

Arab Youth Toolkits: Action Steps For Green Schools - Youth Advocacy



Outline

Introduction	2
Part 1: The power of advocacy and you(th).....	3
Part 2: Schools must lead the sustainability agenda.....	5
Green your school council.....	7
Part 3: Developing an environmental advocacy plan	
Choosing your issue.....	9
Gaining a deeper understanding.....	10
Understanding policies.....	11
Collective action.....	12
Using social media.....	13
Writing your advocacy plan.....	15
Monitoring progress.....	17
Part 4: Green student initiatives around the world.....	18
International programmes for sustainable education.....	19
Conclusion	20

GLOSSARY

C

Carbon Emissions

Emissions of carbon dioxide and other carbon-based gases (such as methane) that result from various natural and man-made activities and that contribute to climate change

Carbon Footprint

The total amount of greenhouse gases (gases responsible for climate change including carbon dioxide and methane) that are generated and emitted from man-made activities such as burning fossil fuels

D

Digital Campaign

An organised course of action, implemented across social media, to maximise outreach and engage participants to achieve a certain goal

G

Green Roofs

A roof of a building covered with greenery and vegetation, providing an easily accessible green space to urban dwellers and providing them with several benefits such as improved air quality, better storm water management, and an aesthetically pleasing space

P

Permaculture

The development of agricultural ecosystems that are integrated within the natural environment (as opposed to replacing it) which are intended to be self-sufficient

S

Stakeholders

Any person, group, organisation, company, or institution that has an interest or concern in a particular issue or cause



Disclaimer: for our younger readers, some parts of this guide may require support from your teachers or older students

INTRODUCTION

Are you a young person who is passionate about tackling climate change but not sure where to start? Do you want to be part of the solution, influence the future, and not stand by as our planet suffers? Are you looking for ways to share your ideas, inspire others, and kickoff initiatives that will have a measurable impact? Then this toolkit is for you. Stick around to learn more about how you can become an active participant in the environmental movement by organising and leading social change within your school or university. If you are already part of a school council or are considering running (which we highly recommend!), this toolkit has some tips for you too, such as developing a pledge for a green mission for your student council.



LET'S BREAK DOWN THE CONTENT OF THIS TOOLKIT:

First, we are going to give you some context. We will highlight the **value of advocacy** and **grassroots action**, as well as explain the meaningful and unique **role youth** have in the **fight against climate change**. Don't worry, we will make sure to define any important terms related to advocacy efforts at this stage.

Next, we will discuss **why you should advocate for your school or university to be more climate-positive**. Not only is school a great place to leverage your network and access resources, but it is also a community in which you, **as a student, are the primary stakeholder**. Furthermore, the **potential for reducing your school's carbon footprint is huge!** You would be surprised at how high the carbon footprints of educational institutions could get, making them a great opportunity for student-led emission reduction strategies and initiatives.

To help you start **brainstorming green initiatives for your school**, we will start off by listing a handful of ideas and explaining why they are good for the environment. Additionally, we will include a **dedicated section on how you can make your student council green** and how you can use it to engage all stakeholders in your school.

Following that, we will **outline the process of identifying your advocacy issue and developing a suitable environmental campaign**. Lastly, we will exhibit a few student-grown green initiatives in educational institutions around the world and **introduce some global programmes meant to include schools in the fight against climate change** which your institution can join.

PART 1: THE POWER OF ADVOCACY AND YOU(TH)

Climate change is a major global challenge of our time and its effects are already being felt in all corners of the world. The only way to prevent further damage from rising temperatures, air pollution, extreme weather events, and natural disasters is to take action now. At times, confronting the climate crisis on a personal level may feel like an overwhelming and impossible task which, indeed, ultimately requires all of society to get involved. Nevertheless, while top-down initiatives are critical to drive system-level transformations and green our economies, local and citizen-led initiatives are equally necessary.

When citizens take initiative, they promote solutions and work to influence policies in ways that are relevant to their communities and surroundings. In being part of their community, changemakers use their insight to identify what initiatives are missing and what solutions will work best and succeed in inspiring collective action.

It is important to note that changemakers do not have to be decision-makers or represent the upper ranks of an institution or group, in fact, bottom-up action may make it easier to achieve goals. When initiatives come from ordinary citizens, often referred to as grassroots, they can have more control over how they address the issues directly affecting them, ensuring their needs are accurately met and giving them greater ownership over the overall process.

Therefore, any dedicated individual who engages in environmental issues and advocates for their solutions can significantly contribute to a more sustainable future by encouraging change in their communities and beyond.

Who is an advocate? An advocate:



Offers Support



Raises Awareness



Proposes Recommendations



Implements Actions

for an idea or cause they care about. When you advocate for an issue, you are a voice for the voiceless and a torchbearer for real change.

Advocates use various means to raise awareness on a specific issue and offer solutions, such as:



Organising Events and Campaigns



Public Speaking



Writing Informative Reports and Articles, and Developing Brochures and Posters



Engaging with Various Forms of Media

In this toolkit, the spotlight is on youth advocacy: the important role of young people in raising awareness and addressing environmental issues. After all, the world is home to the largest generation of youth in history, with people aged under 30 constituting about 55% of the population within the Arab World. This sizeable cohort rightfully cares to inherit a safe and prosperous world, which climate change is risking. Moreover, the youth of today will be the policymakers and leaders of tomorrow: by becoming an advocate earlier in life, young changemakers gain experience, skills, and a plethora of perspectives which they carry into their future.

Young people are not only victims of climate change, but also valuable contributors to climate action. Increasingly aware of the challenges and risks presented by the climate crisis and of the opportunities in greening our societies, youth today are among the strongest voices for climate action. Moreover, they are being viewed as increasingly competent to fight climate change.

Young stakeholders are key to sustainable transformations and are uniquely positioned to raise awareness about environmental issues because of their fresh perspectives, creativity, and enthusiasm for making a difference. Additionally, many young people are tech-savvy, especially compared to older generations, and through their digital literacy, can reach new audiences and discover new solutions. For all these reasons, youth advocates should, and do, have an important role to play in the environmental movement.

"MY GENERATION HAS LARGELY FAILED UNTIL NOW TO PRESERVE BOTH JUSTICE IN THE WORLD AND TO PRESERVE THE PLANET. IT IS YOUR GENERATION THAT MUST MAKE US BE ACCOUNTABLE TO MAKE SURE THAT WE DON'T BETRAY THE FUTURE OF HUMANKIND."
— UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL, ANTÓNIO GUTERRES

PART 1: THE POWER OF ADVOCACY AND YOU(TH)

WHAT ARE YOUTH ADVOCATES BRINGING TO THE TABLE?

THEY ARE:

1

Designing campaigns to educate peers and share solutions to help protect the environment

2

Using social media and other forms of communication to spread stories about climate efforts

3

Leveraging their networks to identify like-minded individuals and bring them together for collective action

4

Collaborating with others on how to drive initiatives that will help secure a more sustainable future for our planet

People often associate advocacy with **dramatic and large-scale events**. It's true that advocacy is often impassioned and does **involve collective action**, however, this is not the extent of it. Advocacy can be **independent**, such as **researching and providing information** to a decision-maker, or **writing a blog to share your ideas**. Advocacy can be **local action** that concentrates on **changing rules or policies within your community**. Often, we think of policies at the national or global level, however, most organisations and institutions have policies that guide how people act and how decisions are made. For example, within your school! It is also important to remember that collective actions on a smaller scale eventually **build up to global change**, as many policies have been developed or influenced by this bottom-up approach.

