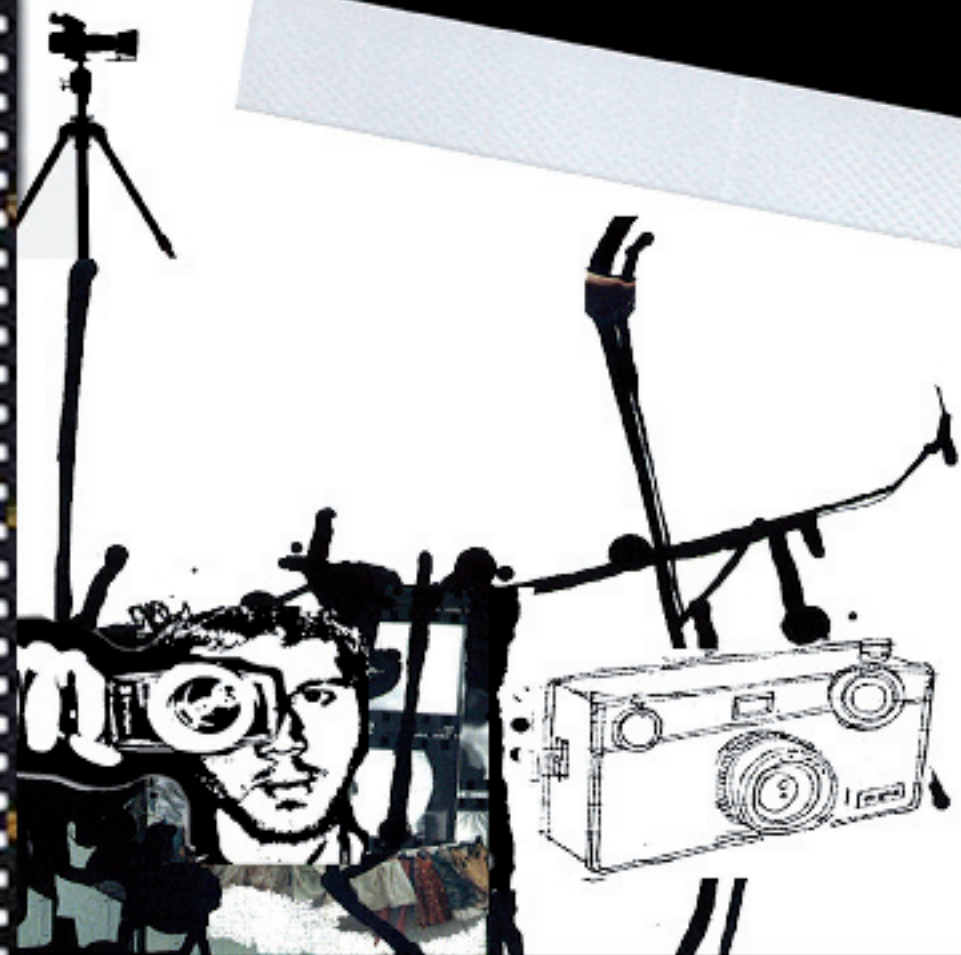




5. Take Action





**Young people are not a passive group but active individuals, with the ability to take positive actions and empower themselves!**

### **5.1. USING ZOOM IN! TO CREATE GLOBAL CHANGE**

Unfortunately, young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is not being acknowledged in all countries around the world. Often young people face a lack of information and access to services and are unable to make and act upon their own decisions concerning their sexual health. In many countries young people's SRHR is also violated, which can put their lives at serious risk. Additionally, young people are often seen as passive and portrayed as being frequently at risk and, as such, needing to change their behaviour. In this sense, they are often seen as a problem group.

Given a chance, young people can change this. They are experts on the needs and interests of their own lives and active agents of change. Young people have the ability to take positive actions and empower themselves as well as others!

With half of the world's population under the age of 25, the crucial need for meaningful involvement of young people is being increasingly recognised. Programmes, projects and policies for young people in both the developed and developing world have proven to be more effective if young people are actively involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes. Providing young people with an environment in which to advocate for their sexual and reproductive rights is also crucial to realising the Millennium Development Goals. ([www.choiceforyouth.org](http://www.choiceforyouth.org))

Young people worldwide need to be able to make informed choices and have a right to responsible and fulfilling experiences when it comes to sex and relationships. Yet limited access to youth-friendly services and information, lack of comprehensive sex education and cultural taboos provide acute barriers to realising these rights and are putting lives at risk.

Fighting and advocating for sexual and reproductive health and rights can be done in many different ways and on many different levels. The Zoom In! project can be used as a tool in this fight. By introducing the subject and issues surrounding SRHR of young people and the impact of this on their lives, Zoom In! can raise awareness and provoke thoughts, discussions and actions among not just young people but also educators, politicians, media and other stakeholders about the importance of meeting the needs and interests of young people worldwide.

