



PRIMARY HEALTH CARE  
PERFORMANCE INITIATIVE

## Primary Health Care Advocacy Guide

Not sure where to start or go next with your advocacy efforts around primary health care (PHC)? This guide offers answers to questions on how to align PHC advocacy with existing health agendas, how to generate awareness about the issue and influence decision-makers, and how to craft an advocacy strategy.



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### How does PHC fit into my organization's advocacy agenda?

From family planning and routine immunizations, to prevention and treatment of illness and management of chronic conditions, primary health care forms the foundation of health systems, ensuring all people stay healthy and get care when they need it. If you work on any of these health issues, a high-performing PHC system will support your goals.

Furthermore, well-functioning PHC systems will be important for reaching the health-related SDG targets, such as “end preventable deaths of newborns and under-five children.” The global goal of Universal Health Coverage (affordable access to quality health care for every person, everywhere) rests on a pillar of strong PHC, as do the aims of the *Every Woman Every Child* movement to help mothers, children, and adolescents survive and thrive.

At the country level, the goals embedded in national health strategies are often dependent on improvements in PHC.

For more information, please see the document titled *Connecting the Dots: PHC and Specific Health Issues* in the advocacy toolkit.<sup>1</sup>

## What actions can I take as an advocate?

### Raise Awareness

Spread awareness of the importance of PHC systems to public health, and the need for improvements to PHC systems, by sharing Vital Signs data and PHCPI materials.

PHCPI has developed a Communications Toolkit<sup>1</sup> for using social media and opinion pieces to generate awareness. It includes sample tweets, such as “Strong #PrimaryHealthCare worldwide is essential to achieving the #SDGs.”

Use PHC Vital Signs data and analysis (PHCperformanceinitiative.org) as sources when your organization produces reports and fact sheets about global health issues.

PHCPI background documents<sup>1</sup> are designed to supplement materials about other health and development subjects. Include them among the materials you supply to decision-makers in support of your organization’s advocacy agenda.

### Engage Decision-Makers

Advocates play a critical role in catalyzing policy change when they contact decision-makers and request actions that support primary health care system improvements.

Of course, ‘asks’ will vary from country to country, and based on the role of the decision-maker (for example, a parliamentarian has different interests and authorities than a health ministry employee or a district health official). However, **consider the following asks** that are relevant across contexts:

- Publicly declare a commitment to PHC system improvements.
- Support improvements at all levels to measurement, data collection, and data analysis for primary health care system performance.
- Support PHCPI indicators; integrate them into the data that is collected in your area.
- Establish and empower multi-stakeholder expert working groups at national and/or subnational levels—with government, advocacy, and technical representatives—to examine PHCPI data and recommend areas for further exploration or improvement.
- Use PHCPI data in policy and budget decision-making.

### Resources

#### Country Briefs:

- For some countries, PHCPI’s local partners have developed country-specific briefs that provide an overview of the primary health care system performance in that country, and outline country-specific asks in line with the local context. Check under “Country Briefs”<sup>1</sup> to see whether your country is included.
- Country briefs are designed to serve as background materials to use in engagement efforts with decision-makers. If there is not already one for the country where you work, you can create your own using our template and instructions; see “Country Brief Template”.<sup>1</sup>

Other Background Materials: PHCPI’s other background materials, such as our “Frequently Asked Questions about PHCPI”<sup>1</sup> and our 2-page overview of the partnership ([www.PHCperformanceinitiative.org/sites/default/files/PHCPI%20Two-Pager.pdf](http://www.PHCperformanceinitiative.org/sites/default/files/PHCPI%20Two-Pager.pdf)), offer further language you can use or adapt when you discuss primary health care with policymakers.

## How do I implement an effective advocacy strategy?

### Conducting Effective Advocacy

For general tips on conducting effective advocacy, PHCPI recommends the following resources:

- [Reflections on a 38-year career in public health advocacy: 10 pieces of advice to early career researchers and advocates](#),<sup>2</sup> by Simon Chapman
- The [Community Tool Box](#), an online resource for advocacy on health and social issues, includes “[Survival Skills for Advocates](#)”<sup>3</sup> (and other useful advocacy resources)

### Developing an Advocacy Plan

Many high-quality resources are available to guide advocates in designing an advocacy strategy and plans to implement that strategy. Check out the following, for example:

- [Stronger Health Advocates, Greater Health Impacts: A Workbook for Policy Advocacy Strategy Development](#),<sup>4</sup> by PATH
- [The Advocacy Progress Planner](#),<sup>5</sup> an online tool for advocacy planning and evaluation, a project of the [Aspen Planning and Evaluation Program \(APEP\)](#) at the Aspen Institute.
- [Stop the Global Epidemic of Chronic Disease: a practical guide to successful advocacy](#),<sup>6</sup> a WHO publication with guidelines applicable to advocacy on any health issue.
- While billed as a communications tool, Spitfire Strategies’ “[Smart Chart](#)”<sup>7</sup> is equally applicable to designing an advocacy strategy.
- The [Community Tool Box](#), an online resource for advocacy on health and social issues, has a piece on “[Developing a Plan for Advocacy](#).”<sup>8</sup>

### Evaluating Advocacy

Perhaps equally important to developing a robust and impactful advocacy plan is effectively monitoring and evaluating your advocacy efforts. Below are some resources to support sound advocacy evaluation practices:

- [UNICEF Advocacy Toolkit and M&E Companion](#)<sup>9</sup>
- [A Users Guide to Advocacy Evaluation Planning](#),<sup>10</sup> Harvard Family Research Project
- [Unique Methods in Advocacy Evaluation](#)<sup>11</sup> by Julia Coffman and Ehren Reed, part of the Innovation Network
- [Champions and "Champion-ness": Measuring Efforts to Create Champions for Policy Change](#)<sup>12</sup> by David Devlin-Foltz and Lisa Molinaro, a publication of the [Aspen Planning and Evaluation Program \(APEP\)](#) at the Aspen Institute

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.PHCperformanceinitiative.org/phcpi-advocacy-toolkit](http://www.PHCperformanceinitiative.org/phcpi-advocacy-toolkit)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.phrp.com.au/issues/march-2015-volume-25-issue-2/reflections-on-a-38-year-career-in-public-health-advocacy-10-pieces-of-advice-to-early-career-researchers-and-advocates/#.VRiUxn36zUI.twitter>

<sup>3</sup> <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/advocacy-principles/survival-skills/main>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.path.org/publications/files/ER\\_app\\_workshop\\_workbook\\_unfill.pdf](http://www.path.org/publications/files/ER_app_workshop_workbook_unfill.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://planning.continuousprogress.org>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.who.int/chp/advocacy/chp.manual.EN-webfinal.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [http://smartchart.org/content/smart\\_chart\\_3\\_0.pdf](http://smartchart.org/content/smart_chart_3_0.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/advocacy-principles/advocacy-plan/main>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/index\\_60811.html](http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/index_60811.html)

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/publications-resources/a-user-s-guide-to-advocacy-evaluation-planning>

<sup>11</sup> [www.innonet.org/resources/files/Unique\\_Methods\\_Brief.pdf](http://www.innonet.org/resources/files/Unique_Methods_Brief.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/champions-champion-ness-measuring-efforts-create-champions-policy-change>