

ADVOCACY AND THE MEDIA

What Is It?

The process of helping media practitioners understand family planning and its benefits and engaging journalists in reporting consistently, factually and responsibly on family planning issues.

What are the Benefits?

- Strengthens journalists' ability to spread accurate information on the benefits of family planning, which can help counter myths and misconceptions within the community
- Builds awareness of family planning issues within the context of the nation and community, helping to create public dialogue around family planning issues
- Helps influence policymakers and makes the case for renewed commitment to family planning
- Educates the general public about family planning, which can inspire them to hold their leaders accountable for the promises and commitments they make



How to Implement?

Step 1: Conduct a media stakeholder analysis

- Also called a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice (KAP) analysis, a [stakeholder analysis](#) will help you understand what journalists know about family planning, how they feel about it and what issues they are writing about (and how). For sample results from a stakeholder analysis, see the [Nigerian Urban Reproductive Health Initiative \(NURHI\) Media Stakeholder Analysis](#).
- To implement the media stakeholder analysis:
 - Identify the specific family planning issue to explore such as youth, long-acting contraceptive methods or male involvement.
 - Prepare questions. You can include open-ended questions to assess knowledge and practice. You may also want to include stated statements, with which participants can agree or disagree, to assess attitudes. For more specific guidance on developing questions, see the [Media Advocacy Toolkit for Family Planning Advocacy](#), developed in Nigeria.
 - Pretest your questionnaire among a group of journalists not participating in the survey; then modify the survey based on their feedback.
 - Conduct the survey among media practitioners and analyze the results to inform your advocacy strategy.

Step 2: Identify critical media persons and begin engaging them

- Make sure to include media owners, managers, media executives and other influential players in the media, in addition to journalists.
- Conduct a series of visits with this group of media representatives to initiate working relationship(s) with them and solicit their support for increased reporting on family planning. You can present the results of your stakeholder analysis to serve as basis for the support you are seeking from the media. It will also be important to present your planned family planning activities in the community and make recommendations on how the media can help make your

project more effective.

Step 3: Conduct a desk review of health reports

- Select popular media organizations in your area (print and electronic) and assess their health stories over a period of time. Look at both quantity (number) and quality (accuracy, depth) of the stories. This will give an overview of the issues in your area and how the media is presenting them to the public.

Step 4: Conduct training for media practitioners

- Determine which training areas are most essential to cover with the media in your area. After your stakeholder analysis, meetings with media representatives, and the desk review, you will have a good idea of gaps and areas in which the media may need training. For example, they might be regularly sharing misinformation about long-acting contraceptive methods.
- Develop training modules on family planning as it relates to the media. Modules can include topics such as:
 - Effective reporting on family planning
 - Linking family planning to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
 - Family planning and economic development
 - For sample training materials that you can use or adapt, see the related pages on [Advocacy at the Sub-national Level](#) and [Advocacy with Family Planning Champions](#).
- Conduct the training with key media. For the training to be effective, include a range of media practitioners, including health reporters, education reporters, feature writers, on-air personalities and others.
- Maintain a database of trained journalists. For example, NURHI conducted a 2-day training workshop for print and electronic media journalists on family planning and its links to health and development. The project then called on these trained media representatives, drawing on a database they kept, to cover their family planning activities.

Step 5: Organize a field trip to family planning sites

- You can take journalists on field trips to family planning facilities in the community to help with effective reporting on family planning. This will help expose the media to live situations and scenarios and will give them human-interest stories to use in their reports. Be sure to also invite photographers, to document the work visually.

Step 6: Conduct regular communication with journalists to ensure adequate media coverage of family planning

- Identify a core person or a group of journalists who have keen interest in reporting family planning issues. You could also select one of these journalists as a your focal person, who can mobilize his/her colleagues as needed.
- Communicate with this person or group of people regularly about your project activities and any community or national family planning issues. With regular coverage of project activities, journalists' knowledge on how to report on family planning issues will be further enhanced. This regular exposure will also help keep them up to date with the current trends, changes, facts and figures on family planning.
- Encourage media professionals to cover stories relating to family planning on a regular basis through routine interviews with women who have benefitted from family planning interventions or services, as well as men, community leaders and others who support family planning. In Nigeria, partners worked with key media contacts to create opportunities for interviews and discussions with the Advocacy Working Group, family planning champions and project representatives. They also helped to popularize the ["Get it Together" campaign](#).

