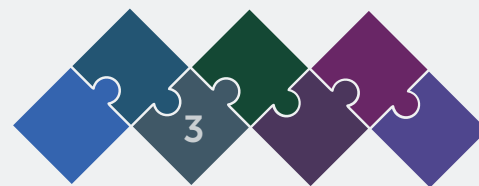


Guidance for Legislators in Health or Social Sector Committees in Parliament

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Introduction

Family planning has long been considered one of the most cost-effective development programs. Indeed, reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies and lowering population fertility rates have cascading benefits across the health, social welfare, and economic sectors. Through helping to reduce maternal and childhood illnesses and deaths, family planning contributes to labor market productivity, achieving the [demographic dividend](#), and increasing GDP per capita. Scientists estimate that for every dollar invested in reducing the unmet need for contraception, there is a long-term gain of \$120 in “accrued annual benefits,” most of it being attributable to the consequent economic growth (FP2020, p. 2).

Political goodwill and support is key to finding sustainable domestic solutions for financing family planning programs and increasing the availability, accessibility, and affordability of contraceptive choices. Persistent commitment from national leadership has been shown to be critical in developing policies that create an enabling environment for implementing family planning programs through purposeful budgetary allocations at both national and subnational levels (Murunga et al., 2013). Legislators/members of parliament—especially those who are members of parliamentary committees on health, women’s welfare, and/or social welfare—can assume leadership roles in advocating for and formulating legislation that can ensure sustainable domestic financing for family planning programs. The responsibilities of these legislators should include:

1. Advocating to the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Finance (MOF), and fellow parliamentarians on the health and economic benefits associated with national family planning programs.
2. Building broad coalitions within parliament to support increased budgetary priority for family planning programs.
3. Drafting and passing legislations that support increased domestic financial resource allocation and create an enabling environment for family planning programs.
4. Leveraging their position on oversight committees to ensure health budgets include financing for family planning and that these funds are used efficiently.
5. Engaging with civil society organizations working in family planning to create public awareness and demand for family planning services, building political pressure on the government to prioritize family planning.

The purpose of this brief is to provide practical action steps that legislators can take to improve the sustainability of family planning financing by strengthening domestic financing mechanisms. Actions offered are provided for varying country contexts and the financing mechanisms used.

Understanding the Context in Which the Family Planning Program Operates

To identify appropriate family planning financing mechanisms, legislators need to understand the country context in which the program operates, as well as the opportunities to build upon

existing and emerging financing mechanisms. To understand the context of the national family planning program, including the legal, regulatory, and policy environment related to family planning, legislators should review the landscape analysis in the country's family planning costed implementation plan. The analysis should provide a thorough review of the different aspects of the family planning program and its priorities and gaps. The Health Policy Plus (HP+) project's *Guide for Examining the Legal, Regulatory, and Policy Environment for Family Planning Inclusion in Universal Health Coverage Schemes* can help legislators identify the enablers and barriers that exist to investing in family planning as part of universal health coverage initiatives.

To understand the national health financing context, legislators should review USAID's [Family Planning Financing Roadmap](#) website and interactive tool, which can serve as a launching pad for considering relevant financing options for family planning. The site provides a review of [health financing concepts](#) and pre-filled [country-specific](#) data that can be modified to offer stakeholders a set of recommendations for family planning financing solutions appropriate to the context. Through this step, legislators should try to understand the current level of public expenditure on health and opportunities to increase this financing (such as through domestic resource mobilization), the proportion of the health budget dedicated to family planning, and the coverage and benefits provided under the country's national health insurance program/benefits package.

Engaging the Right Stakeholders

With a comprehensive understanding of the family planning context, legislators can identify the key decisionmakers and stakeholders with whom they should build stronger relationships to advance the family planning financing agenda (see Table 1). Because there is frequent turnover in key staff positions, particularly in the government, legislators will need to re-engage with new decisionmakers and stakeholders as necessary, presenting the same evidence and advocacy cases repeatedly to ensure continued collaboration.

Taking Action to Advance Family Planning Financing Strategies

After examining the country context, legislators, in collaboration with other stakeholders mentioned in Table 1, need to identify the financing solutions that are the most feasible. The following are action items for different financing mechanisms—some or all of which may be appropriate depending on the country context.

