



GUIDE FOR STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS ON BUDGET ADVOCACY STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION¹

1. INTRODUCTION

This guide provides basic information about the national budgeting process and how to undertake budget monitoring and strategic advocacy. It does not provide exhaustive information on all aspects of budget monitoring and expenditure tracking and will not create budget experts. Practical budget analysis exercises will be required to advance the skills on budget advocacy, emphasizing the importance of number crunching in generating powerful evidence to inform budget policy advocacy.

This document will help state and non-state budget advocates to:

- a) Identify budget problems and related budget solutions for the problems.
- b) Understand the budget cycle to locate problems and identify solutions.
- c) Conduct a quick SWOT analysis.
- d) Identify and analyse stakeholders.
- e) Propose advocacy message(s) and dissemination techniques.
- f) Draft an Impact Plan for their respective country projects.
- g) Develop a schedule/ timetable of activities.

2. FACTORS AFFECTING BUDGET CHANGE

To develop and implement an effective budget advocacy strategy it is important to keep the following notes in mind:

When you are advocating for solutions that require changes in budget, it is important to be aware of the internal constraints and complex relationships within which budgets are negotiated and set.

BUDGETS ARE RIGID

One factor that makes it difficult to bring about changes in budgets is the fact that they are relatively rigid. Budgets cannot be reinvented from scratch every year – there are always already existing commitments that need to be accommodated and are often beyond negotiation.

So, what makes budgets rigid?

¹ We would like to acknowledge materials sourced from and lessons learnt through the Partnership Initiative (PI) of the International Budget Partnership; Alison Hickey-Tshangana, a Public Finance Expert; and reflections from the Open Society Foundation's Community of Practitioners on Accountability and Social Action in Health (COPASAH).

- ✓ Many budgets include a large component of salaries, which cannot readily be reduced without making far-reaching decisions regarding peoples' jobs.
- ✓ Many budgets are geared to fund the implementation of existing contracts, which are difficult to change.
- ✓ Where budgets include considerable amounts dedicated to salaries, pensions and social security payments, there is little leeway to reduce or alter allocations.
- ✓ These factors limit how much money that can be shifted in any single financial year.

BUDGETS HAVE WINNERS AND LOSERS

All budgets are based on balances and political trade-offs. The allocation of public funds is usually a competitive process where departments and ministries compete against each other for as big a slice of the resource pie as they can get. The over-riding rule of the game is: "**What I get is what you don't get**".

- ✓ Therefore, whenever you are advocating for something which requires more spending in a certain sector or programme, it is essential to consider where the money will come from to address the problem you want to impact on. As part of your advocacy strategy, **you will have to develop recommendations about what trade-offs could be made**, and the advantages that would come with making such trade-offs. If you propose to shift funding from one spending area to another you should be in a position to explain why such shift is necessary, what is the government going to gain out of this shift, and also what is government likely to lose if the shift does not happen. For instance, government would shift funds from one programme to the other within one ministry or department, or from one ministry to the other, based on efficiencies of those receiving additional money or based on inefficiencies of those losing the money. The risk of not moving the money from inefficient spenders to efficient spenders is that public funds would be used on wasteful expenditure while effective spenders would have to narrow down their interventions due to insufficient funding, and thus reduce the positive impact they would sustain if additional funding was available.
- ✓ To demand for sound trade-offs it is important to monitor spending trends in other ministries beyond the ministry or programme of your interest to see where trade-offs could be made. Poor spenders with *no valid reasons* should give away some money to those who are able to absorb increased allocations with better outcomes. For the trade-offs to happen you also need to show genuine needs of the programme or ministry you are advocating for, and where possible demonstrate *efficiency* and *effectiveness* of such programme spending to gain more weight in the budget debate.
- ✓ Analysing budget allocations against expenditure reports, and analyzing the Supreme Audit Institutions' (SAU) reports and recommendations would also help in knowing who should lose money or spend better. If the programme or intervention you are fighting for has received a negative SAU opinion on its spending, you are not likely to win the budget debate because there are issues to still answer to. But if your programme has received a positive opinion on spending and can show results for such spending, you are likely to win then to lose. This requires one to have a bird's eye view on various spending areas to know where poor, wasteful or irregular spending is happening to demand that those areas lose money for your programme to gain more money.
- ✓ In addition to thinking about the implications of your proposed solution for the budget, it is wise to consider in advance **what political costs would result from the changes you want**. Who would stand to lose face or status as a result of the changes in allocations? In other words, be sure to analyze and determine who may be opposed to your advocacy position for political reasons, rather than budgetary ones.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT WITH THE BUDGET

