

Life Saving Commodities – Advocacy

Background

The UN Commission on Life-Saving Commodities for Women and Children (the Commission) was formed in 2012 by the UN Secretary-General as part of the global Every Woman Every Child (EWEC) movement (www.everywomaneverychild.org). The Commission challenged the global community to increase access to and appropriate use of essential medicines, medical devices, and health supplies that effectively address the leading preventable causes of death during pregnancy, childbirth, and childhood.

Led by a wide range of high-level leaders from around the world, the Commission made ten recommendations focused on rapidly increasing the availability and use of 13 priority commodities for reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health (RMNCH) to achieve the goal of saving the lives of six million women and children by 2017.

Eight expert groups¹ – or Technical Resource Teams (TRTs) – carry forward the Commission’s recommendations by supporting countries in their efforts to make these essential commodities more widely available and used, and by addressing global and regional RMNCH challenges. Each of these TRTs specializes on a type of commodities or on a barrier that prevents a wider use of these commodities.

Pooling expertise on advocacy

Dedicated and coordinated advocacy is essential to ensuring the necessary resources, policies, and political will are available to realize the Commission’s recommendations and to scale up and sustain expanded access to RMNCH commodities.

To help carry forward the Commission’s recommendations at the global and national levels, PATH convenes the Advocacy TRT (also called the Advocacy Working Group - AWG). The Advocacy TRT—a diverse group of approximately 100 partners from more than ten countries—works across the RMNCH spectrum to promote joint planning and advocacy to amplify a unified voice among the Commission’s stakeholders.



Nakimbugwe Juliet, 33 holds her two year old daughter Violet at Butenga Health Centre IV, Bukomansimbi District, Uganda, in September 2013.

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The Advocacy TRT seeks to ensure that stakeholders from different sectors and various EWEC initiatives are involved in the Commission’s advocacy activities to improve access to and availability of lifesaving maternal, newborn, and child health commodities, programs, and services.

Progress to date

- The Advocacy TRT is seeking to align its advocacy activities both globally and nationally with related EWEC initiatives and working groups. It has formed a steering committee wherein the members represent initiatives under the EWEC umbrella (e.g., Family Planning 2020, Every Newborn, Call to Action: A Promise Renewed).

The 30 member steering committee, co-chaired by World Vision International, guides the broader working group to identify related advocacy activities, plans, and opportunities both globally and within EWEC countries in order to collaborate and include focus on the ten recommendations and 13 commodities.

¹ The other TRTs focus on: family planning; maternal health; child health; demand, access and performance; global markets, quality and regulation; and supply chain and local markets. These groups are coordinated by a multi-agency Strategy and Coordination Team hosted by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

- The Advocacy TRT has published ‘[Scaling Up Lifesaving Commodities for Women, Children, and Newborns: an advocacy toolkit](http://www.path.org/publications/files/APP_advocacy_toolkit.pdf)’ (http://www.path.org/publications/files/APP_advocacy_toolkit.pdf). The online toolkit provides a variety of information and advocacy resources for stakeholders in EWEC countries, including details on global TRTs and national plans, guidance on engaging key stakeholders to implement the recommendations and plans, suggested advocacy actions at both global and national levels, and messaging and communications tools.
- The Advocacy TRT has begun specific advocacy activities in four of the initial pathfinder countries²: Malawi, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. After a competitive request for applications process in early 2013, five grantees across the four countries were identified as local lead partners to carry out specific advocacy strategies in each country. Grantees include: Coalition for Health Promotion and Social Development (Uganda), Samasha Medical Foundation (Uganda), Speak Up Africa (Senegal), Health for All Coalition (Sierra Leone), and Health and Rights Education Programme (Malawi).
- The Advocacy TRT has conducted RMNCH advocacy strategy development workshops in each of the four countries. Participants from almost 50 local organizations and entities have used the toolkit to create a unified strategy that identifies gaps in the country’s RMNCH policies and brings forward policy change solutions. The workshops provide a platform for advocates to create linkages among colleagues and ensure a coordinated advocacy approach to advance RMNCH issues, the Commission, and other EWEC initiatives.

Advocacy strategy goals include policy change to update Essential Medicines and Devices Lists, updating of Standard Treatment Guidelines to reflect global best practices, task shifting to increase commodity availability at the community level, increased budget and procurement lines for the essential commodities, and policy dissemination to sub-national levels.

² The ‘pathfinder countries’ are the eight countries where the TRTs started their work: Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Uganda.



Members

PATH convenes the Advocacy TRT, co-chaired by World Vision, to bring together more than 80 members. It is guided by a steering committee of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Population Action International, PMNCH, the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition, the United Nations Foundation, the World Health Organization, World Vision International, Save the Children, International Academy of Paediatrics, Rutgers WPF, John Snow Inc., Family Care international, Pathfinder, and the five country partners, including Samasha Medical Foundation, Coalition for Health Promotion and Social Development, Health Rights and Education Program, Speak Up Africa, and Health for All Coalition – Sierra Leone.

How to become involved in the Advocacy TRT

- The Advocacy TRT has dedicated funding to provide targeted technical assistance to the global TRTs as well as EWEC countries to both develop and implement advocacy strategies that accelerate the execution of integrated RMNCH plans.
- The Advocacy TRT can also provide technical assistance to stakeholders within EWEC countries on how to leverage the EWEC and Commission platforms to advance commodity-related advocacy.

Resources

The Advocacy TRT has developed a series of advocacy tools for use globally and within EWEC countries, including:

- Briefs on global convening groups.
- An advocacy toolkit.
- A messaging framework highlighting the importance of the 13 commodities and ten recommendations.
- An advocacy activities calendar.

Contact us

For more information or to request tools and technical assistance, please contact: Ashley Latimer: alationer@path.org