as in-person participation.** Virtual interventions might not get as much attention as those made by advocates who are physically at UN meetings. Without face-to-face interactions, it's harder to read reactions and adjust your message on the spot, which can lessen the

effectiveness of your advocacy. Media coverage and public awareness of remote initiatives are usually lower too, making it challenging for advocates to gain momentum and influence key stakeholders.

- ✖ **Coordinating with different organizations and stakeholders can get trickier in a remote setup.** Aligning strategies and messaging takes extra effort when you can't meet in person. Building coalitions and keeping everyone focused can be tough when there are fewer opportunities for informal info sharing and strategizing. These coordination challenges can slow down the creation of effective advocacy campaigns.
- ✖ **The ongoing UN budget crisis has added another layer of complexity to remote participation.** It is seriously affecting how advocates can participate in discussions and decisions at the UN, especially through hybrid formats that combine in-person and remote participation. The cancellation of sessions and pre-sessional working groups for treaty bodies not only delays crucial reviews of how well countries are following human rights treaties but also adds to the backlog of reports that need attention. The crisis is also contributing to shrinking civic space at the UN, making it even tougher for advocates to share their perspectives. This situation disproportionately impacts those from developing nations, who often face bigger barriers to attending in person.

Some **advantages** when it comes to remote advocacy

Remote advocacy at the United Nations has some great advantages that can really allow for different forms of engagement and inclusivity.

- + One of the biggest perks is increased accessibility and participation. Remote advocacy opens up UN processes to a lot more people who might have faced challenges getting involved in person. **This wider access brings in a greater diversity of voices, especially from grassroots organizations and underrepresented areas.** It cuts down on travel, and accommodation costs in big cities like Geneva or New York, making it easier for advocates to join in. Plus, those dealing with visa issues or safety concerns can participate more freely.

- + **Flexibility is another major benefit of remote advocacy. Advocates can manage their time better since they don't have to be away from their local work for long periods.** It's way easier to join multiple events when there's no need to move around from venue to venue, and the time saved on travel can be used for other advocacy activities or local responsibilities.
- + **Additionally, remote advocacy can reach a much larger audience.** Live-streaming and recorded sessions make events accessible to more people, and social media lets everyone share and interact in real time. Virtual side events can pull in bigger and more diverse crowds than traditional in-person meetings!
- + **Cost-effectiveness is another big plus of remote advocacy.** By cutting out travel and accommodation costs, advocates can save a lot of money when engaging with the UN. The need for printed materials and physical resources goes down too, which lowers the costs for organizations hosting events and meetings. These savings help smaller organizations and individual advocates get more involved in UN processes.
- + **Finally, remote advocacy is better for the environment since it reduces international travel.** This means a smaller carbon footprint when participating in UN activities, which aligns with global efforts to tackle climate change.

PRO TIP

Building and maintaining virtual networks is more important than ever! Use Signal for a safe and secure way to coordinate your efforts, share real-time updates during negotiations, and stay connected with your allies. This platform allows for quick mobilization and information sharing, which can be crucial during fast-paced resolution negotiation.



MONITORING & FOLLOW-UP

Before diving into the important task of monitoring and following up on resolutions after advocating for them at the UNOG, **it's crucial to take a moment to focus on self-care and mental health. Activism can be incredibly rewarding, but it can also be emotionally and mentally taxing.** To sustain your energy and passion for advocacy, make sure to prioritize your well-being. Spend time doing things that bring you joy and relaxation. Whether it's cooking your favorite meal, reading, or spending time in nature, these activities can provide a much-needed mental reset. Surround yourself with supportive friends and fellow advocates. Sharing your experiences and feelings with others who understand can provide comfort and motivation. Build a support network where you can exchange ideas, challenges, and encouragement.

So... to dive back in: Monitoring and following up on resolutions after advocating for them at the UNOG is super important to ensure that all your hard work pays off! Here are some concrete tips and actions you can take to make a real impact:

STAY ENGAGED



Keep the lines of communication open with relevant UN bodies and member states.

USE RESOLUTIONS AS LEVERAGE



Link international resolutions to your national advocacy efforts. Create a strategy that outlines how you can use the adopted resolutions as a powerful tool to pressure your government. This might include drafting letters to decision-makers, hosting meetings with policymakers, or organizing public campaigns that highlight the importance of these commitments.



UTILIZING ONLINE PLATFORMS

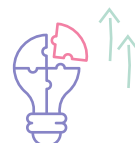
Leverage social media, webinars, and online forums to keep discussions alive. Share updates, insights, and calls to action to keep issues at the forefront of decision-makers' agendas.

GATHER EVIDENCE



Track the impact of the resolutions by collecting data and stories that demonstrate how they are affecting people on the ground. This could include statistics, case studies, or testimonials from individuals and communities. Presenting this evidence can strengthen your case when engaging with policymakers for future sessions.

COLLABORATE WITH ALLIES



Partner with other organizations and advocates to amplify your voice. Jointly organize campaigns, share resources, and learn from each other! **You can also make friends in Geneva!**

BE PERSISTENT

Remember that advocacy is often a long-term effort. Stay persistent in your follow-up actions, even when progress feels slow. Your dedication can make a difference over time.

ATTEND FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS



Whenever possible, participate in follow-up meetings or briefings held by other organizations, UN bodies or member states regarding the implementation of resolutions.

Keep pushing for progress, and remember that your voice matters in shaping a better future!

THANK YOU FOR TRUSTING US! 
HOPEFULLY NOW, YOU'RE A GENEVA RESOLUTION MASTER !

Resources and Tools

- + UN Language Guide by CHOICE For Youth and Sexuality
- + YouthUp UN toolkit by CHOICE For Youth and Sexuality

SOURCES

1. Cox, E. (2010). State interests and the creation and functioning of the United Nations Human Rights Council. *Journal of International Law and International Relations*, 6, 87. Retrieved from <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/jilwirl6&div=7&id=&page=>
2. Haslegrave, M. (2013). Sexual and reproductive rights at the United Nations: frustration or fulfillment? *Reproductive Health Matters*, 21(42), 197-207. [https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1016/S0968-8080\(11\)38585-0](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1016/S0968-8080(11)38585-0)
3. United Nations Human Rights Council. (n.d.). Sessions. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/sessions>
4. United Nations Human Rights Council. (2015). Resolution 29/14: Accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: eliminating domestic violence. Retrieved from https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/29/14
5. United Nations Geneva. (n.d.). Who we are. Retrieved from <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/about/who-we-are>
6. International Service for Human Rights. (n.d.). What does the Human Rights Council do? Resolutions. Retrieved from <https://academy.ishr.ch/learn/un-human-rights-council/what-does-the-human-rights-council-do-resolutions>
7. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (n.d.). Mandate. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/mandate-un-human-rights>
8. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR). "UN Liquidity Crisis: Rights Groups Call on States to Pay Your Dues." ISHR, <https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/un-liquidity-crisis-rights-groups-call-on-states-to-payyourdues/>.

CHOICE **FOR
YOUTH &
SEXUALITY**