

Guidance for Civil Society Organizations

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Introduction

Civil society organizations (CSOs)—such as local nongovernmental organizations, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and youth-led organizations—play a critical role in ensuring that family planning programs are adequately financed. They also help ensure that budgets are responsibly executed and implemented to progress toward achieving family planning goals. The role of CSOs is especially critical in the context of limited domestic funding and continued scale-back by external donors. Meaningful engagement of youth, especially in the poorest countries where their population is expected to grow from 207 million in 2019 to 336 million in 2050, is the only way to ensure that development solutions are truly sustainable. To support financing for family planning, CSOs should:

- Support the Ministry of Health (MOH) and policymakers to collect and analyze evidence from community members and peer organizations to understand attitudes, usage, and unmet needs regarding family planning to ensure accurate forecasting, as well as to showcase the cost of not addressing unmet needs
- Collaborate with government stakeholders to support processes and mechanisms to review how funding is spent periodically to ensure accountability
- Advocate to government and donors, where needed, for additional family planning funding as well as sustainable financing mechanisms that could be developed

- Participate actively in the development of family planning financing policies/strategies
- Participate in important multisectoral coordination mechanisms, such as technical working groups
- Mentor nascent youth-led organizations and community groups at all levels (national, subnational, and community) to engage in financing mechanisms and budget processes

The purpose of this guide is to provide practical action steps that CSOs can take to improve the sustainability of family planning financing in their country. Actions offered vary based on the country context and the financing mechanisms used.

Understanding the Context in Which the Family Planning Program Operates

Before taking action, it is important for CSOs to consider the country and/or local context and the opportunities that exist to build upon existing financing structures at the national, subnational (district), and community levels. To understand the context of a family planning program, CSOs should review the landscape analysis in the national or subnational family planning costed implementation plan, which provides a thorough review of the different aspects, priorities, and gaps in the family planning program. The [Family Planning Financing Roadmap](#) website and interactive tool can serve as an additional resource. CSOs can use the website to review [health financing concepts](#) and fill-in [country-specific](#) data to receive a recommendation for family planning financing solutions appropriate to the context. The following steps outline actions

for further investigation for CSOs working at both the national and subnational level:

1. Understand the health financing mechanisms—health insurance, earmarked taxes, government subsidies, etc.—that exist or are under consideration in the country for family planning
2. Determine what kind of financial projections or indicators to look at to inform discussions with other stakeholders
3. Gather any additional evidence needed to inform those discussions

4. Identify key stakeholders and decisionmakers in the family planning financing space and understand their role and positions

Engaging the Right Stakeholders

With this comprehensive understanding, CSOs 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, CSOs will need

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.
Ministry of Finance 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 or social committees in parliament	Leads the development and consideration of legislation related to the health sector, including approval of the health sector budget.	Approves and can advocate for the health budget, including allocation to family planning (particularly the budget line for contraceptives) and health financing reforms that could include family planning.
Subnational and local government leaders in the health sector	Develops and allocates the health sector budget at the regional/district/county level, especially in decentralized contexts.	Allocates the health budget across health programs, including family planning.
International nongovernmental organizations and implementing partners	Analyzes family planning financing data to generate evidence and strengthens capacity of local actors to hold governments accountable.	Provides evidence for advocacy to support budget lines and execution; promotes financial sustainability by ensuring local actors can continue these efforts.

to re-engage with new decisionmakers and stakeholders, 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, CSOs should identify the advocacy activities that could be the most impactful. The following are potential actions for different contexts and financing mechanisms.

If government budget line allocations to family planning are non-existent or insufficient (national and local):

- Collaborate with key stakeholders such as representatives from the MOH, national or subnational legislators, international nongovernmental organizations, and other CSOs working in the reproductive health and family planning sector to develop an advocacy action plan using the SMART approach to advocate for either the establishment of a line-item allocation for family planning commodities and service provision or for higher allocations for family planning in national and/or local health budgets. Each year as the new budget is drafted, CSOs must activate and engage their network within and outside of government to ensure funds are allocated to family planning-related line items. CSOs can use the examples from Malawi and Tanzania to better understand key budget advocacy concepts, approaches, and considerations. To engage in budget advocacy CSOs should:
 - Compile evidence to support key messages, including evidence on total resource needs and implementation plans. For example, CSOs may participate in conducting a budget gap analysis to compare allocated resources and the country's actual family planning funding needs (national or subnational).
 - Use the evidence generated to develop advocacy messages targeted at different key decisionmakers such as local government health officers and Ministry of Finance (MOF) budgeting staff.
 - Meet with key decisionmakers (within the MOH and MOF) and present evidence.
 - Partner with other CSOs working in the reproductive health and family planning sector and advocate to government officials, for example, by initiating discussions on family planning at community town hall meetings.
 - Monitor budgets to hold governments accountable for increasing family planning investments and ensure that committed funds are allocated, released, and spent on time and appropriately.