We hope that at this point we've convinced you that you can become an advocate for the environment and make a difference! Now, you may be wondering, **where do I start?** We may have hinted at it already...

SCHOOL!

Keep reading to learn more about why schools and universities are the best place to start your advocacy path and identify some of the initiatives you can advocate for!

WHY?

1

First and foremost, it is a community **central to your life** as a young person!

2

The **environmental impact** of schools is huge! There are a plethora of opportunities for reducing a school's carbon footprint.

3

The **social impact** of schools is just as important, and students are more likely to join a cause that other students have also shown interest in or actively participated in – positive peer pressure can create a domino effect of positive impact.

4

Besides being good for the environment, greening your school is **good for people**. Improving the environmental quality of schools can lead to less physical illness, improved mental health and less stress.

5

School is a place for sharing knowledge. By implementing green initiatives, students, teachers, and staff can learn about sustainability, environmental issues, and the importance of protecting the planet.

PART 2: SCHOOLS MUST LEAD THE SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA








Schools and universities, as innovation drivers in science and technology worldwide, must be **prominent actors in the transformation towards a carbon-neutral society**.

- Youth are playing a key role in the global wake-up call on climate change, and it only makes sense that schools become **hotbeds of activism** on the defining issues of today's young generation.
- Besides **leading** by example, the education sector represents huge untapped potential for enacting solutions to fight climate change, and initiatives should begin with **schools greening themselves**.
- Schools are responsible for **sizeable carbon footprints** due to their **high energy consumption** from powering and heating buildings, tons of waste produced from food and materials, as well as student and staff travel to name a few.
- In a comprehensive study of **carbon footprint** data from 20 universities around the world, on average, university **carbon footprints** per capita were found to make up **23% of the national per capita footprint**.
- By reducing their **carbon footprints** schools may not only **improve their climate impact** but **reduce their costs** - and therefore **the costs of students and taxpayers**, in the long run!

Beyond altering their physical space, schools can incorporate a focus on sustainability through their **learning and teaching activities**, research and innovation missions, operational management, and as major employers and consumers of goods and services (through their economic behaviour). Indeed, schools are at the centre of, and are composed of, vast networks, including learners, educators, parents, vendors and services providers, investors and shareholders, and the wider community.








As a climate-conscious young person, **what change would you like to see within your school? Are there any initiatives or policies you would recommend to make your school or university greener?**

TO SPARK YOUR CREATIVITY, HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF SOLUTIONS SCHOOLS CAN IMPLEMENT TO BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE, AND HOW THEY MAKE AN IMPACT:

SOLUTIONS	IMPACT
 IMPLEMENTING A RECYCLING PROGRAMME	By installing recycling bins around campus, and educating students on how to segregate their waste and the importance of reusing and recycling waste . The programme could start with one material, for example recycling computers and other e-waste , which can help reduce waste, conserve resources, decrease the school's carbon footprint , and reduce the number of toxic materials entering the environment . This then creates the base for more recycling activities.
 USING ENERGY-EFFICIENT LIGHTING	Can help reduce the school's energy consumption, lower electricity bills, and decrease greenhouse gas emissions . Energy-efficient lighting uses less energy and lasts longer than traditional lighting.
 INSTALLING SOLAR PANELS OR GREEN ROOFS	Can help the school generate its own renewable energy, reduce its reliance on fossil fuels, and decrease its carbon footprint . Solar panels can generate electricity , while green roofs can reduce heat island effect, lower energy consumption, and increase biodiversity .
 INSTALLING "HYDRATION STATIONS", OR EASILY ACCESSIBLE TAPS	That make it easy to refill and re-use water bottles will encourage students and staff to switch to reusable bottles . To take this one step further, a school can altogether stop selling plastic bottled water .
 REDUCING PAPER USE AND ENCOURAGING THE DIGITALIZATION OF TEACHING MATERIALS	Can help the school decrease its environmental impact and become more efficient . By using digital resources, the school can reduce the need for printing and paper , as well as make information more accessible to students and faculty .
 STARTING A BIKE RENTAL OR CARPOOLING PROGRAMME	Can help reduce the school's carbon footprint by encouraging the use of alternative transportation methods . This can help reduce the number of cars on the road, lower the school's carbon emissions, and improve air quality .
 ORGANISING A DONATION PROGRAMME	Can help the school reduce waste and conserve resources . By encouraging students and staff to donate items they no longer need , the school can reduce the amount of waste generated and provide resources to those in need .

PART 2: SCHOOLS MUST LEAD THE SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA

TO SPARK YOUR CREATIVITY, HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF SOLUTIONS SCHOOLS CAN IMPLEMENT TO BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE, AND HOW THEY MAKE AN IMPACT:

SOLUTIONS	IMPACT
 SWITCHING TO ELECTRIC OR HYBRID VEHICLES	Can help the school decrease its carbon footprint and improve air quality . Electric vehicles do not produce emissions and hybrid vehicles produce significantly fewer emissions compared to traditional gasoline-powered vehicles. This would also be paired with the installation of electric vehicle charging stations, making them more accessible to the student body, faculty, and staff.
 STARTING A CAMPUS COMMUNITY GARDEN	Can help the school promote sustainability by promoting the use of local, organic produce and reducing food waste – as only food that is needed will be harvested. Community gardens also provide a space for students and staff to engage in sustainable activities and learn about food systems , and could eliminate environmental impacts from the food system such as carbon emissions released during transporting food to campus.
 USING REUSABLE OR BIODEGRADABLE DISHWARE	Can help the school reduce waste, conserve resources, and promote sustainability . Reusable or biodegradable dishware can be used multiple times and does not contribute to the waste stream like disposable dishware.
 IMPLEMENTING A GREEN PURCHASING POLICY	That calls on purchasing products that are sustainable and environmentally friendly can help the school reduce its environmental impact . This policy can encourage the use of products made from recycled materials, reduce energy consumption, and promote sustainable practices .
 DEVELOPING A CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY PLAN	Can help the school ensure that it is taking a comprehensive and coordinated approach to sustainability . The plan can outline the school's sustainability goals, strategies, and actions, and provide a roadmap for achieving a more sustainable campus .
 CONDUCTING ENERGY AUDITS	Can help the school identify areas where it can improve its energy efficiency and reduce its carbon footprint . Energy audits can identify sources of energy waste, suggest ways to improve energy use, and help the school save money on energy bills .
 CALCULATING AND ASSESSING THE SCHOOL'S CARBON FOOTPRINT	Can help the school understand its impact on the environment and identify areas where it can reduce its emissions . This information can help the school set emissions reduction targets, prioritise actions, and track its progress towards a more sustainable future .



You will find that all of the projects mentioned above give a very practical approach to advocating for a greener campus. Most of the projects fall in line with the principles of **reducing waste and consuming consciously**. This is because overconsumption of resources and energy, and increased waste that ends up in landfills – or worse, the environment – greatly contribute to the increase of a school's footprint, which these projects aim to reduce.

