

# Advocate for Family Planning

*Introducing the AFP Advocacy Portfolio*

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How do you identify the right moment to advance a critical policy? Or build a coalition of supporters? What is the best way to craft compelling arguments for decisionmakers and deliver them at the most opportune time? The execution of advocacy is frequently afflicted by false-starts or near-misses—either weighted down by too many competing interests or so generalized it is ineffectual. But it doesn't have to be.

The Advance Family Planning (AFP) Advocacy Portfolio provides the tools necessary to design, implement, and capture the results of an evidence-based, locally-driven advocacy strategy. While intended for family planning advocates, the approach can be adapted for use in any sector. This introduction explains why advocating for family planning is important, introduces AFP and our approach, and outlines the purpose of the portfolio.

# Foreword

The ideas that later evolved into the Advance Family Planning (AFP) approach to advocacy took root just over a decade ago, but the seeds were planted long before then. During my time working with government agencies and donors, I was always struck by the difficulty in determining the key decisionmaker on an issue. It was (and still is) very common to see people spend time and resources advocating to individuals who have little influence on making a change. At the same time, when the right decisionmaker was reached, it was surprising and encouraging to see how often and quickly changes occurred.



With the AFP Advocacy Portfolio, we aim to help advocates identify, plan, carry out, and evaluate activities that focus on the decisionmaker and policy change that have the highest potential for impact in the near term. The simple tools contained in the portfolio are designed to be easily accessible; adaptable for any context (whether at the national, state, or district level); and responsive to the need to measure impact.

The AFP approach continues to benefit from the invaluable input of dozens of supporters and collaborators, including experienced advocates from developing countries. And, of course, this work would not be possible without the generous support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the David & Lucile Packard Foundation.

We invite you to use the portfolio and welcome your feedback. Its contents will evolve and expand as we share best practices and experiences to meet the ever-changing needs of our field.

Duff Gillespie

Director, Advance Family Planning

The Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

## Why advocate?

Because it works. More political leaders are beginning to appreciate the benefits of family planning—not only for the health and well-being of women and children but also for the development of their countries. However, even in favorable environments, no initiative can succeed without specialized advocacy efforts to gain and sustain local support.

These efforts must go beyond health policymakers and also engage those with budgetary authority, the private sector, and donors. Effectively engaging each type of decisionmaker requires customized messages delivered by well-prepared champions. Those messages tell a decisionmaker why a policy or change is important and how taking particular actions will help them achieve their goals.

The 2012 London Summit on Family Planning, for example, catalyzed donors, governments, and civil societies to make family planning a higher priority. The summit led to the launch of Family Planning 2020 (FP2020), a global partnership that seeks to enable 120 million more women and girls in some of the world's poorest countries to access contraceptive information, services,

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## AFP is...

**Locally-driven.** Local champions determine and direct activities.

**Focused.** Our efforts target policymakers who control family planning funds and policies.

**Evidence-based.** Advocacy supported by the most up-to-date, proven data compels action.

**Collaborative.** We facilitate an inclusive, consensus-building process that leverages the resources of others.

**Influential.** Voices from the South are better able to influence global and regional agendas.

**Accountable.** Strong performance monitoring frameworks help track progress and increases in access to family planning.

**Sustainable.** Country advocacy capacity and activities are able to continue after AFP ends.

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and supplies, without coercion or discrimination. More than 20 governments made commitments to address the policy, financial, delivery, and socio-cultural barriers to reaching this goal; donors have pledged an additional US\$2.6 billion in funding. It is up to advocates to maximize this investment and hold leaders accountable.

## What is Advance Family Planning?

Advance Family Planning (AFP) is an advocacy initiative comprising individual family planning champions, locally-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), government officials, and regional health and development networks. Through evidence-based advocacy, we aim to increase the financial investment and political commitment needed to ensure access to high-quality family planning. Our focus countries include Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda.

An initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, AFP works to achieve the goals of the FP2020 partnership. AFP is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

## What makes our advocacy approach different?

It builds consensus from the start. The most skilled advocates intuitively focus their energy and attention on opportunities for action that have the highest potential for impact in the near term. Our approach facilitates this process, connecting a series of near-term “quick wins” with broad, long-term goals. Adapted from a broad spectrum of well-established decision-making concepts, tools, and best practices, our approach has been honed through practical application in resource-limited settings. It incorporates the SMART framework—a specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound disciplined approach to developing an advocacy strategy—as well as robust monitoring and evaluation tools. It allows advocates to respond quickly, advantageously, and decisively to advocacy opportunities, while leveraging partner resources and integrating new evidence.

## What have we accomplished with this approach?

More than 40 significant policy advances were achieved (“quick wins”) at the global, regional, and country levels in AFP’s first four years (2009–2013), including the following:

BROAD GOAL	QUICK WIN
Increasing funding for family planning	→ Increased government allocations for family planning in Indonesia, Tanzania, and Uganda, including at the district level
Eliminating policy barriers	→ Catalyzed policy changes to allow community health workers to provide injectable contraceptives in Kenya and Uganda → Implemented workplace family planning programs in Indonesia → Permitted private providers and NGOs to access the national medicine warehouses in Tanzania and Uganda
Raising the global visibility of family planning	→ Included family planning in the World Health Organization’s guidance on task shifting for maternal and newborn health → Added reproductive health as an area of emphasis in the World Bank Development Report

## What is the purpose of the AFP Advocacy Portfolio?

The portfolio provides a compendium of our best practices and tools to refine your strategic vision, identify and motivate key players, take action, manage and overcome setbacks, and monitor and evaluate success. Whether you are a new or experienced advocate, the AFP Advocacy Portfolio can help you along the way to achieving your desired result: real, achievable, and sustainable change.

Used separately, the tools can supplement an existing effort or inject new life into an initiative that has lost its vision or momentum. Used together, they provide a comprehensive roadmap to develop, implement, and evaluate a focused advocacy strategy from start to finish. While intended for use in a family planning context, the approach defined here could easily be adapted for other advocacy needs.

**To achieve maximum impact, advocates must**

- Understand the policy environment
- Make effective, evidence-based arguments
- Document, validate, and share results to allow for strategy revisions

The portfolio guides advocates in developing a strategy, implementing a plan, and capturing results. For advocacy to achieve maximum impact, advocates must understand the context in which advocacy will occur; make effective, evidence-based arguments; and document, validate, and share results to allow for strengthening of the strategy or necessary course adjustments.

## AFP Initiative

### Where We Work

Burkina Faso	Nigeria
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Senegal
India	Tanzania
Indonesia	Uganda
Kenya	

### Our Partners

Advocacy Nigeria	Jhpiego
African Women’s Development Fund	Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs
Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health	Partners in Population in Development, Africa Regional Office
Cipta Cara Padu Foundation	Population Action International
Equilibres et Populations	Population Foundation of India
Futures Group	Reproductive Health Uganda
Health Promotion Tanzania	Réseau Siggil Jigéen
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# Acknowledgments

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