Government and its agencies should involve citizens in determining needs, setting priorities, estimating resource needs, budgeting for these, and monitoring spending on them. Such participation could result in well informed plans and budgets and would ensure improved transparency and accountability.

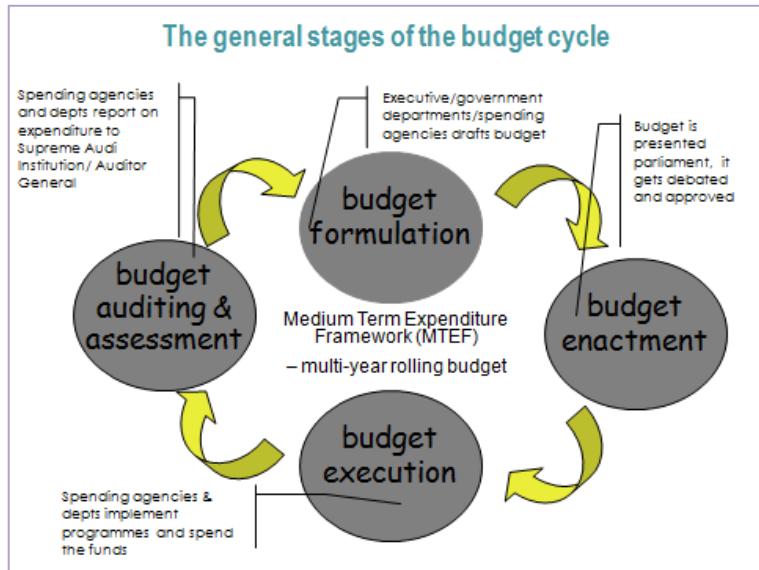
Civil society should be involved in strategically positioned coordinating and governance structures with political power & commitment, to which all actors must report regularly, to keep citizens informed and engaged in the decision-making processes.

It is the responsibility of civil society organisations to build the confidence to engage with the budget through capacity building, full public participation in agenda setting, budgeting, implementation monitoring etc. Citizen interest on and capacity to engage with budgets can be enhanced through rigorous community or public mobilisation campaigns. This effort is important because of the power of multiple voices in demanding budget changes. This goes hand in hand with formation of strategic coalitions to fight for a common cause. The secret for effective budget advocacy is in the sound evidence generated as well as in the united voice of multiple stakeholders speaking the same language or passing the same messages (strategic messaging). Civil society is best positioned to bring on board various stakeholders, including donors, research institutes, advocacy groups etc to work together for a common goal. This brings power to influence or change public budget decisions. However, parliamentarians have the power and mandate to facilitate public engagement in policy and budget debates, allowing other stakeholders to generate and use evidence in life-changing government decisions.

Innovative technology can transform citizens and parliamentarians' access to information – but key is the individual's experience for their motivation for involvement. Government budget information should be accessible electronically, and parliaments should build the interest among their members to access such information and use it in parliamentary budget debates. Where there are no Freedom of Information laws (FOI), parliaments should form such law, as lack of access to essential financial information threatens the effectiveness of any budget or policy development efforts and undermines parliament's oversight role. Ideally, governments should provide an online access to timely budgetary and expenditure data, linked to performance indicators, for both public and parliamentary scrutiny and to inform future planning and budgeting. Thus, budget research becomes important to find budget or expenditure information that is not readily available online or on print, and it may take a lot of time to get good information for advocacy.

