

ADVANCE FAMILY PLANNING

Media Advocacy

Snapshot | February 2021

Overview

In 2016, Advance Family Planning (AFP) added a new component to its advocacy approach—media advocacy. Six countries—Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda—are integrating strategic media coverage with existing advocacy efforts to reinforce accountability on family planning commitments. AFP’s experience shows that media coverage not only amplifies family planning policy issues but also leads to advocacy wins.

KEEPING FAMILY PLANNING VISIBLE DURING COVID-19

When COVID-19 lockdowns descended, governments in nearly all AFP focus countries deemed journalists as essential workers, enabling them to become key sources of on-the-ground information. AFP’s journalist champions worked hard to keep sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues visible, putting themselves at risk to report stories in communities and health clinics. Select accomplishments include:



Stories Keep Clinics Safe and Open in Tanzania

Following media reports of congested health clinics and mixed messages by providers on service availability in May 2020, Kagera and Dar es Salaam regional medical officers issued directives instructing that all maternal and child health services, including family planning, continue to be provided with adherence to safety measures. The ministry of health reported that family planning services continued without further disruption.



Media-driven Telephone Hotlines Bolster Services in Kenya

In Kakamega County, advocates, journalists, and government officials developed a new initiative—telephone hotlines, an idea initially shared in AFP’s media advocacy WhatsApp group—to link women in need of essential services, including family planning, with officials who could grant curfew passes. Journalists then highlighted the initiative [in a story on NTV](#), broadcasting it nationwide.



Media Help Sustain Budget Allocations in Nigeria

In Nigeria, journalists reported on the need for sustained funding for family planning at a time when states were reviewing and revising budgets due to COVID-19. In Gombe and Nasarawa states, this coverage helped the local advocacy working groups obtain an invitation to participate in budget town halls, where they made the case for family planning. As a result, family planning budget allocations were maintained in both states.

“Because COVID-19 is highly contagious and can be deadly, the government felt the need to institute a lockdown. However, the SRHR needs of millions of women never stopped. Many of them could not access commodities and information they needed. **If journalists went to sleep during this time, instead of highlighting the SRHR needs of the country that were being neglected, a number of women and youth would have been in danger.**”

– Gillian Nantume, NTV Uganda

COUNTRY ACHIEVEMENTS

Bangladesh

Partners: Marie Stopes Bangladesh, Shushilan, Team Associates

- In 2020, AFP partners obtained **free spaces for family planning stories on television at the national level** (BanglaTV and News 24) **and in two newspapers at the subnational level** in Khulna (*Daily Janmobhumi*) and Pirojpur (*Priojpur Kantho*).
- The first News 24 program aired on July 11, 2020, focusing on family planning access during COVID-19, child marriage, and other youth issues. BanglaTV's first program aired later that month, focusing on family planning service disruptions and gender-based violence during COVID-19 and their consequences on women's health and well-being.
- *Priojpur Kantho* has published seven stories on topics such as unmet need for family planning, rural women's access to reproductive health, and the consequences of COVID-19 on women's health, among other topics.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Partner: Tulane International

- When the government renewed its commitment to family planning in December 2019, AFP and the Network of Journalists for Sexual and Reproductive Health organized a national TV talk show on Radio-Télévision Nationale Congolaise (RTNC) to publicize it. The talk show also aired on five other TV channels: B One, RTGA, Numérica, RTVS 1, and Kin24.
- In August 2020, RJSSR also **organized a talk show on continuing family planning services during COVID-19**, which aired on RTNC and the TV channel CMB DIGI.
- At the subnational level, the Radio Communautaire Libre (Free Community Radio) station in Lualaba province has broadcast stories about the importance of contraceptive use on five health-focused shows and produced two weekly shows exclusively on family planning at their own expense since September 2019.

Kenya

Partner: Jhpiego

- As of January 2021, a total of 11 radio stations in 11 counties have dedicated free airtime for family planning stories, totaling nearly 60 million Kenyan shillings (US \$530,000).
- In May 2020, AFP established an editorial board of senior editors who agreed to mentor AFP-trained journalists *pro bono*.

KENYA SPOTLIGHT: FROM STORIES TO ACTION

In January 2019, **journalists published stories about contraceptive stock-outs** in some health facilities in Migori County. The county's health promotion coordinator contacted the journalists to find out which facilities were affected. He also took part in a live talk show on *Radio Milambo* and promised action. The next month, 8 facilities (Got Kachola, Karungu, Ngodhe, Nyakuru, Owacho, Piny, Rabondo, and Sibuoche) received redistributed supplies, in addition to Rongo Sub County Hospital.

