

# HEP optimization Advocacy Action Guide

HEALTH EXTENSION PROGRAM AND PRIMARY HEALTH CARE DIRECTORATE. MINISTRY OF  
HEALTH

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## 1 Introduction

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has planned to optimize the Health Extension Program (HEP) based on extensive research and analysis of available evidence. The long-term HEP optimization national indicative plan was developed and launched in May 2018 in presence of HE Deputy Prime Minister. This indicative plan put forward eight key strategic directions; one of which underlined the need for developing a Roadmap that will guide the overall implementation of HEP optimization in the coming fifteen (2021-2035). As a result, the roadmap has been developed based on extensive literature review processes and consultations with key partners and stakeholders under the keen leadership efforts of the top management body in the MOH.

This roadmap is composed of several strategic directions and initiatives which would be implemented phase by phase over the next fifteen years' time in alignment with the subsequent health sector strategic plans and Sustainable Development Sub Goals- specifically, SDSG 8. As the road map has huge reform agendas, it's paramount important getting leadership commitments and all stakeholder's engagements to implement, it requires well-planned advocacy and orientations at all levels.

Therefore, this guide is designed to help health sectors at all levels plan and conduct effective advocacy campaigns that will result in the adoption and effective implementation of the HEP roadmap.

## 2 Rationale

Advocating the roadmap is a key and an entry point to start the implementation of HEP optimization as it can be used as a multifunctional (management, accountability, communication, and resource mobilization) tool in the process. We have to advocate the HEP road-map up to the grass-root level because:

- There is strong evidence that addressing the issue will have a positive impact on the health sector.
- As there is a political will to address the issue, there are also stakeholders who may oppose the initiative due to different reasons.
- Advocacy is one of the best approach to communicate the roadmap to decision-makers, influencers, and other key stakeholders. Therefore, the implementation of the roadmap is only successful if we could get the leadership buy-in and create accountability at all levels.
- This initiative brings a notable reform/policy change to the health system, especially at the primary health care level.
- Decision-makers' commitment is crucial as it requires a huge budget to implement.

Therefore, this advocacy helps to influence those who make policy decisions and effective implementation and enforcement of the HEP roadmap. This process may use a list of cross-cutting strategies and this guideline provides a step-by-step guide to conducting the advocacy sessions and how to evaluate its impact.

### 3 Objectives

#### 3.1 Main Objective

The main objective is to achieve HEP optimization roadmap goals by ensuring that the necessary resources, policies, and political will are available to support, scale-up, and sustain the implementation of the milestones as per the HEP optimization Roadmap.

#### 3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives are to:

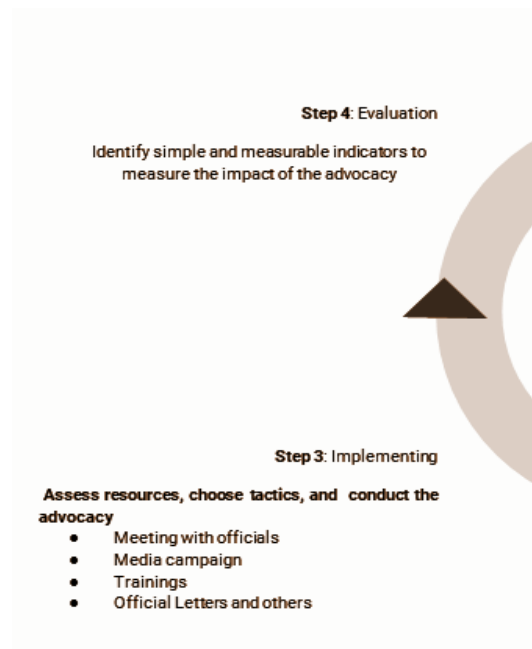
- Communicate the new changes and their strategic importance in terms of advancing HEP
- Mobilize all resources that are required for the implementation of HEP optimization road map
- Ensure leadership and political commitment at all levels
- Create a sense of ownership among the stakeholders

### 4 Core principles

- Context is key as processes are always specific to target audiences and evolving through time.
- Continuous, regular, and it is a two-way process of negotiation towards the transfer of ownership of the findings and the roadmap developed to key target audiences.
- It requires adequate preparation, commitment, and persistence.
- Involve all stakeholders and requires bargaining with more political audiences.