3. LOCATING YOUR HEALTH PROBLEMS IN THE BUDGET PROCESS

In addressing the presenting problem(s), you need to understand the budget process (see picture below), and answer the following questions:



- In which stage do the problems lie in the budget process? (Problem identification and analysis)
- Where should it be solved? (Timing of your intervention)
- Who can solve the problems? (Stakeholder analysis)

When you see something that's wrong, no matter how big the problem is, think; "Who else would like to change this? How can we work together".
 Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan

The "Who" question is extremely important, as decisions and actions are taken or can be altered by certain decision-makers and actors who are key to solving our problems. These individuals need to be known for strategic targeting.

UNDERSTANDING POWER BROKERS IN THE BUDGET DECISION MAKING PROCESS (ANSWERING THE 'WHO' QUESTION):

It is important to understand that government is not monolithic. There are multiple actors, each with their own degree of power, and own agenda. It is important to understand these actors so that you know who could support your budget advocacy calls and who is likely block you. In order to intervene effectively as CSOs, we must figure out where the conflict is in the budget decision-making chain. Who are your allies? Who needs persuading? REMEMBER: 98% of advocacy is figuring out who you should be talking to! Also remember that some problems could require various actors to solve, for example, a problem faced at a local health clinic could be solved locally by the clinic manager, however, some of the problems would be beyond the control of the clinic manager and would require a district or county health manager to intervene.

FIGURING OUT WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT DECISION DURING THE FORMULATION STAGE OF THE BUDGET PROCESS:

Decision	Who decides?
How much extra money will we collect in tax & donor funds for the next financial year?	Treasury/ Finance Ministry, Central Bank, Donors
How much extra money do we want to spend?	Treasury/ Finance Ministry, Donors, Cabinet
How much money should we borrow?	Treasury/Finance Ministry, Central Bank, Donors
How should we divide additional money up between expenditure departments/ministries?	Treasury/Finance Ministry, Donors, Cabinet
How should we divide additional money up within expenditure departments/ministries (which programmes)?	Minister, Head of Department
On what should we spend additional money within each programme?	Head of Department, Programme Head

Below are examples of health problems and actors that would help solve these problems:

Problem	Responsible person(s)	Stage of Budget Process to fix the problem
Not enough money is allocated to salaries/training in primary health programme in the health ministry?	Chief Director/Director/Manager of Primary Health Programme	Formulation
Not enough money is allocated to primary health care programme itself?	Head of Department of Health ; Minister of Health	Formulation
Not enough money is allocated to the Department/Ministry of Health?	Cabinet; Parliament	Formulation; Enactment/Approval
Government not spending enough altogether?	Treasury/ Finance Ministry; Donors; Cabinet	Execution; Formulation
Is this the result of poor donor commitment, weak tax administration or conservative fiscal policies? Or is the economy simply too small?	Treasury/Finance Ministry; Donors; Cabinet	Formulation
There is shortage of essential drugs at the community health clinic?	Clinic Manager; District/Sub-district Health Manager; County Director for Health	Formulation; Execution
There is alleged misappropriation or leakages of health care funds resulting in poor service delivery?	Head of Department; Minister; Chief Financial Officer	Execution; Auditing/Assessment

POINTS TO PONDER:

- Most budget bids do not contain proper/complete information:
 - There is no time or commitment for proper costing prior to submission
 - Institutional delivery is not worked out in detail prior to allocation
 - Not all the departments are working on proper demographic/socio-economic data
- Budgeting is an iterative process:
 - Policy options are developed with rough cost estimate
 - Treasury/Finance Ministry allocates budget envelope/ceiling (usually less than what is required)
 - Departments must re-do costing/budget with new envelope
 - Chicken-and-egg budgeting (What should come first – budget envelope/ceiling or budget estimates?)
 - “Tell me how much I’ll get, I’ll tell you what I can do...”
 - “Tell me what you need, I’ll tell you what you get...”
 - ‘Rough’ estimates can mean really rough (last minute decisions taken on limited information in order to balance).