As previously discussed, you do not have to be a decision-maker to drive sustainable solutions within your school. However, if you are part of, or thinking of joining your **student council**, developing an **environmental advocacy plan** is a great way to align your school council with an important cause and give your peers a designated outlet for their ideas and contributions. The next section will suggest some ideas for student council leaders on how to green their school council.




GREEN YOUR SCHOOL COUNCIL

Every school should **take steps to create a more sustainable and eco-friendly environment**. One great way to do this is by **creating an active school council** that promotes **green initiatives** and **inspires other members of the community to become environmentally responsible citizens**.

School councils, as the representatives of the student body, can play a unique and important role in **promoting sustainability** by **providing their peers with a platform** to express ideas on how their school should be run and take action on changes they feel should be made. Through their elected and organisational power, student councils can speak on behalf of their peers and lead the way in changing school norms, values, and policies. Additionally, school councils **serve as a channel** for collaborating with the administration, faculty, and even local organisations, which can help **organise fruitful conversations** and foster a greater sense of community among students and staff. Hence, having a proactive school council with a clear vision can be an **excellent opportunity for initiating school-wide efforts to reach common sustainability goals and make your school more greener**.

Here are some proposals for activities your student council can undertake to make your campus greener:

- 1 Create a **"Green Team"** responsible for **developing ideas** and **researching projects related to sustainability and environmental awareness at the school**. Make sure to have a diverse group of students with a variety of skills across various grades to develop ideas that are suitable for students across their educational journeys. Older students: **help your younger peers** by providing them mentorship and encouraging them to develop their agency.
- 2 **Educate students on the importance of going green** by **organising educational courses, programmes, events, and workshops**. Here are some links to online resources where you can find free courses to share with other students directly or help you develop your own resources. Try keywords such as **"climate change", "green", "greening", "sustainable", and "sustainability"**.

 coursera	(EN/AR)
 Future Learn	(EN)
 إدراك	(EN/AR)

- 3 **Develop a sustainability pledge** that students and staff can sign. **Start by looking at existing sustainability pledges** to get inspiration and ideas, for example, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or pledges from other schools and organisations. Then, **develop your school's sustainability pledge**, one that is actionable and reflects your school's sustainability goals and mission. Next, **launch the pledge by promoting it through various channels**, such as posters, social media, and school newsletters. You can also **organise a school assembly or an event** to encourage students and staff to sign it. Lastly, **monitor and evaluate the pledge's implementation and impact regularly**. Stay tuned for part 3, where we detail the steps for developing an environmental advocacy plan, which can be used to launch a sustainability pledge!
- 4 **Foster partnerships with local organisations and businesses to promote sustainability**. You can start by researching who else shares your sustainability goals and mission. Reach out to these organisations, introduce yourself and your school's sustainability initiatives, and see if they'd be interested in partnering by offering their resources, expertise, or sponsorship for sustainability events.
- 5 **Organise fun and creative initiatives** such as competitions, fairs, and drives to encourage student and staff participation in sustainability initiatives. For example:

1. Plan competitions that are engaging, such as a recycling competition.
2. Plan fairs where students and staff can learn about sustainability initiatives and organisations that promote sustainability, such as the ones you've identified in point 4!
3. Plan drives, which are community events, such as a clothing or book drive, to promote trading used books or clothes, and encourage students to reuse and reduce waste.
- 6 **Devise proposals and petitions** that encourage school decision-makers to enact policies, fund, or sign off on green solutions such as banning single-use plastic, retrofitting buildings, or having locally grown school meals. Here are some steps to take:
 1. Identify the green solutions that you want to promote and highlight their benefits.
 2. Research best practices and examples of similar policies or initiatives that have been successful in other schools or communities.
 3. Develop a proposal that outlines the green solutions, their benefits, and the steps needed to implement them.
 4. Gather support from other students, staff, and community members through petitions, social media, and other communication channels.
 5. Present your proposal to school decision-makers, such as the school board, principal, or superintendent, and advocate for their adoption.

GREEN YOUR SCHOOL COUNCIL

These are just some of the ways that your student council can work towards making your campus more environmentally conscious. However, the **opportunities are endless**: flip back to the previous section where we brainstormed solutions for greening your school. Regardless of your school council's green agenda, the goal is to **leverage your ability to engage with the entire school community** and as the representatives of other students, make sure you are listening to your fellow peers! Moreover, **ensure that you have an actionable plan** that will make it easier for others to understand your goals, get on board, and support you. Sometimes, school councils are already comprised of parent representatives, teachers, education authorities, and students. If yours isn't, why not propose for your council to have biweekly meetings with other **stakeholders** in your school? Not only can this give you new ideas, and help your agenda succeed, but also ensure responsibility, incentive, encouragement, and representation within your council.

Now, you may be thinking, I have an idea and a vision but I am not sure how to make it happen! **Has my idea already been implemented at my school and I am just unaware of it? How long would it take? What support will I need?**

The next section should answer all of your questions, as we will guide you through **identifying and fully understanding your initiative**, and then **developing and measuring the impact of your advocacy plan**. We hope that, armed with the tools and tactics we will outline, you will become more confident to act on your passion for change, identify clear steps in your advocacy plan, and expand the impact of your advocacy actions.



PART 3: DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY PLAN

Developing an environmental advocacy plan is a process which includes **fact-finding, building your team and network, writing your strategic plan**, and finally, **evaluating how well it worked!** This may sound tedious, but having a step-wise approach will help your organisation and time management and most importantly, maximise the chances of actually improving the issue you have chosen to tackle.

1. CHOOSING YOUR ISSUE

The advocacy process starts by asking yourself: **what change do I want to see in the world?**

People become passionate about various issues for different reasons, and that's good! Society presents many challenges, and we need every advocate to use their unique skills and get involved in their specific way. This toolkit focuses on **environmental challenges**, but even **climate change is a wide scope with many sub-issues**. Are you passionate about wildlife and forest conservation? Recycling, thrifting, and up-cycling? Renewable energy?

While there may be many causes you would like to get behind, starting with a specific issue you would like to create change around, as well as identifying goals you can work towards to reflect that change, is an important step. Otherwise, without a clear vision, you can get lost in trying to focus on too many things and not know where to start. Therefore, clarify to yourself and to others what exactly you are trying to tackle and streamline your efforts, it is important to start with a solid foundation.

If you like, fill in the following sentences to help frame your issue:

*As we go through this section, find the (e.g. blue bubbles) where you can jot down your own ideas as we go through the steps.

<p>My issue</p>	
<p>The change I want to see</p>	
<p>Specific goals for achieving that change</p>	
	<p>This issue is important to me because at this point, take the time to articulate why you are choosing this issue. Have you been affected by this issue, or witnessed something first-hand that spurred you to confront it? Did you hear a story, or watch a documentary that made you passionate about this cause? Is there somewhere you'd like to go, or something you'd like to do in the future but are afraid you won't be able to because of climate change? What particular consequences do you fear? Explaining why the cause you have chosen is important to you will help get others interested and connect over common sources of motivation.</p>

PART 3: DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY PLAN

2. GAINING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

The next step is to **conduct research** so that you may **gain a better understanding of the historical, social, and political context** surrounding your issue. This involves searching the web, reading articles and books, or talking to experts about the subject. In doing so, you can learn more about what caused the situation and how people have responded to it over time, through laws, movements, organisations, and other specific initiatives. This, in turn, will help you refine and support the impact of your preferred solution. Additionally, by gathering various opinions people have on this topic, you will be able to **better navigate the social and cultural dynamics around it**, and through **understanding how others feel and relate to your issue**, know how to best advocate for them.