## 5 Steps for successful advocacy

The strategic approach below outlines the steps to be followed for the successful HEP roadmap advocacy.



### Step 1: Identifying all inputs for the HEP roadmap advocacy

We have a solid evidence showing that existing HEP implementation strategy needs a big reform. We have also proposed solutions backed with strong evidence. On the HEP roadmap there are clear goals and SMART objectives as well. Therefore, we need to have adequate number of those document that are customized to the local context and other job aids. Depending on the methods we follow, key messages that are extracted from the main documents must be prepared a head. The list of

### HEP Optimization Goal and objectives

#### Goal

The overall goal of the HEP optimization roadmap is to accelerate the realization of UHC through which all Ethiopians will have access to needed health services, including prevention, promotion, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care. These services will be of sufficient quality to be effective while preventing financial hardship from the use of these services

#### Objectives

1. Ensure equitable access to essential health services
2. Improve the quality of health services provided through HEP
3. Ensure sustainable financing and eliminate financial hardship from HEP services
4. Strengthen community engagement and empowerment
5. Ensure reliance by maintaining the provision of essential services during the emergencies
6. Strengthen and continue political leadership, multisectoral engagement and partnership

materials needed for the advocacy will included but not limited to:

- HEP assessment report
- Policy brief
- Case Studies
- HEP Optimization roadmap
- HEP roadmap PowerPoints
- HEP implementation guide (Rural, Urban Health concept and Pastoral)
- Brochures and leaflets
- Press release
- And other relevant documents

### Step 2: Identify stakeholders and develop strategies

Identifying a champion throughout the process are valuable assets for our advocacy campaign. Seek out influential and respected policymakers or in key positions who you can trust to act as effective champions. For example, at the national level the prime minister or deputy prime minister or the president may be the key figures and ideal to champion the program. The same approach will work for the regional and down level structures.

In addition to securing champions for the change it's also very important persuading a broader set of decision-makers to support the issue. Direct interaction and arranging dialogue session with the decision makers and influencers is effective for the roadmap advocacy. It may happen that, for various reasons, we cannot get direct access to these decision makers and therefore, we may need to work with others who are better placed to influence them.

There are multiple influences on the decision maker. These can vary from advisers to particular civil society groups, media pressure, and public opinion or elected representatives. To succeed, it is important to know who these target groups are: gauge their knowledge of the issue, find out their current opinion, and consider any personal or political interests that might influence their views. Some the key stakeholders/target audiences are listed below.

Levels	Target audiences	Approach
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Members of the parliament</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Present key findings from national HEP</li></ul>

level		<p>assessment- successes &amp; Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Training/orientation</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directors and agency heads at the ministry,</li> <li>• Ministry of Education, women and children, Finance, office of the PM, party representatives,</li> <li>• RHBs heads and focal points</li> <li>• Academia- (at least those who have matured public health programs), professional associations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a presentations by arranging a meeting and distribute official letters- focus on areas that need multi-sectoral effort</li> <li>• For academia- stress on issues that needs evidence generation specially implementation research</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donors and development partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a presentations by arranging a meeting and distribute official letters-Identify strategic areas that needs technical and financial support</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an orientation and media briefing or news conferences</li> <li>• Sign agreement to broadcast key findings over extended period of time- possibly for a year</li> </ul>
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department/Directorates/Process</li> </ul>	

level	<p>owners and management members,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education, women and children, Finance, water bureaus, office of the President, party representatives, mayor office, urban development</li> <li>• Zonal health departments and focal points</li> <li>• Academia, professional associations and other relevant CSOs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a presentations by arranging a meeting and distribute official letters- focus on areas that need multi-sectoral effort</li> <li>• For academia- stress on issues that needs evidence generation specially implementation research</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media personals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an orientation and media briefing or news conferences</li> <li>• Sign agreement to broadcast key findings over extended period of time- possibly for a year</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a brief presentation by arranging meetings</li> </ul>
Woreda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management members from the woreda and Health centers</li> <li>• Health extension workers</li> <li>• Kebele leaders and managers</li> <li>• All line- sectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an orientation by organizing meetings/conferences</li> </ul>