THE SILVER BULLET IN BUDGET ADVOCACY:

If you’re interested in changing service delivery, focus advocacy efforts on formulation stage ONLY. Research activities can focus on execution stage. Intervention in enactment and auditing stages increases transparency and public awareness but it will not get any real or direct results in terms of improving how govt delivers services.

Take the following action steps:

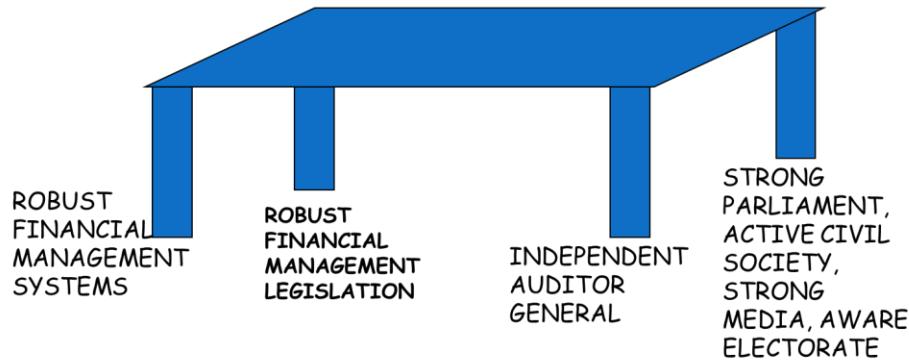
- Find out who the 1-2 right people are who can fix your budget problem, and get very close to them.
- Find out who puts together the policy options, and who advocate for particular policy options.
- Give your allies the ammunition they need when they go into battle. Evidence from budgetary analyses!
- Do the required research at the right time—short and sweet (backed up by evidence from the budgetary analyses).
- Protect your organisational or departmental reputation at ALL times.
- Do credible research always. Decision makers judge the value of advocacy by the quality and usefulness of the research or evidence presented.
 - Before you can demand an increase in coverage or budgets, you need to know the baseline. Using budget analysis and other reviews determine what is the current coverage of the intervention you are advocating for, or how much is currently available in the budget for you to demand a certain increase. This makes your advocacy call more legitimate and sound.
- Choose your battles carefully.
- You need to get the most return for your work, given limited staff and capacity. Don’t be afraid to keep a narrow focus.

FACTORS TO PROMOTE ACCOUNTABILITY

The accountability table (below) provides a framework of what budget advocates should look for beyond monitoring the budget process. For government to be found accountable it must have robust financial management systems that would ensure quality and valid financial information for analysis and reporting; robust financial management legislation to guide spending and protect the public purse

from fraudulent or irresponsible spending practices; independent supreme audit institution or office of the auditor-general that would report on bad financial practices and cases of corruption and fraud, and; strong parliament, active civil society, strong media and aware electorate to demand social accountability and put pressure on government for protection of human rights, quality service provision, etc. Budget advocates should draw up an accountability table for their country to see if the accountability table is complete, and to use the elements (or legs) of the accountability table to demand accountability and push their budget advocacy objectives.

Accountability Table



4. UNDERSTANDING YOUR INTERNAL CAPACITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN RELATION TO YOUR PROBLEM(S)

A SWOT analysis is required to understand both your capabilities and challenges to achieve your budget advocacy objectives. Please use the following table to identify your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, in order to inform your advocacy plan or action. Some examples are already given in the table below. This table shows factors that could either be your strengths or weaknesses, opportunities or threats which you need to act on.

Strengths		Weaknesses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills and abilities Funding lines Relevant policies Partners Existing Activities 	
Opportunities		Threats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other organisations relevant to issue Resources: financial, technical, human Political and policy space 	

5. UNDERSTANDING YOUR BUDGET PROBLEM(S) AND PLANNING FOR ACTION

You need to be clear of the problem(s) that you are trying to solve with your budget advocacy effort. List your budget problems and issues to be addressed, and prioritise according to their urgency and sensitivity. Use the Problem Analysis and Action Table below to prioritise the problems requiring your budget advocacy action.