Tip Remember to **keep track of your sources** (and make sure they are reliable! Fake news and false narratives are easily spread and can jeopardise your efforts), so that you may give credit where it is due and so that you and others can easily go back to them whenever needed!

To learn more about the basics of climate change in a fun and engaging way, check out our other Arab Youth Council for Climate Change [crash course](#): Climate Change for All: A Climate Literacy Course.

Historical Context

What led to the current situation? Since climate change is a scientific phenomenon, it is helpful to understand this aspect from a historical context too. For example, why are our oceans becoming more acidic? Why are we struggling with deforestation? To ensure you can make a change, you need to orientate yourself with the root cause of the problem. Ask yourself.

- 1 When did this issue begin?
- 2 What are some of the events that led to or may have influenced this issue? With climate change, this can include both human-caused and natural effects.
- 3 How have certain players (individuals or entities) exasperated this issue or contributed to solutions?

Social Context

For your cause to be successful, you will need support from all kinds of people within your community. So, you need to understand the **different opinions and perspectives** that people have on your issue, or lack thereof. In that case, why might some people not care about, or believe in the subject? This will allow you to effectively engage, collaborate, and work with others toward a solution.

- 1 Who in the community is involved, either positively or negatively, in the issue?
- 2 How do these people relate to each other?
- 3 What social and cultural considerations may influence the topic at hand?

Political Context

Every community, institution, or group has a political context. This simply means the **processes and structures** in place that influence and control policy which, in turn, will affect the way in which you carry out your advocacy plan.

- 1 Who are the rule makers, and how are decisions made? How can you best propose your solutions in that given structure? What common values can you build towards?
- 2 What policies relating to your issue exist? Who ensures these policies are upheld? How can you capitalise on this?
- 3 How can people engage with decision-makers? For example, can you have a discussion with your school director? If not, who would be your point of contact?

Now that we've reviewed how to gain a deeper understanding on the background of your issue, let's delve deeper into something we've already touched on: **POLICIES**.

PART 3: DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY PLAN

3. UNDERSTANDING POLICIES

Policies are a critical part of advocacy, whether or not you aim to change them (for example, you may want to focus instead on changing values and norms). Engaging with policy may seem intimidating, or even brash. However, we recall that policies are simply a **set of plans or methods to make decisions or achieve a desired outcome**. Consequently, it is beneficial to understand the policy framework in **which your advocacy plan will operate, what rules around your issue exist, and how they might affect your cause**.

To identify and understand policies that are relevant to you, ask yourself:

- 1 Where can I find out about the policies in my school?
- 2 Who is responsible for policies around my issue?
- 3 Are there documents you can access to gain a clearer understanding of what these policies stipulate?

By doing this, you will **gain knowledge about what policies already exist and whether they align with your cause to understand how to best capitalise on them**. Additionally, look at the policies implemented in other educational, private, or public institutions, many have policies surrounding sustainable initiatives. You may be inspired to imitate the policies and climate targets of a local company. Or, your school can align with state and national climate policies. Most countries have an NDC, or Nationally Determined Contribution, which is a climate action plan that each country submits to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) under the Paris Agreement. The NDCs outline each country's efforts to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change**. This can also allow students to understand the ongoing activities and initiatives that countries are adopting to mitigate and address climate change, and could even encourage students to have a more meaningful contribution towards climate action. You can learn more about the NDCs [here](#).



PART 3: DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY PLAN

4. COLLECTIVE ACTION

Collective action is the spirit of advocacy: while individual change is good, ultimately, advocacy should seek to be **inclusive** of everyone. This is especially important with climate related issues, which are inherently global. Consequently, it is **important to network**. Networking is the process of **interacting with others to exchange information and develop relationships**. While networking is something ongoing, which you should continue after you set your advocacy plan in motion, initiating contact with people from the beginning can uncover opportunities, give you access to resources, help you gain advice, and connect you with people you may want to work with.

One reason for networking is that it is the gateway for **building allyships to focus collective efforts** and if you choose, build an advocacy team. This represents a more strategic and deliberate form of networking, important for a successful advocacy plan. In cultivating an advocacy team with people who offer their assistance, advice, support, and friendship, they can:

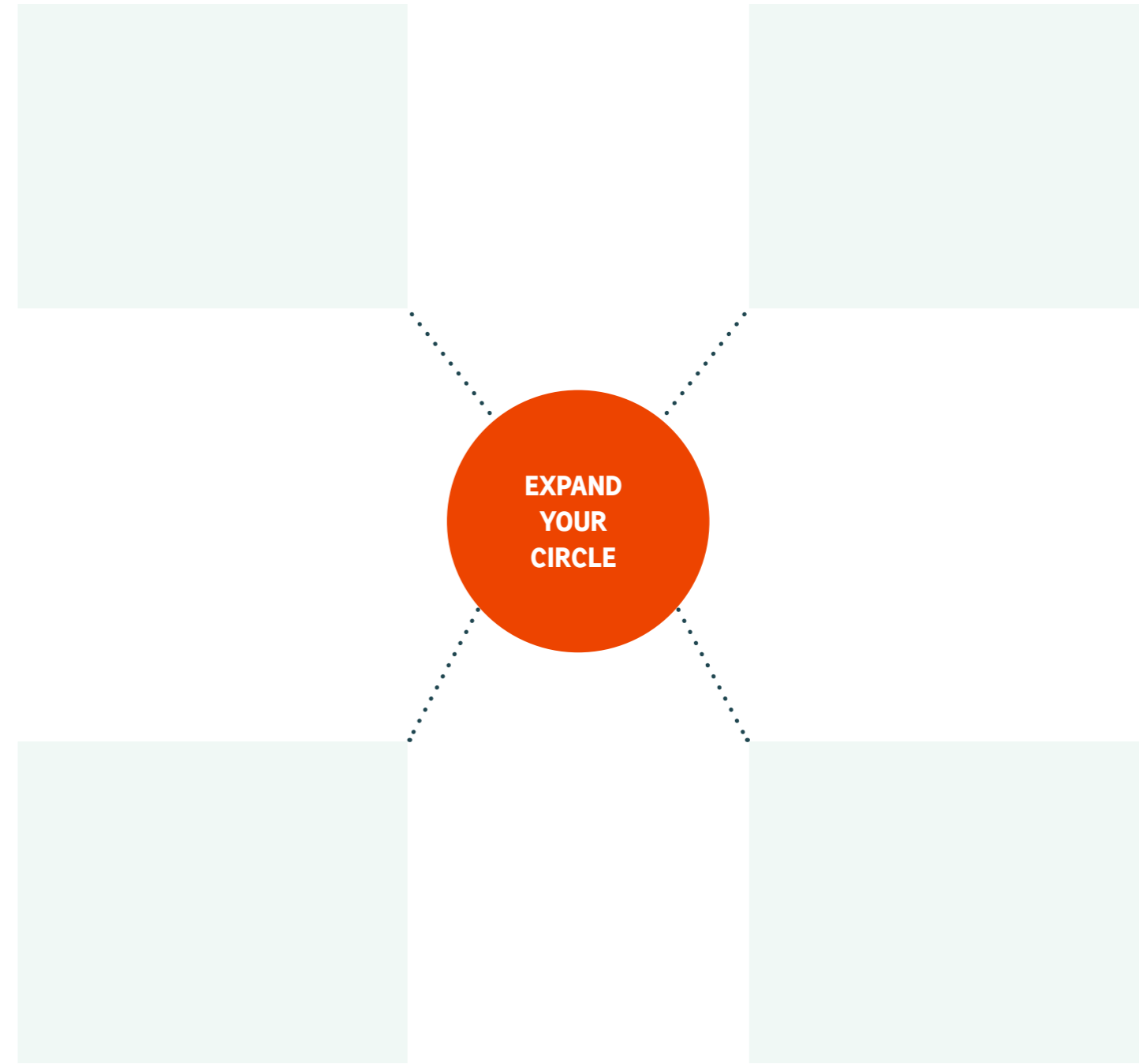
- 1 Bring in unique skills
- 2 Offset your weaknesses
- 3 Help you view situations from different angles
- 4 Brainstorm ideas

