

Advocacy at the Sub-National Level

Advocacy at the sub-national level in Pakistan refers to engagements with influential people in the federal, provincial and local governments, district committees, as well as influential figures in the community to support family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH), including adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health (AYSRH).



Step 1: Identify key stakeholders at the defined sub-national level

Identify influential figures as key focal persons to target with advocacy messages about family planning being an essential health service and a cost-effective and impactful intervention. Conduct orientation on family planning concepts and issues among key stakeholders to clear their misconceptions and myths about birth spacing and contraceptives. Keep in mind the budget cycle process when you engage key stakeholders at the sub-national level.



Step 2: Identify allocated budgets for advocacy activities from existing national and provincial budgets

Every year, the governments (federal and provincial) sit on their respective budgetary requirements and develop budgets for approval. In June, the government announces the budgets allocated to various areas and implementation begins in July. You can identify what activities are budgeted and plan Advocacy Working Group (AWG) activities accordingly.



Step 3: Form or leverage existing Advocacy Working Group (AWG)/Technical Working Group (TWG)

Referred to by different names – such as an Advocacy Working Group (AWG), Advocacy Core Group, or District Working Group – these groups include individuals identified in Step 1. Where a technical working group doesn't exist, designate an exclusive one for family planning and AYSRH issues, which will allow members to work as a community voice for policy change. The working group will be a way to engage with key decision-makers, build consensus and secure funding and support for family planning and AYSRH.



Step 4: Convene regular meetings with the AWG/TWG

Hold monthly meetings. During these meetings, share relevant provincial and local data with the group from the district committees, including unmet need for family planning in the area, family planning commodity needs of the area, evidence related to infrastructure, facilities, equipment, and human resources and evidence of the impact of strengthening family planning services in nearby areas (if available).



Step 5: Design and implement your advocacy strategy

Convene a meeting with the AWG/TWG to develop a site-specific advocacy strategy. Develop a specific budget for the required activities in the area to advocate for family planning and AYSRH. Develop SMART goals for your advocacy and implementation activities against the budgeted line items. Conduct pre-sensitization meetings with community leaders to kickstart the advocacy activities.



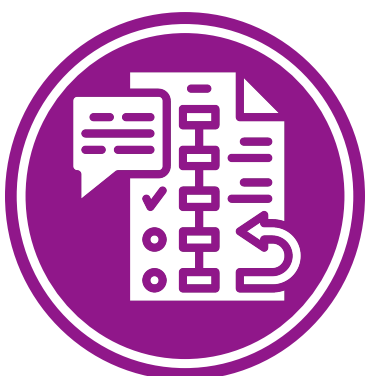
Step 6: Hold advocacy trainings to increase the skills and competencies of AWG members

Training AWG members will help sustain the advocacy activities and ensure members can advocate on behalf of married women of reproductive age and couples who desire family planning. Train members on various advocacy tactics, and on budgeting, financing and financial reporting.



Step 7: Develop and use advocacy materials

Prepare appropriate advocacy materials such as fact sheets, briefs and presentations that will meet the decision-maker's needs. Meet the decision-makers where they are, and be creative. Using data is a critical element of the advocacy materials. Advocacy materials can be city-specific and used to stimulate community dialogue.



Step 8: Follow up and monitor advocacy efforts

Convene quarterly review meetings to assess achievements, review any existing and foreseeable setbacks of the AWG/TWG and the budget task team. Shift activities as necessary. Hold annual site-specific implementation review meetings and field visits. Work with AWG/TWG members and others (e.g., community organizations, religious organizations) to ensure the sustainability of advocacy efforts.

Tips

- Identify local and affluent community leaders to serve as members of the AWG/TWG to ensure ownership and in-depth understanding of issues.
- Be patient. Avoid asking for too many things at once at advocacy meetings. Present one specific “ask” – for example, adding a budget line item to the district budget.
- Engage with community members about issues that may be unclear – for example, private provision of contraception, use of or demand for long-acting methods, etc.
- Adapt your messages to the needs of different decision-makers and influential figures.
- When working with decision-makers who are unsupportive of family planning/AYSRH, think about what might motivate them to change their mind. For example, you can frame family planning/AYSRH in terms of family health, child health or economic empowerment and development.
- It is essential to build rapport with the lower clerical staff to reach the top management in the government sector.