BUDGET ISSUE (what is/are your health concern(s)? List them according to priority, starting with MOST important issue)	PROBLEM SOURCES (decisions/actions that could be causing the health problem)	RESPONSIBLE ACTORS/ STAKEHOLDERS (who decides about this? Who can fix this problem? Who can support your advocacy? Specific names of actors are recommended, not just names of large departments or institutions)	TIMING OF THE PROBLEM (see picture of the budget process below. In which stage(s) of the budget process are decisions about this problem made? In which stage of the budget process can it be resolved?)	SOLUTIONS/ ACTION (what needs to happen to address this issue?)
EXAMPLE 1: Insufficient human resources for RMNCH at service delivery level	Government has not assessed human resource needs at service delivery level AND/OR Insufficient financial resources to recruit, train and retain health staff	Director of Human Resources for Health at district/county/provincial/national level AND/OR Budget Office of Health	Formulation	Human Resources for Health Mapping Exercise Reprioritisation of health expenditure items
EXAMPLE 2: High maternal mortality in rural districts	Poor emergency obstetric care services in rural districts	Minister of Health/ Director of Health at district/county level	Formulation (insufficient resources) Execution (supply chain management or logistical issues)	Increase budget allocations for emergency obstetric care services Increase budget allocations for emergency health services such as ambulatory services Recruit, train and distribute mid-wives to rural districts

6. IMPACT PLANNING

The International Budget Partnership (IBP) defines an impact plan (IP) as 'an explanation of how you expect one of your organization's strategies to work. It shows the chain of cause and effect between strategies that your organization uses and the ultimate results that you hope to achieve. These assumed links between what we do and what we hope to achieve can also be expressed in diagrams.' The IBP regards the IP as a useful tool for formulating strategies. It assists you to draw a roadmap of the actions you take in order to achieve the desired impact. It is not a monitoring and evaluation framework, but could be used as a roadmap to ensure that the organisation moves on the right track to achieve the desired change.

In line with your Problem Analysis and Action Table completed above, please clarify and elaborate on the following to formulate your Budget Advocacy Impact Plan.

i. Project purpose

What is your overall project aim that you want to achieve? This should relate to the final result you want to see about the problem(s) you have identified.

ii. Project objectives

What are your specific objectives you want to achieve, that would lead to the attainment of your overall project purpose? Remember your objectives have to be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timebound).

SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ATTAINABLE	REALISTIC	TIMEBOUND
Specify an action: DO NOT state what the problem is, rather the solution that you want. E.G. Not that mothers are dying, but that there is no comprehensive emergency obstetric care service available for them, so it must be provided.	If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. Here 'measurement' refers to THE AMOUNT you want government to raise or spend differently. E.G. We want \$10,000 to be spent on transport for girl children. NOT that 'government must put in place transport for girls'. Remember: Not all problems can be solved by the budget. e.g. stigmatization of people living with HIV.	Set goals that are within your reach to achieve. If you set goals that are too far out of reach, you and your partners probably will not commit to doing, at least not a second time. E.G. 'Make Poverty History' or 'Put an end to AIDS' are not attainable in the short term (within the project timeline).	Budgets are rigid because of political reasons. Not everything you demand can be changed immediately. Propose a plan or a way of getting there which makes the goal realistic. How can what you propose be done in this year's budget? How much do you want government to spend and where should they get it? You have to know the baselines in budgets and coverage for you to demand a certain increase. You should also give suggestions for where the additional or new money should come from to fund your demand.	Set a realistic timeframe for the goal to be attained: E.G. Government must add a specific budget line-item for adolescent health service by end of 2017. This demand would not be realistic if the government was given only one year to achieve because of budget politics and inflexibility in the budget envelope. If you don't set a time or too long a timeframe, the commitment is too vague.

iii. Priority issues identified

You may have a number of problem issues identified that need to be fixed. But you may want to prioritise your issues as government may not be able to respond to all of them at once. So what are your key issues that need urgent attention? Do state if these can be addressed in a short, medium or long term. You need to give suggestions of how the government should attend to these problems. If the problems are money-related, you may need to tell the government of where they could cut costs or find new money in order to fund your call.