If limitations of the health budget or poor financial management require the family planning program to be more efficient (i.e., producing better outcomes given resources):

- Build a basic understanding of the budget process and the key actions needed to influence funding allocations and monitor budget releases and expenditures.
- Assess the budget process and identify opportunities for providing inputs and being engaged.
- Collect context-specific data on community priorities for family planning. Invite youth and other groups to participate and highlight their family planning needs.
- Collaborate with health sector stakeholders, such as international nongovernmental organizations, national or subnational legislators, and government leaders, to analyze the proposed government budget to identify and understand inefficiencies in different aspects of the family planning program and highlight its implications for various issues, programs, or stakeholders. For example, explore the implications of inefficiencies on the community priorities gathered.
- Meet with key decisionmakers within the MOH and MOF to present evidence, represent the community's perspective, propose

alternative budget priorities—such as reducing spending in one area and increasing spending in another—and project the potential economic and/or social impact of doing so.

- Support decisionmakers within the MOH and MOF to develop an action plan to address inefficiencies.
- Monitor budgets to hold governments accountable, ensuring that funding commitments are adjusted to reduce or eliminate inefficiencies and appropriately spent to meet community priorities and program objectives.

If the country is facing transition in donor financial support:

- Support and/or participate actively in a national- or subnational-level family planning technical working group that can bring together donor, government, private sector, and civil society stakeholders to support the implementation of a transition plan and ensure long-term sustainability.
- Advocate for the integration of family planning into subnational/local development plans and implementation plans to ensure local ownership for financing family planning programs (using the same advocacy steps described previously). The following resource provides an example: *[Integrating Family Planning Interventions into District Implementation Plans in Malawi](#)*.

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, CSOs should advocate to key stakeholders, including the MOH and MOF, family planning technical working groups, and development partners who finance commodities, for tax exemption of family planning commodities. For example, CSOs can develop an advocacy plan and targeted messaging for legislators and MOF staff to emphasize the health and economic benefits from increased numbers of family planning users. The *[Legacy Impact:](#)*

Madagascar resource provides an example of how tax exemptions were achieved in the country.

If there is a lack of awareness and understanding of family planning health financing issues among public policymakers and/or community members:

- Support efforts to educate the public to increase the support base for sustainable financing strategies, including engaging the media to cover family planning issues to promote transparency and accountability.
- Track commitments, allocations, and disbursements of the family planning/health budget to ensure that budget allocations are being used as intended.
- Use evidence from tracking efforts to generate awareness and educate government officials on family planning issues and support them to become family planning champions.
 - Consider utilizing the civil society-led *[Motion Tracker approach](#)*, which aims to hold governments accountable and promote actions toward country commitments. The Motion Tracker process provides stakeholders with the opportunity to present data and facilitate agreement at multi-stakeholder forums attended by decisionmakers, implementing partners, CSOs, and the media.
- Promote *[joint accountability](#)*, a shared process that strengthens linkages between multisectoral actors to build consensus and ability to act on solutions.
 - Joint accountability can be achieved by identifying, mapping, and examining relationships and rallying them around a priority. For additional details on this process, consider the Health Policy Plus *[Fostering Joint Accountability Within Health Systems](#)* training curriculum.
 - Support formal mechanisms such as task forces or partnerships in which stakeholders from different sectors (e.g., civil society, government, private, and donors) hold one another accountable.

If health financing policies do not meet the population's family planning needs:

- Meet with community stakeholders to gather evidence on their priorities, including, for example, age- and gender-specific needs, the resource and training needs of healthcare providers, and family planning utilization data.
- Participate in important multisectoral coordination mechanisms, such as technical working groups to support the development of family planning financing policies/ strategies.
 - Utilize the information gathered with the community to inform policy recommendations, giving policymakers insight into what happens on the ground.
 - Support policymakers to identify the strategies and interventions needed to achieve national goals, the resources needed to achieve those goals, the resources already available, and the financing gaps.



Read the Series



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



Guidance for Civil Society Organizations



Guidance for National Public Health Insurance Agencies



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