**Youth participation is not only about giving young people a voice, but to encourage adults to listen.**

#### RESOURCES

[www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/mdgs.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/mdgs.htm) - Youth and the Millennium Development Goals



## 5.2 WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is speaking up, drawing attention to an important issue and demanding change for the better.

We advocate for change on behalf of a cause or issue because we want to:

- build support for that cause or issue;
- influence others to support it; or
- bring about positive change in support of that cause or issue.

You can advocate in many different ways. For example:

- writing a letter to a newspaper,
- talking with government leaders or journalists,
- organising or participating in a rally,
- organising or signing a petition.

With all advocacy and awareness raising activities, it's crucial to have a strong, clear and preferably simple message. Your message has to state what you want and why that is important. Supporting information will make your argument stronger, so gather facts and figures, relevant statements from international agreements, stories, and personal anecdotes. Choose and use the best combination of information and personal stories to influence decision makers. But keep the essential advocacy message simple. Some of the shortest are the most powerful and memorable: For example:

Drop the Debt (to end the debt crisis keeping poor countries poor)

Make Trade Fair

Make Poverty History

Make it Safe, Make it Legal (Irish abortion campaign)

Feed the World (in response to famine in Africa)

Free Nelson Mandela (anti-apartheid campaign)

Think! Don't Drink and Drive

Just Say No (Drugs)

### One minute message

A one minute message is often used to make a strong and clear statement in a short period of time. If you want to talk to the Minister of Health you often don't get a lot of time to convince him/her of your message. So imagine you are in a lift with the Minister and you have until it stops on the 10th floor – about one minute. If you can't say it in that minute – you have lost your chance. This is a good way of practising to keep your message simple.



In addition, when you write a letter or article, it's important to write in clear language, so the reader stays interested.

A short and strong message tends to consist of the following:

Your main message.

- Facts and figures (to back your argument)
- Example (a personal story to give the message 'heart')
- Statement (your call for action/change)

Always keep the goal of your message in mind and adjust your message accordingly:

- Do I want to inform people?
- Do I want to convince people?
- Do I want to motivate them to take action?

The following message is an example from two young Zoom in! participants. Their goal was to convince other students to participate in the Zoom in! project.

Zoom in!  
It is fun to be part of this project  
Because by seeing and taking pictures you discover the difference  
and similarities between developing countries and our country.  
After being a part of Zoom in! I felt really inspired  
by all the different stories behind the photos.  
Be a part of it.  
You're not only taking part in the project,  
you are the project.



## 5. Take Action

### 5.3 ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Young people are the best advocates when it comes to matters that affect themselves.

Fighting for sexual and reproductive rights for young people can be done in many different ways and on many different levels.

To fight for sexual and reproductive health and rights young people can:

- Raise awareness among other young people or adults of the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Raise money for organisations and projects that they think are important.
- Advocate for the sexual and reproductive rights of young people

The following organisations are good examples of what young people are doing worldwide.

- Dance4life, [www.dance4life.com](http://www.dance4life.com)  
an international campaign in which young people come together to advocate for support for HIV/AIDS programmes, through their schools, by organising their own campaigns and by participating in a twice-yearly international dance event.
- YPEER, [www.youthpeer.net](http://www.youthpeer.net)  
a UN Population Fund programme which supports peer educators and peer education projects on sexual and reproductive health and rights worldwide.
- YouAct, European Youth Network on Sexual and Reproductive Rights  
[www.youact.org](http://www.youact.org)  
YouAct consists of young Europeans, all active in the field of sexual and reproductive rights in their own country. Together they create a voice for young people at a European level. They advocate for the needs and rights of young people at the European Union and the United Nations, they write articles, conduct workshops and empower other young people by training and collaborating to stand up for their own rights.



#### 5.4 ZOOM IN! IN ACTION

If Zoom in! participants want ideas on what they can do to help the Zoom in! cause, it's important to think about:

- What do I want to do?  
For example, do you want to help raise awareness of sexual and reproductive health problems encountered by young people in the developing world?
- What's my goal and how am I going to reach it?  
Could your goal be to help make a change to these young people's lives and if so, do you want to raise money for international aid programmes that provide sexual and reproductive health services for these young people and/or get involved in the fight for their right to access these services.

The photo/story pairings produced during the Zoom in! project can provide a lot of material for actions you can undertake:

- Organise an exhibition at your school or in a community centre (for other young people, adults, policy makers, etc). Next to the pictures and stories you can use facts and figures around the issues, background information on the different countries, etc. Think carefully about the goal of the exhibition (inform, persuade, motivate) and develop your message accordingly.
- Make the exhibition even stronger by organising a launch at which you present the message that you want to get across and in which you can hold a debate, for example between young people and policy makers. Or include a show or role play to emphasise the issues.
- Use the school website, school newspaper, local newspaper, etc to spread your message and to exhibit the pictures or promote the exhibition.

The most important thing about taking action for the sexual and reproductive rights of young people is that you should be doing something that you really believe in.

If you or any of your participants want to stay active after the Zoom in! project and join other European young people in the fight for young people's rights, please visit YouAct at [www.youact.org](http://www.youact.org).