- 5 Offer access to their networks
- 6 Provide support when you feel discouraged or hit a wall...nobody said advocacy is always easy!

Another outcome of networking is that you may **reach people who don't contribute directly to your strategy**, yet participate in your initiatives, or help spread the word.

Within your school, what are the different groups or individuals you interact with? Are there specific friends or professors that you feel particularly aligned within your values, or already have close relationships with?

If you like, fill in the following network map with whom you think could be important allies. Write in their name and what role you envision them playing in your advocacy, or the special skills and knowledge they could bring. Make sure to think beyond the bounds of just the student body or your teachers, think of the family members of the student body (parents, siblings), public officials such as your town mayor, decision-makers you could connect with, impactful organisations you could leverage, or even social media influencers who are popular in your area who might make a bigger impact in spreading your message or your initiative.



With a goal in mind, a solid background on the issue at hand, and map of possible connections you can leverage, you are now ready to formulate a strategy outlining what actions you want to achieve through your campaign and what steps need to be taken in order to reach your goals!

PART 3: DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY PLAN

5. USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has changed the game of spreading ideas and engaging with others. With more and more people having access to the internet and owning smartphones, **social media provides a quick and effective way to reach people**. Additionally, social media **makes it easier to expand your network beyond your immediate community**. By using posts, polls, live Q&As, broadcasts, and other creative tactics to interact with many people, you can **raise awareness, organise information, and help build momentum**. Lastly, keeping up with the latest trends and events within your issue of interest can help you **stay informed about meetings, conferences, and events** that may be relevant to your topic, and help you organise your own!

Make sure that the content you produce is compatible with your preferred social media channel. For example, a lengthy Facebook post that could be shared on a group might not have the same impact on Instagram or Tik Tok. As a general rule, the more engaging, interactive, and digestible your content is, the better it will perform. Depending on the most popular apps in your country, **you could try some of these features to get your message across:**




Some ways you could utilise social media for your advocacy campaign include:

-  **Set up accounts on social media** to represent your cause, school council, or team to highlight your efforts and maximise your reach
-  **Follow other accounts or discussions around this issue** to stay up to date



Design digital campaigns. Ask yourself the following:

- Who is your audience?
- What are your key messages?
- What is your content strategy and messaging tactics?
- What are the key activities and resources needed to implement your campaign?
- How long will it run? If working in a team, will you have a dedicated "content creator"?
- How will you engage in and moderate discussions?

Creating a Facebook group for the student body where they could keep track of the latest news and updates on programmes and campaigns

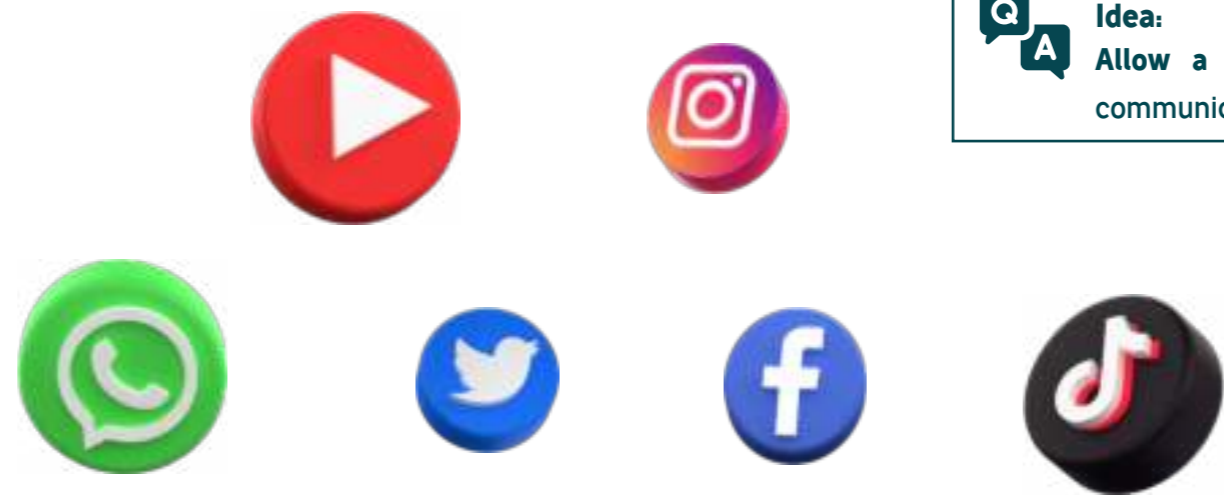
-  **Idea:** Encourage the student body to join the group and create an active platform for discussing programmes and campaigns
-  **Idea:** Upload photos and videos from events that show the progress being made
-  **Idea:** Use the Facebook page as a platform to engage with the entire community and reach out to public and private entities

Making engaging posts and stories with polls and trivia on Instagram that the student body could participate in and share across their own accounts

-  **Idea:** Create a daily trivia question relevant to your projects with interesting facts and stories to keep the audience engaged
-  **Idea:** Use the Instagram polls feature as a tool to identify and assess user opinion on ongoing activity

Developing a Twitter Space, where you can create events that allow users to get on and voice out their concerns - this could be an informal podcast as well


-  **Idea:** Set up regular Twitter Space events and host guests from the public or private sector, from the community, or from the student body to discuss issues or opportunities
-  **Idea:** Allow a Q&A segment where users could directly communicate with the host or the guest