For example, organisations working on maternal and child health might have identified a number of problems leading to increasing maternal and child mortality. These could include insufficient budget allocations to health overall, insufficient budget allocations to maternal and child health programmes specifically, shortage of professional health workers such as midwives or general practitioners, long distances travelled to reach clinics or hospitals, and a serious lack of ambulances for emergencies. These are all important issues to tackle, but government does not have enough funding or capacity to address them altogether. Budget advocates have to weigh the urgency and importance of these problems and prioritise which one(s) government must address first in order to reduce maternal and child mortality. This needs to link with the SMART objectives to ensure that what budget advocates put their effort on will yield the desired results.

iv. Measures of progress in achieving the objectives: Indicators

How will you know if your issue is being attended to? How do you keep track of progress made in your budget advocacy effort? Here you will need to set some indicators of what would show you if progress is made in addressing the issue. The budget itself could be used as one of the indicators, by tracking if allocations have increased to meet the needs. You could also monitor actual expenditure during implementation to see if funds are utilised in line with plans and in a timely fashion. This could work well if your main concern is on delayed or slow disbursements from funding sources to the service providers.

Defining an indicator:

The UN Women defines an indicator as 'a specific, observable and measurable characteristic that can be used to show changes or progress a programme is making toward achieving a specific outcome... The change measured by the indicator should represent progress that the programme hopes to make'. Quite importantly indicators do not specify a particular level of achievement such as 'improved coverage of immunisation', 'increased budget allocations for MNCH', or 'decreased child mortality'.

Types of indicators:

Process indicators are used to monitor the number and types of activities carried out, such as number of people trained, number of reports published, percentage of patients on treatments, percentage of girl children receiving transport service, etc.

As an example of process indicators, *Output indicators* illustrate the short to medium term change related directly to the activities undertaken in project or programme. They measure the quantity of goods and services produced and the efficiency of production, e.g. number of people consulted, number of books procured to improve adult literacy, number of clinics visited and assessed, speed at which ambulances respond to emergency calls made by clinic staff for hospital referrals, etc.

Results indicators are used to evaluate whether or not the activity achieved the intended objectives or results, such as level of knowledge about a subject, perceptions about a policy or service provided, attitudes of health workers towards patients, etc. Results indicators are usually measured through surveys.

As an example of results indicators, *Outcome indicators* relate to change that is demonstrated as a result of the programme interventions in the medium-to-longer term, e.g. number of hospitals

providing comprehensive emergency obstetric care services, percentage of people living with HIV on AIDS drugs, number of counties eliminating user-fees, etc. *Impact indicators* also fall under results indicators, measuring the *long-term* effect of programme interventions, e.g. HIV prevalence in prisons, nurse:patient ratio in public health facilities, child mortality rate in rural districts, etc.

v. Partners identified to support the achievement of the project objectives

You need to analyse your stakeholders thoroughly so that you know who would support your call and who is likely to oppose you. There could be other initiatives that work in the same field that could provide you with evidence or support to push your budget advocacy agenda. You could form a coalition of various players so that there is a united force pushing your agenda. In budget work it is important to form partnerships or coalitions with multi-sectoral stakeholders to ensure that all areas of your concerns or problems are covered. That is, you may need to bring on board research, training and advocacy organisations to ensure sufficient capacity to generate evidence and to use it for effective advocacy.

