

Make Your Case

An Overview of Evidence-based Advocacy Briefs

An advocacy brief includes a concise summary of a particular issue, the policy options to deal with it, and some recommendations on the best option. It also provides decisionmakers with the evidence to support that option. Because advocacy efforts focus on decisionmakers who might have little relevant technical background or are busy and sometimes not aware of or interested in the topic, the following points should be kept in mind when developing briefs.

Briefs should be

- **Short.** One page (double-sided, usually about 700 words) is best, with key information on the front.
- **Focused.** There should be only one or two take-home messages.
- **Evidence-based.** But non-technical in presentation. Focus on meanings, not methods.
- **Relevant.** Country- and, if possible, state- or district-specific.

Briefs can inform (research results or a state of knowledge) and/or influence (advocacy).

An effective advocacy brief will

- Provide enough **BACKGROUND** for the policymaker to understand the problem.
- **CONVINCE** the policymaker that solving the problem is important and urgent.
- Provide **EVIDENCE** to support action.
- Incite the policymaker to make a decision with a clear, actionable **ASK**.

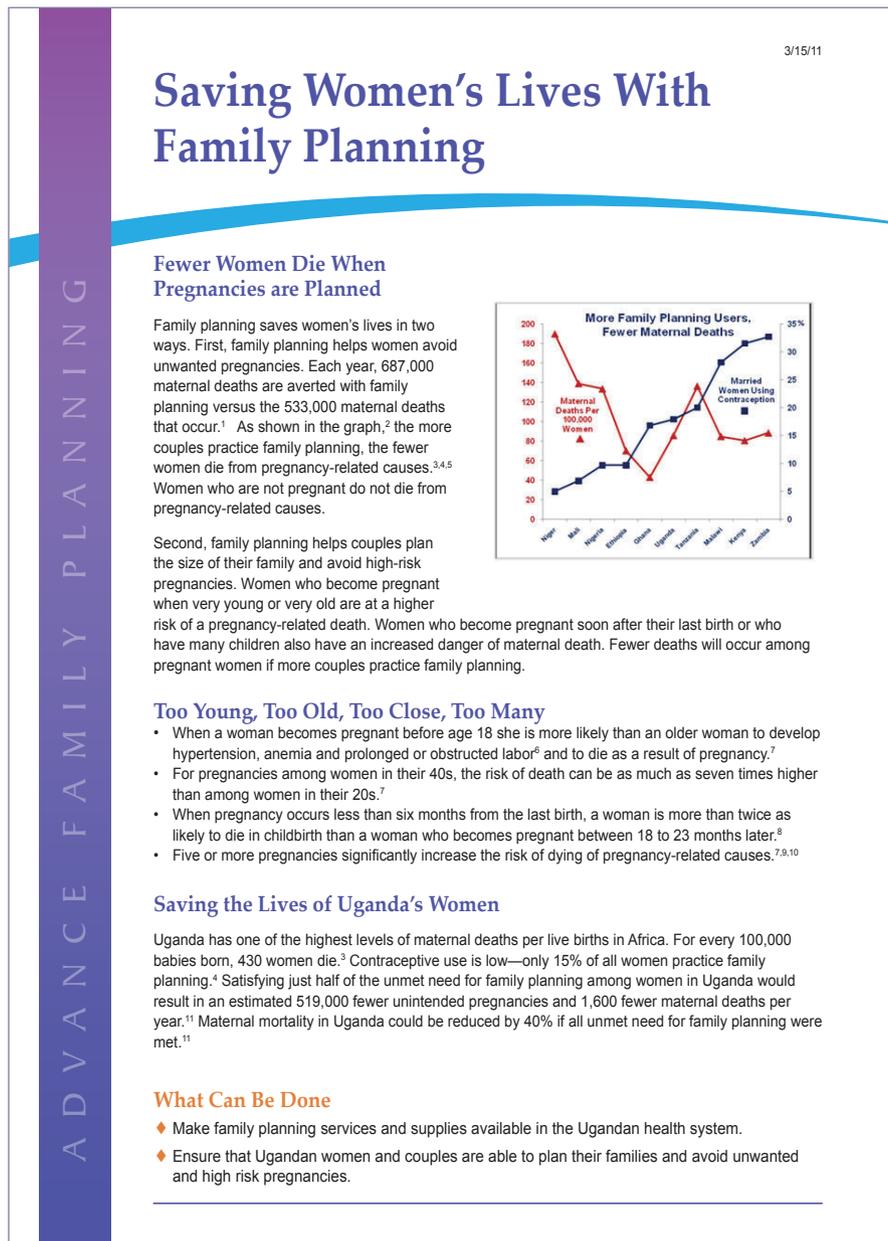
See Figure 1 for a sample advocacy brief.

EVIDENCE

Data that support or emphasize the main message are essential.

- Present only information that is relevant to the decisionmaker.
- Use graphics such as charts, figures, and tables to show data visually, but make sure the graphics have clear titles and the message is easily discerned.
- Define technical terms in a way that is understandable to the average reader.

Figure 1: Sample Advocacy Brief



FORMATTING AND STYLE

Write short, succinct sentences.

- Use “white space” to make the page appealing to the eye and attention-catching.
- Lay out your text in an electronic- and printer-friendly format.
- Consider bulleted lists and tables, use boldface text to highlight important words or phrases, and insert subheadings to improve readability.
- Select photos strategically to convey a message and put a “human face” on the topic, as well as to make the page attractive. However, be cautious of adding too many images, which can make the file size large and affect download speed.
- Use boxes or sidebars to present various types of information that do not fit well in the flow of the text.

ATTRIBUTION

- Provide references for evidence—but not so many that it begins to look like an academic report.
- Make the organizational source of the brief clear through attribution or inclusion of a logo(s).
- Include a “for further information” section along with the name of a person to contact.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

In addition to the brief, supporting materials may include

- A factsheet
- Supporting research, field reports, or complementary advocacy materials
- Examples of successful applications of the recommended “asks”