PART 3: DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY PLAN

5. USING SOCIAL MEDIA

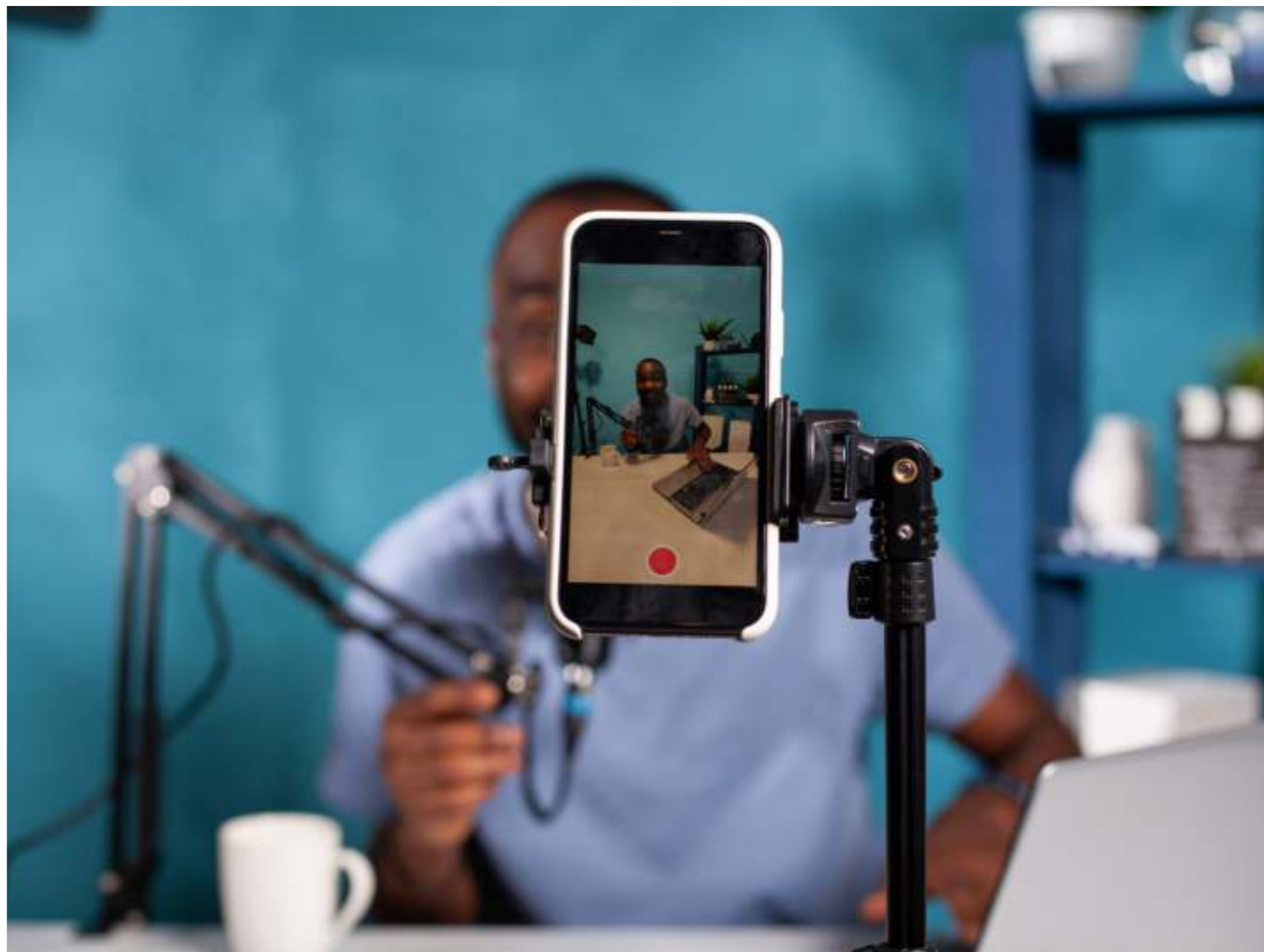
Getting creative on Tik Tok and making short-form content that makes social media engagement a little more entertaining and digestible

 **Idea:** Use Tik Tok to create an attention-catching pitch for your campaign, programme, or project

 **Idea:** Create hashtags and slogans and use trending sounds and filters to maximise engagement and activity on your Tik Tok

To increase engagement even more, you could ask your school’s principal or university if they could **boost your page on the official school or university page across any social media platforms** that apply. Even better, you could ask if they could **provide you with a small budget to boost and promote your posts** and showcase the positive impact and work you are contributing to your community and student body. **Tagging accounts and people** you want to reach can also go a long way if you are consistent and make sure to produce creative and engaging content. It would be worth **collaborating with accounts** that have established a sizable following that you could be exposed to as well.

Tip Digital platforms are a powerful tool, but make sure to use social media responsibly. Remember to check the reliability of the information you find and share, and make sure that what you say is reliable as well. Lastly, etiquette is important, especially for an advocate: ensure that whatever you say to someone, you’d be just as comfortable saying face to face.








PART 3: DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY PLAN

6. WRITING YOUR ADVOCACY PLAN

Now that you have brought information and people together, as well as picked up some engagement strategies along the way, **you are ready to write your advocacy plan**. Think back to the goals you set in step 1; if along the way you've gathered new information or were recommended solutions that you didn't think of before, **feel free to refine or change your specific objectives now**. We've already mentioned that **having well-defined goals is important**: while it may seem strange to start at the end and work backwards, having clear sight of the impact you want to have will **help you come up with targeted activities, strategies, and intermediate goals** so that you may reach your final, long-term ones.

To organise your advocacy plan, which you can think of as your strategic roadmap, or the bridge between strategy and execution, ask yourself the following (and if you like, take this opportunity to draft your advocacy plan now! Don't worry, it's not graded).

	What are your big picture goals or impacts?
	What is the short-term change you hope to see?
	What are the direct results or outputs (try to quantify these) of your campaign?
	What activities contribute to your plan and help to achieve goals?
	What are the inputs needed to implement your activities?

After that, fill in the following impact model to achieve your big picture goal. **Here is an example of what it would like look for a bike-sharing scheme on campus:**

- Bicycles
- Bike racks or parking facilities
- Helmets and other safety gear
- Staff to manage the scheme
- Marketing and promotional materials

Box 1, Inputs: These are the resources required to implement the bike sharing scheme

- Procuring bicycles and other necessary equipment
- Setting up bike racks or parking facilities
- Developing marketing and promotional materials to raise awareness of the scheme
- Hiring and training staff to manage the scheme
- Establishing rules and procedures for using the bikes and returning them

Box 2, Activities: These are the specific actions taken to implement the bike sharing scheme

- Number of bicycles procured
- Number of bike racks or parking facilities installed
- Number of helmets and other safety gear provided
- Number of staff hired and trained
- Number of students who participate in the scheme

Box 3, Outputs: These are the tangible results of the bike sharing scheme.

- Ratio between number of bicycles and student body
- Space available for bike racks and other infrastructure that this project might need
- Budgets available for procuring the necessary equipment
- Student engagement (Is this an activity that students would be excited to engage with? How could the maximum number of students be engaged?)
- Safety and legal challenges (this might be taken up with the campus principal and public officials)

Box 4, Challenges: These are the obstacles that could make goal achievement a challenge

- Reduction in the number of students using cars to get to and from school
- Increase in physical activity levels among students who use the bikes
- Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from reduced car use
- Improvement in overall health and well-being among students who use the bikes
- Reduction in traffic congestion around the school

Box 5, Outcomes: These are the changes that result from the bike sharing scheme.