You need to also plan for the opposition. Who is likely to oppose your budget call? How can you change their minds about the issue? Or are there other stakeholders you could use to influence your opposers? Remember that BUDGETS HAVE WINNERS AND LOSERS. Those who are likely to lose money because of your call are more likely to oppose you than those who would benefit from your advocacy. You need to assess your decision-makers and actors very carefully, and ensure that your messaging is clear to get support from the powerful actors. Here you need to show what is it that they will gain out of your advocacy so that the relationship you are building with them is more attractive.

vi. Specific actions to be prioritised

Once you have a clear understanding of the actors, list specific actions to be prioritised, indicating what various stakeholders/actors will do to achieve your objectives. Relook your Problem Analysis and Action Table and see if your suggested actions are realistic given your available resources and time. Link your priority actions to your SMART objectives, available resources and your capacity.

vii. Foreseeable challenges threatening the project

Are there any foreseeable challenges that you need to plan for? What are these? What alternatives can be made to overcome challenges or to totally avoid them?

viii. Assumed changes in government attitude and practice

Indicate what specific action(s) you want government to take. Your research evidence can tell you what needs to happen. Write action points the government must adopt, and indicate how these will fix the problems. Do you want to see change in government attitude through budget allocations, implementation, public participation etc? Do you want to see more transparency and accountability? Be clear of what you want to see happening in the government that will ultimately fix your identified problems, and be able to say how the change in government attitude and practice would solve your problems.

ix. Dissemination

A crucial element of advocacy work is good dissemination. Once you have developed a message about the budget that you wish to promote or alter, there are a number of forms your dissemination strategy can take, be specific on which dissemination activities you will employ:

- Private meetings with powerful stakeholders
- Public meetings/hearings to encourage debate and discussion

- Submissions to members of parliament/government departments
- Seminars, workshops, and conferences to share information with other stakeholders
- Marches, petitions, and other forms of peaceful protest
- Media engagement. Remember that media can make or break your advocacy. Be very clear of your media engagement strategy and the actual messages.
- Public-awareness campaigns.

You may require to use various dissemination strategies to reach wider audiences and for impact. Your messages need to be as clear as possible to avoid confusion and unnecessary resistance. It is recommended that messages offer options for addressing the problems. Tell your audiences what they need to hear, e.g. "investing in MNCH will save lives and promote economic activities", instead of saying "government must pay for maternal deaths due to insufficient budgets". Telling your audiences what they need to hear would be more attractive to decision-makers than when there are no specific recommendations or suggestions for moving forward.

7. THE ACTION PLAN

To summarise your advocacy plan, draw up a simple logframe with the following item, and monitor its implementation for success.

Main objective	Specific objectives	Activities	Outputs	Targets/Audience/Actors	Timeframes	Outcome	Outcome Indicators
EXAMPLE: To advocate for increased budgetary allocation to life-saving commodities for malaria by 2021/22	Government to increase the comprehensive malaria budget allocation by 20% in the 2021/22 budget	Sensitisation of members of parliament on malaria public policy and budgeting issues Capacity building workshop on budget monitoring for community health advocates Budget trend analysis Lobbying meetings with decision-makers and influential partners	Meetings with relevant parliamentary portfolio committee chairpersons and clerks Workshop report Budget Policy Brief & Submission to Parliament Proposal/plan for collaborative action	Portfolio committees on health, social services Portfolio committees on finance and auditing Civil society partners Government, donors, members of parliament Director of Malaria programme at national level Donors supporting Malaria Programme	Ad-hoc basis June 2021 Quarterly Quarterly	Increased awareness and participation in maternal and child health budget and service delivery monitoring Increased budget allocations for malaria goods and services	Number of invitations to sub-national government offices, civil society groups, individuals to submit comments on malaria budgets to parliament and government Percentage (%) of positive growth in budget allocation for malaria Level of satisfaction on availability and accessibility of malaria services

Questions and points for clarification can be addressed to:

Mr. Nhlanhla Ndlovu, Director: Centre for Economic Governance and Accountability in Africa (CEGAA)
nhlanhla@cegaa.org / nhlanhla.ndlovu1@gmail.com / +27731987219