

Building Advocacy Capacity of Faith and Religious Leaders to Better Influence Family Planning (FP) Investments in Uganda: A case of 3FHi

Background

While the Government of Uganda has acceded to **FP2020** global initiative, developed national and district costed implementation plans for Family Planning (FP) to eliminate the unmet need for FP, the progress to realizing these commitments remain significantly low due to poor and uneven allocation of funds. The Faith and Religious Leaders (FRL), acting as Frontline Advocates plays an important role in influencing domestic investments for FP. However, FRL lack network and advocacy skills, have limited awareness of their civic rights and have fewer opportunities for participation in decision-making processes. Additionally, FRL are not well organized and often they are not recognized as significant stakeholders in advocacy processes.

Intervention

3FHi program and advocacy interventions focused on two objectives: Enhancing advocacy knowledge and skills of FRL in FP budget advocacy in 8 districts in Uganda; and improving the capacity of FRL to participate in health planning and budgeting processes at the district level.

Methods and approach

For over 18 months (March 2018-August 2019), 3FHi assessed the impact of advocacy skills training, advocacy mentorship, financing and support of 25 FRL in 8 districts in enhancing prioritization of FP in the district's development, health and budget plans.



Results and key findings

Through 3FHi's FP Policy Projects (FPPs) the trained and supported FRL influenced domestic investments for FP in 8 districts with each district allocating an average of 1.9% of their local revenue to FP. The FRL spearheaded the establishment of the FP Technical Working Groups and establishments of Districts Inter-Faith FP Coalitions in the 8 districts. Crucially, FP is now integrated in the district operational plans and budgets.

One of the key findings of the FPP is the realization that investing in the capacity of FRL through training is not enough. Rather, FRL need to be supported through the process of influencing and meaningful participation. For instance, 3FHi supported FRL to design and implement advocacy strategies aimed at increasing allocations to FP. We also found that application of new skills that are acquired through training needs to be supplemented with coaching and mentoring, especially as FRL tackle the challenges that stem from being historically excluded and the failure of some decision-makers to take their right to participation seriously.

Program implications and lessons

The successful engagement of FRL as FP frontline advocates in 8 districts in Uganda has taught us two important lessons. Firstly, FRL must be mobilized, capacitated, engaged and facilitated if they are to make a meaningful change in influencing prioritization and financing of FP at the district level. Secondly, the role of the external agent such as 3FHi, Universities, Government Departments, Donors and NGOs in building the advocacy capacity of FRL is not only critical but also essential. These agencies can act as catalysts, enablers, mentors and facilitators. They can finance FRL advocacy actions and link them with advocacy spaces and platforms locally and globally. They can also connect them with global networks of advocates and community of practitioners as well as document and share the results of their advocacy actions.



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