- Improved environmental quality
- Improved student wellbeing
- A culture of sustainable transport on campus (and increased awareness?)

Box 6, Impact: This is the overall effect of the bike sharing scheme on the school community and the environment.

PART 3: DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY PLAN

6. WRITING YOUR ADVOCACY PLAN

Box 1, Inputs

Box 4, Challenges

Box 2, Activities

Box 5, Outcomes

Box 3, Outputs

Box 6, Impacts

There are many project management and other organisational tools designed to assist you in organising and managing such projects and tasks effectively. For example, take a look at the [Gantt chart](#).

The Gantt chart allows you to see at a glance what the various activities of your project are, when each activity begins and ends, how long each activity is scheduled to last, where activities connect and overlap with other activities, and the start and end date of the whole project.

PART 3: DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY PLAN

7. MONITORING PROGRESS

Let's go back to step 1, when you identified the change you wanted to see. **Monitoring and evaluating your progress** helps you **identify what is going well, and what is not in your advocacy plan**. Monitoring refers to **regularly gathering information throughout your project, and determining the effect of your activities**. We mentioned that your advocacy activities should enable you to reach the goals you have set: **how can you check if they actually are?** By continuously assessing your outputs and outcomes, you can quickly assess the current situation and how a policy, campaign, or project has progressed over time. Finally comes evaluating whether your advocacy plan has had its intended consequences, and making adjustments where necessary to have more of an impact in the future. Evaluation can be time-consuming, costly, and in some cases, nearly impossible. For example, it is quite difficult to follow people around to see if they have actually changed their attitudes or behaviour. Consequently, we suggest thinking of some **quantifiable goals and targets**, if applicable, that would make evaluation easier. Keep in mind that different policies and campaigns will have unique indicators and thus, require their own approach to monitoring.

HERE ARE SOME INITIATIVES AND THEIR SUGGESTED METRICS OR TOOLS

INITIATIVES	SUGGESTED METRICS OR TOOLS
REDUCING WASTE	Weigh it! At the end of each day, weigh the food and material waste at your school. Record it and then use data analysis tools, like Excel, to track and visualise whether it is decreasing.
CURBING ENERGY AND WATER CONSUMPTION	Look at utility bills. If your school doesn't already, advocate for installing smart meters that provide detailed information about consumption, making recording and tracking usage easier.
USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	Leverage insight features on social media platforms. These can show you who, how, and when people are engaging the most with your posts. For example, business and creator Instagram accounts have free access to Instagram insights that tell them about the overall trends across their followers and their content's performance with their audience.
RAISING KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS, AND INSPIRING GREEN HABITS	As we mentioned, observing behavioural change is difficult . However, you can use surveys to see how people's perceptions change before and after a policy is implemented. When crafting your survey questions, avoid influencing answers by presenting questions in a neutral manner and steer clear of complex or double-barreled questions. You could also find lots of inspiration for an initiative by reading the first iteration of the Arab Youth Toolkits titled Conscious Consumerism, check it out here .

To further support you with building your advocacy plan using the seven steps mentioned above, check out this [resource](#) for some inspiration (just remember that this resource is to help guide you on advocacy in general, you are the ultimate decision maker on what you want to advocate for, and how you want to go about advocating for it).

PART 4: GREEN STUDENT INITIATIVES AROUND THE WORLD

At this point, we imagine you are well-equipped to get started with **greening your own school and developing an advocacy plan to realise your ambitions**. To give you some real life examples, the next section will introduce a few case studies of what students like you are doing around the world to make their universities more sustainable. Many of these stories have inspired sustainable identities in schools, triggering new student and administrative-led initiatives, and have been replicated in other institutions, or have grown bigger than the confines of their school community. **Feel free to get inspired!**



Trash2Treasure at University of New Hampshire, USA

Started by Alex Freid, a student at University of New Hampshire in 2011, **Trash2Treasure** is a programme run by students which aims to reduce waste for the University of New Hampshire and the local community. The programme's main focus is the **collecting goods during the student's annual spring move-out and selling them during their fall move-in weekend**. This helps **minimise landfill waste and provides cost savings for families**. During the end of the school year, T2T collects large amounts of furniture and dorm items from students, which are then either recycled or resold at reduced prices in the fall. Since its creation, T2T has helped students save over half a million dollars in back-to-school expenses and has prevented over 174 tons of waste from going to landfills. What's more, it has spread to other schools in the US, such as Northeastern University and American University.



Energy Carta at University of Singapore, Singapore

Energy Carta is a non-profit organisation founded in 2008 by a group of like-minded National University of Singapore students. Its focus lies in **empowering the sustainable development industry among young leaders**. What started as launching a one-time event, the Awesome Youth Energy Summit (AYES2008), Energy Carta has evolved into an ongoing effort to educate young people about opportunities in the sustainable development field and develop future leaders. Over the years, Energy Carta has explored various methods of engaging with youth, including **conferences, job fairs, business case competitions, and games**. It has received support from corporate sponsors and organisations such as the Energy Market Authority, the Energy Studies Institute, and the National University of Singapore's Entrepreneurship Centre, and its alumni include professionals in a range of industries, including cleantech investment, green building design, environmental consulting, oil and gas, and more.



Potajouy at HEC, France

Potajouy is an association started in 2017 by HEC students. Potajouy is **developing a permaculture vegetable garden, with the aim of raising awareness on campus around agro-ecology, ecological construction and renewable nature**. **Permaculture** itself is a conceptual system inspired by the functioning of nature, and seeks to design harmonious, sustainable, and resilient human

settlements which imitate natural ecosystems, saving labour and energy. Additionally, this project has created a friendly space on campus where everyone can eat seasonal fruits and vegetables. Their next step? **To create a business providing baskets of fresh produce**.



Green Campus at University College Cork, Ireland

In March 2010, **University College Cork** became the first University in the world to be awarded a Green Flag (meaning its activities are compliant with the principles of sustainability) from the Foundation for Environmental Education. Since then, they have maintained this status, by continuously passing assessments by a panel of external experts. Beginning in 2007, Green Campus was the brainchild of the school's Environmental Student Society. Today, it remains a student-led partnership with staff, benefiting from strong commitment and support from the highest levels in the university. Evolving significantly since its inception, the Green Campus Programme enhances the school's sustainability management as well as promotes environmental championship throughout the region. To continue expanding the programme's impact, the (student-led) Green Campus Committee, chaired by the Student's Union Deputy President, meets regularly to discuss ideas and campaigns. Green Campus's areas of focus **include greening commuting and business travel, landscaping and natural resources, food health, recycling and waste management, energy, water, and procurement and contracts**.