If government allocations to family planning are non-existent or insufficient:

- Collaborate with civil society organizations in the health sector to gather evidence on the health and economic benefits of investing in family planning. Utilize this information to develop policy briefs/advocacy messages targeted to the MOH, MOF, and other parliamentarians. For the latter group, it is important to develop messages that convey why constituents (communities/families) will benefit from increased availability, accessibility, and affordability of family planning services—both in terms of better health outcomes for mother and child as well as labor market productivity.
- Meet with MOH and MOF leadership during pre-budget consultations to present evidence and advocate for developing/increasing budget line allocations to family planning. Also consider if family planning services could be financed through the national health insurance scheme benefits package.
- Meet with specific caucuses within the national parliament, like the women parliamentarians' caucus or the committee on development affairs, to garner support for increased domestic financing of family planning.
- Lead the development of legislation that can support increased domestic financing for family planning programs.

If there is limited health budget necessitating a more efficient family planning program:

- When reviewing the health budget either in a committee and/or parliament, use legislative authority to introduce amendments that can improve allocative efficiency, i.e., the

Table 1. Key Stakeholders and Their Contributions to Family Planning Financing

Key Stakeholder	Responsibility	Contribution to Family Planning Financing
MOH family planning department	Gathers evidence on the value of investing in family planning programs and coordinates with other stakeholders within and outside of the government.	Articulates family planning budget needs to departments and ministries within the government as well as to development partners.
MOH planning department	Develops and monitors the national health sector strategic plan, its objectives, and the budget.	Advocates for appropriate inclusion of family planning in the health budget.
MOH finance and administration department	Manages, monitors, and reports on the MOH budget and spending.	Advocates for appropriate inclusion of family planning in the health budget, particularly specific budget line items.
MOH department in charge of universal health coverage or health financing initiatives	Develops and/or strengthens health financing mechanisms or reforms.	Makes decisions about the inclusion of family planning in health financing mechanisms or reforms.
MOF budget department	Sets and maintains the health sector budget.	Approves and disburses health budget including allocation to family planning, particularly the budget line for contraceptives.
Health insurance agencies	Determines services that are covered in benefits packages and providers that can offer them.	Considers integration of family planning services and commodities in benefits packages and contracts diverse cadres of providers in the public and private sectors for service delivery, thereby increasing access and financial risk protection.
Civil society organizations	Promotes accountability and transparency; advocates for support for family planning generally and for specific populations (e.g., adolescents).	Holds the government accountable to follow through on commitments and act with transparency; advocates for family planning contributions from the government and development partners.

best way to allocate limited funds so that maximum population-level health gains are achieved. Some of the ways to achieve this goal include:

- Ensuring that allocations equitably address unmet family planning needs of the rural and socially and economically marginalized population groups and make services available at primary healthcare facilities (not only at hospitals). Domestic financing should also address supply chain (logistic) issues in hard-to-reach areas.
- Providing guidance and monitoring to the MOH to strengthen the government financial management system by identifying and addressing potential bottlenecks in allocation, transfer, receipt, and utilization of funds from the federal level to community and facility levels.
- Emphasizing the purposeful and complete use of allocated funds within a fiscal year, which can provide a strong justification for increasing family planning allocations in the subsequent health budget.

- Use oversight authority over the MOH's budget execution (especially for legislators in the health committee) to implement steps to improve technical efficiency, i.e., using the available resources to achieve the maximum possible improvement in outputs:
 - Use the forthcoming HP+ [family planning technical efficiency tool](#) to identify potential inefficiencies in the family planning program. Steps to improve efficiency in service delivery may include integration with the HIV program, inclusion of adolescent-friendly services, ensuring availability of commodities, and conducting in-service training for providers. Additional measures to improve efficiency may involve improving program management and increasing demand for services—for example, through health insurance or voucher programs, media campaigns, and social marketing.
- Work with the MOH to develop vouchers or other subsidies that may increase the demand for family planning services among target population groups.
- Work with the MOH and MOF to identify and evaluate opportunities for [blended finance](#), strategically using public and philanthropic resources to incentivize private funding for family planning programs.

If family planning commodities are not exempt from import taxes:

- If the essential supplies for family planning (medicines, equipment, and commodities) are not already exempt from import taxes, work with the MOH, MOF, and the parliamentary budget committee to make the case for tax exemption of family planning commodities.
- Additionally, work with these stakeholders to identify ways and means to motivate domestic production of family planning commodities.

If limited domestic resources for health require considering innovative financing mechanisms:

- In collaboration with the MOH, consider strategic purchasing mechanisms like results- or [performance-based financing](#) to incentivize high-quality service delivery.

References

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Introduction



Guidance for Ministry of Health Family Planning Department Staff



Guidance for Ministry of Finance Staff



Guidance for Legislators in Health or Social Sector Committees in Parliament



Guidance for Private Sector Actors



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