Step 7: Encourage media to monitor policy and budget changes

- In your [other advocacy activities](#), you will be monitoring government commitments, policies, budgets and family planning indicators. You can update the media on these developments and include them in training sessions, seminars, conferences, stakeholders' forums, and other related events. You can also include media representatives in your [community advocacy](#) activities.
- Encourage journalists to provide supplemental information to your policy and budget tracking. For example, journalists can visit health care facilities to obtain first-hand information and generate stories for news reports and documentaries.
- Help develop the capacity of media professionals to monitor budgets and track government's spending on family planning. One way is to foster relationships between journalists and experts in budget monitoring and tracking who can provide insider information on whether or not the government is fulfilling its family planning commitments. You can do this by inviting the media to your Advocacy Working Group meetings in which you discuss budgets. You can then advocate for regular reporting on family planning budgets, and you can also encourage the media to advocate for production of budget documents for public access and distribution.

Step 8: Track and monitor family planning coverage in electronic and print media

- Monitor family planning stories produced by key media outlets, including print, radio, TV and Internet sources.
- Assess the tracked media reports, to determine if there has been a change in the quantity and/or quality of reporting on family planning. This analysis can be compared with the baseline produced from the desk review.
- Add related indicators to project monitoring efforts. A sample indicator is the number of articles on family planning in the media during a particular time frame.

What is the Evidence?

The media has the potential to serve as civil society's voice on family planning issues; media advocacy can therefore effectively disseminate accurate information on the benefits of family planning to individuals, families, communities and the nation.

Media are the most influential and cost-effective communication channels available to successfully reach the general public with information on government obligations, as shown in a number of countries:

- Sensitization and training of journalists through Kenya's five-year Tupange project enabled journalists to publish more than 120 family planning-related articles with correct and accurate facts.
- Also in Kenya, media advocacy resulted in [an increase in women who were exposed to messages](#) about family planning on radio, TV and other media channels.
- In Nigeria, after implementation of NURHI's "Know, Talk, Go" mass media campaign encompassing radio, TV and community mobilization, the percentage of women who reported having seen family planning messages in the media jumped in all project areas (see below).

Increase in Percentage of Women Who Reported Seeing Family Planning Messages in Media



💡 Helpful Tips

- Be sure to include new media, such as social media (Facebook, Twitter and others) in your advocacy. Unlike traditional media such as radio, newspapers, TV, and magazines, new forms of media can distribute information to a wide cross-section of audiences and are particularly important in understanding what messages are reaching young people.
- Encourage journalists to interview family planning clients, health care providers, and others who work in family planning. These beneficiaries of family planning and frontline workers can help share first-hand experiences or testimonials, helping to put a “human face” to family planning issues that are often presented in the form of data, tables or charts.
- Consider awarding prizes for journalists who produce high-quality family planning stories. You can also share stories, outcomes and results with journalists and other stakeholders. This may help encourage the journalists to continue reporting on family planning.

⚠️ Challenges

- Like other stakeholders, media representatives can harbor misconceptions and incorrect information about family planning and may be reluctant to support family planning in the media due to sensitivities expressed by local opinion leaders. Thus, training media representatives is critical—not only on reporting but also on the basics of family planning and its importance to building healthy families, communities and societies.
- Moving from media to public discourse can sometimes be difficult. One way this can be achieved is by encouraging the media to cover key national and international days related to family planning, such as World Population Day, Safe Motherhood Week, World Breastfeeding Day and World AIDS Day. Securing appearances and interviews on these days can help generate public dialogue and discourse on family planning.
- Keeping content interesting can be difficult when family planning issues are covered regularly. To keep content fresh while also encouraging consistent reporting, you can suggest media professionals cover new developments that are not usually reported such as new evidence about family planning’s effect on the economy or the integration of family planning with HIV or other services.

Tools Related to This Approach

- [Family Planning Efforts Questionnaire](#)
- [Nigeria: Media Advocacy Manual](#)