THE UAE'S SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS INITIATIVE (SCI)

Launched by the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi and sponsored by Borouge, the **Sustainable Campus Initiative (SCI)** aims to **help young people get involved in making positive changes on their own campuses and in their local communities**. The environmental challenges of our day, such as climate change and the depletion of natural resources, are being discussed and worked on by today's youth, alongside the economic, social, and cultural obstacles that appear to characterise our globalised society. SCI is meant to **serve as a guide for higher education students as they face an uncertain future and approach their roles that dictate the trajectory towards a sustainable future**. The programme is divided into:

- 1 **The Green Campus Audit** that prompts students to measure ongoing activity around their campuses such as water and energy consumption, quantity of waste produced, and biodiversity found on the campus site.
- 2 **The Sustainability Action Project** that encourages students to identify and develop solutions to sustainability challenges that their campuses face.
- 3 **The Green Youth Majlis** which is a platform for youth that are part of the SCI programme to meet quarterly and discuss solutions and initiatives that further empower and enable youth in the sustainability space.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES FOR SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION

We wrap-up this toolkit by offering **three international programmes designed to encourage sustainability in educational institutions**. Students and schools from any country can participate, so we encourage you to navigate to their websites, which we provide, to find out more. You will note that most of these programmes **highly focus on reporting and auditing their environmental performance** – which is a critical component of sustainable education and for the implementation of any climate initiative as monitoring and performance assessment provide the enablers of these initiatives (in this case, the students) with necessary feedback on whether the initiative is meeting the necessary climate goals. In addition to identifying areas of improvement and expansion, reporting also helps ensure that everyone is playing the necessary role to meet these objectives and allows for the distribution of the success of an initiative. There are many stakeholders who must be engaged to ensure that the proper goals are met efficiently and effectively.



RACE TO ZERO FOR UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

Powered by the UN Environment Programme, **Race To Zero** is a global initiative **aimed at gathering support from businesses, cities, regions, and investors for a zero carbon recovery that is healthy, resilient, and creates jobs while promoting sustainable growth**. This campaign brings together a coalition of leading net-zero efforts, including 11,309 non-State actors such as 8,307 companies, 595 financial institutions, 1,136 cities, 52 states and regions, 1,125 educational institutions, and 65 healthcare institutions (as of September 2022).

The goal of the campaign is to **increase momentum towards a net-zero economy by 2050**. Information on the dedicated coalition for universities and colleges can be found [here](#).

How does it work? First, a school pledges to reach net zero GHGs as soon as possible, the latest target year being 2050, and sets an interim target for the next decade. Next, within 12 months of joining, the school must explain what actions will be taken toward achieving both interim and long-term pledges. Lastly, the school commits to report publicly both progress on pledges and activities.

Already, 1137 institutions have signed and 437 institutions have committed to their target. Use this [link](#) to find out if your school is a signatory. If not? Only head-of-organisations can sign Race to Zero, but that shouldn't stop you! It is the perfect opportunity to use the tools and tactics covered in this toolkit to rally support within your school and advocate for joining Race to Zero, so you can help kickstart and benchmark green initiatives at your school.

ECOSCHOOLS

ECOSchools is a programme designed to **encourage young people to engage in their environment, starting with the classroom**. By having a voice in the environmental management policies of their schools, students steer their schools towards certification and prestige which comes with being awarded a Green Flag. The Eco-Schools programme consists of three structural elements: The Seven Steps Framework (a methodology to help schools maximise the success of their Eco-School ambitions), the Eco-Schools

Themes, (biodiversity & nature, climate change, energy, food, transport, and waste to name a few), and finally, the Assessment for the Green Flag. ECOSchools is operated by the Foundation for Environmental Education, which is partnered with some of the world's foremost organisations in the fields of education and the environment such as UNESCO, the UNEP, UNWTO, ISESCO, YMP, Earth Charter, the GAP and eTwinning.

You can read more about ECOSchools' many projects, and network [here](#).

To get in contact and see whether your school can join, click [here](#).

STARS: THE SUSTAINABILITY TRACKING, ASSESSMENT & RATING SYSTEM

STARS is a global sustainability standard **created by and for higher education, which offers colleges and universities a transparent, self-reporting framework to measure their sustainability performance**. Any college or university can register and benefit from this tool, whether they are already high-achieving institutions or taking their first steps towards sustainability. By participating in STARS and preparing a valid STARS report, institutions receive a public rating, these are reporter, bronze, silver, gold, or platinum, depending on their performance. Their website details all the resources necessary to begin reporting, including a technical manual, a reporting tool, and a benchmarking tool, making it easy to get started. Lastly, in joining, you have access to the whole STARS community, so that you may connect with other participating institutions.

This could help you in understanding what activities these institutions are adopting to gain higher ratings and support you in potentially replicating some of these activities in a meaningful way on your campus and among your peers.

CONCLUSION

This toolkit only provides you with a few examples of **what advocating for a green school or university would look like**, however you could always get creative in how you go about advocating for these causes. Ultimately, the goal is the same: student bodies – who will lead future governments, the private sector, and the global economy as a whole – must be prepared to **catalyse change and champion the transition towards a sustainable future**. While the scale might seem minuscule, the cumulative effects of mobilising schools and universities for the same objectives of climate action and a greener tomorrow will **kickstart a movement across the most important demographic and generation**. After all, the risk of inaction might cause irreversible consequences.

Whether it's starting a new council to represent the voice of youth and making their concerns heard, promoting projects that make your campus more sustainable, or just raising awareness to educate the student body on the importance of climate action and leading a more sustainable lifestyle, these are all **meaningful steps that you can start taking to develop the necessary leadership skills to create and reinforce a positive climate impact**.





HSBC in the MENAT region

HSBC is the largest and most widely represented international banking organisation in the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey (MENAT), with a presence in nine countries across the region: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. In Saudi Arabia, HSBC is a 31% shareholder of Saudi British Bank (SABB), and a 51% shareholder of HSBC Saudi Arabia for investment banking in the Kingdom. Across MENAT, HSBC had assets of US\$71bn as at 31 December 2021.



The Arab Youth Center (AYC)

The Arab Youth Center (AYC), led by HH Sheikh Theyab Bin Mohammed Bin Zayed, Chairman of the Crown Prince's Court and AYC, aims to empower young Arabs and address their needs.

The Center offers a unique platform to develop youth capabilities and support innovation and creativity among youth. AYC implements purposeful initiatives across diverse sectors, in addition, it conducts research on young Arabs to help decision-makers shape policies that enable their progress.

The Arab Youth Council for Climate Change (AYCCC)

The Arab Youth Council for Climate Change (AYCCC) is an initiative by the Arab Youth Center in cooperation with the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment (MOCCA), the Office of the UAE's Special Envoy for Climate Change, and private sector partners under the umbrella of the Arab League. The Council aims to achieve a qualitative leap in the interaction of Arab youth with environmental issues, support youth climate action, and engage young Arabs in developing innovative and sustainable solutions to the climate change challenge.



Posterity Institute

The Posterity Institute is an independent, non-profit, and non-partisan think tank that strives to create a better tomorrow, and a more sustainable shared future for the coming generations. The Institute aims to develop a deeper understanding and awareness of sustainable development challenges in emerging economies through conducting research, leading programmes and initiatives, and fostering strategic partnerships with the public and private sectors. The Institute has two focus areas: Climate Change and Inclusive Economic Growth. It also centralises the role of Technology for Good, leveraging and promoting the use of the latest technologies to overcome obstacles and catalyse sustainable living.

The Institute's team of experts leads research studies particularly on public policy, curates and designs specialty courses relevant to its focus areas, enables leaders and pioneers, supports and facilitates regional and international initiatives that accelerate sustainable development, and nurtures meaningful partnerships and collaborations between the public and private sectors.

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