Kebele level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community representatives and other influential</li> <li>• WDA leaders</li> <li>• Youth association</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an orientation by organizing meetings/conferences</li> </ul>
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### Step 3: Advocacy approach/ strategies

Persuading decision-makers to take action is essential for affecting this changes. As indicated in the above table, there are many ways this can be done, but most successful campaigns employ a combination these strategies: 1) direct interaction with decision-makers and influencers through different platforms, 2) using media platforms and 3) capacity building/training to engage a strong base of supporters and organizational allies to encourage the change.

#### A. Direct interaction with the decision makers and public by organizing meeting or conferences

Direct communication can be a powerful outreach strategy and might include: In-person meetings, briefings, trainings, workshops, and conferences.

For a successful meeting, it is important to be well prepared (See annex I).

##### Before the meeting, do the following:

- Invite attendees known to and influential with the decision-maker.
- Develop an agenda.
- Identify a meeting leader and prepare talking points to other representatives.
- Familiarize yourself with your decision-maker's history on the issue and prepare responses for likely concerns or questions.
- Prepare an information packet/toolkit with proposed policy language and select background materials (e.g. the roadmap, fact sheet, brochure, assessment report, guidelines and manuals).
- Assign a note-taker to track issues raised and commitments made by the decision-maker.

Remember that it will usually take more than one meeting to establish credibility and gain a decision-maker's support. Until that time, be sure to maintain regular

communication and provide helpful data and information. If it is not possible to directly access a target decision-maker, consider how you might be able to reach them through an influencer

## **B. Media Engagement**

Using media is an advocacy strategy that can help to raise visibility, get people talking, and place your issue on a decision-maker's agenda. It includes printed publications, radio, television, and the Internet. Media advocacy includes the following types of coverage:

- All earned media (government sponsored media) and private medias, which means convincing a media outlet to cover the issue. We use the following approach to gain the attention of the Medias and audiences.
  - Organize an orientation or news conference sessions to provide a real data, report, that provides new information to a reporter and the outlet's audience
  - Organizing panel discussions and engaging the medias in the conference, workshops and meetings cover the events.
  - Stories of real people who have been impacted by the program.
- Social media, which includes using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram and other interactive platforms to create attention and generate dialogue
- Use owned media by creating and disseminate content over the ministry's and RHBs' website and other media outlets. We can also upload the relevant documents on the websites to make them accessible to the public

## **Training / capacity building**

This is not actually advocacy but preparing for advocacy. However, it is very important to prepare the leaderships, HEP experts and HEWs through training; and it's an important prerequisite for or accompaniment to advocacy work in at all levels. In general, developing skills and building the structures needed to carry out more effective advocacy can be more powerful and sustainable in the longer term. Therefore, integrating the implementation strategy of the HEP optimization road-map in basic training or preparing standalone training is helpful for the effective implementation.

## Writing a letter

A letter is a good way to deliver our message, especially if we couldn't have access with our target audience. For example, in addition to meeting the donors and international communities, it is important to send the letter along with the relevant documents. When sending a letter, we need to find out how to ensure our audience is most likely to read it. We can use mail, fax, or e-mail deliver our messages.

## Community level meeting

Engaging community members at the grass root level is very important to create ownership and mobilize resources needed for the HEP optimization. Therefore, proper planning and regular structured community forum will be facilitated in all kebeles. To create some sort of accountability, we need to communicate clearly the vision, role and responsibility of the community and local government. Remember that this community forum need to be done regularly and evaluate the progress periodically.