COUNTRY ACHIEVEMENTS

Nigeria

*Partner: Pathfinder International
Nigeria*

- A total of 48 media houses in 9 states are publishing or airing family planning stories, leveraging an estimated **13.3 million Nigerian naira (NGN) (US \$37,000) in free coverage for family planning.**
- In February 2020, AFP achieved its first media advocacy sustainability win when **members of the media advocacy working group in Lagos**, a phased-out geography, **obtained the renewal of a weekly family planning column** in *Leadership*, one of Nigeria's most popular newspapers. The column is valued at 405,000 NGN (US \$1,080) per week; working group members take turns providing the content.

NIGERIA SPOTLIGHT: FROM STORIES TO ACTION

In 2019, the Lagos media advocacy working group collaborated alongside the Lagos State Advocacy Working Group (PHSAI) to publish stories highlighting gaps in family planning services and the need for budget releases in five local government areas (LGAs). **The stories spurred the Badagry LGA Chairman to follow through on his commitment of 10,000 NGN (US \$28) as a monthly imprest to cover the cost of family planning consumables for primary healthcare centers.**

Tanzania

*Partners: Johns Hopkins Center for
Communication Programs Tanzania,
Health Promotion Tanzania, and
Tanzania Communication and
Development Centre*

- In the lead up national elections on October 28, 2020, journalists used a media guide developed by AFP to ask political candidates about family planning and reproductive health. In response, **candidates from 12 parliamentary constituencies across six regions as well as two presidential candidates publicly stated their support for family planning and reproductive health.**
- In 2019, the Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation TV, Star TV, E-FM TV and Radio, and East Africa Radio channels and stations dedicated 15- to 45-minute weekly time slots for open discussions with policymakers, key actors, and the public on family planning and reproductive health issues. This coverage had an estimated value of 468 million Tanzanian shillings (US \$203,000) for a period of eight months (March to October 2019).

Uganda

*Partners: Partners in Population and
Development Africa Regional Office
and Reproductive Health Uganda*

- **AFP secured 23 free radio talk shows worth about 29.7 million Ugandan shillings (US \$8,050) between 2020 and early 2021.** The spots aired in six focus districts: Arua (10), Dokolo (1), Kabarole (4), Lira (2), Mbale (3), and Soroti (3). Stories focused on family planning access during COVID-19, teenage pregnancy and adolescent access to family planning, and male involvement.
- Of the 40 stories published through media advocacy efforts in 2020, 30 focused on COVID-19 and access to family planning and SRHR. Journalist allies helped bring the issue to the government and public's attention during the lockdown.
- In April 2019, the Mbale resident district commissioner issued a directive to all 18 media houses in Mbale to allocate part of the government's airtime for health issues, particularly family planning. This win was replicated in Kabarole district in November 2020.

MEDIA COVERAGE ANALYSIS



AFP partners reported **more than 400 stories across print, online, radio, TV, and blogs, among other media, between November 1, 2019 and October 31, 2020.** Print/web (63%) and radio (22%) were the most frequently used formats. Slightly more than half (55%) were in a local language. Sixty percent of stories targeted audiences at the subnational level, a decrease from the prior year, when 90% of the coverage focused on subnational geographies. The increased focus on national-level media reflects the addition of the DRC and Bangladesh to AFP's media effort, which have a national focus, as well as our COVID-19 media response.

ONGOING PRIORITIES

- ❖ **Bangladesh**—orient local journalists to family planning and highlight issues of quality and youth access.
- ❖ **DRC**—profile government budget allocations for family planning and continue to build capacity for media advocacy at the subnational level.
- ❖ **Kenya**—ensure government accountability for International Conference on Population and Development +25 commitments, commodity financing, and implementation of family planning policies and innovations.
- ❖ **Nigeria**—cultivate social media influencers to hold leaders accountable on family planning commitments.
- ❖ **Tanzania**—spotlight youth access to contraception and ensure sexual and reproductive health issues become a permanent priority on radio programs in the Katavi and Manyara regions.
- ❖ **Uganda**—highlight commodity stockouts, adolescent access to family planning, and the need for family planning funding at national and subnational levels.

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