### Step 4: Monitoring and evaluation

We need to know if we have been successful, and if the advocacy has achieved the objectives. It is difficult to monitor, however, and even more difficult to evaluate as the changes often takes place over the long term, and it can be unpredictable. And successes are difficult to attribute to the advocacy actions due to the complex nature of the processes and so many stakeholders involved.

However, despite the challenges, it is possible to develop a short and clear set of indicators against which we can monitor and evaluate progress. We can use also different approaches to measure the indicators. Supervision, review meetings, field observations, periodic evaluations are some of the methods to assess the implementation of the milestones. Below are some of the indicators we may use to assess the changes over time.

- Increased dialogue about and attention to the practice that needs to be changed among practitioners as well as policymakers and broader public
- Pilot and practice change model initiated and/or exchange visit/training initiated
- Number of new changes implemented
- Budget is allocated to roll out the milestones
- Availability of evidence of monitoring and enforcing practice change (guidelines, orders, standards, inspectorates)
- Community perception about the changes

## 6 Timing

Being ready and presenting the roadmap into the decision-making process at the right time is vital to having influence. Looking at the people and decision-making practice, we need to try to predict the best opportunity or window to make our move. Probably, the current time a good windows of opportunity to advocate as we are closer to the election period.

It is equally important to be fully aware of the timetables underpinning the day to-day policymaking processes of the targets we identify. In addition, keeping an advocacy calendar that includes relevant events and deadlines will help to deliver the right message to the right person at the right time. Looking at this calendar, we can then set an implementation timeline that makes the most of upcoming opportunities. For example, we may use Annual or bi-annual review meetings to accesses some of the audiences identified.

## Annex I: Meeting/conference/workshop preparation checklist for the HEP roadmap advocacy

Employing the following three stages of meetings are very important for the successful advocacy - **preparation, the actual meeting and follow-up**. Neglecting the preparation and follow-up make the actual meeting a waste of time. Share this checklist so everyone knows what is expected.

### Preparation

- Establish team
- Define a clear goal
- Select participants
- Make sure budget and other logistics for the meeting are secured.
- Prepare all supporting documents (HEP-roadmap, HEP implementation guideline, PowerPoints, brochure...)
- Decide the form of the meeting (in person or or web conference)
- Set date and start and end time
- Arrange a press conference (optional)
- Distribute agenda and provide supporting material in time
- Demand that everyone is prepared
- Identify speakers and facilitators and make sure they have an adequate orientations and deliverables from the meeting.
- Make sure that talking points are prepared for the speakers
- Designate one person to take notes during the meeting.

### 1. Actual Meeting

- Start on time
- Repeat the goal of the meeting
- Follow to the agenda, stay on time
- Stay focused
- Produce summary of the meeting at the end of the meeting
- end on time

### 3. After the meeting

- Distribute minutes as soon as possible
- Communicate tasks to task owners
- Track tasks and follow-up if not completed by due date
- File minutes in a place where you can easily find them for future documentation

## Annex I: Panel discussion/press conference/release preparation checklist for the HEP roadmap

### 1. Preparation

- Prepare the key messages
- Determine a date and time for the press conference, and make sure it doesn't conflict with other press events or media deadlines.
- Prepare location for the press conference that has adequate space
- Select and train participants who will be knowledgeable and articulate about the roadmap,
- Select a moderator who is experienced with the press and the issue.
- Conducted a dress rehearsal.
- A press advisory prepared and mailed about one week ahead of time to inform the media about the press conference.
- Follow up your press advisory after three days with phone contact to the major media outlets.
- Followed up a second time the morning of the press conference.
- Develop a kit, for the participants. press kit contains:
  - A press release, HEP roadmap, guidelines, brochures, leaflets and other supporting materials

### **At the press conference:**

- Welcome members of the press as they arrive.
- Give each of them a press kit.
- Start on time.
- Record the event, for your own records, and for possible media use.
- Entertain any questions from the press, and direct questions to the appropriate participants.

### **After the press conference:**

Make sure that you hand deliver a press release and press packet to these people, send a recording, or, try to schedule an interview with a reporter.

### **ANNEX 3: SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE /NEWS RELEASE**