

Zambian faith organization advances family planning advocacy through faith communities



Engaging religious leaders and faith communities in family planning advocacy is an effective way to improve domestic investments in family planning. The Churches Health Association of Zambia (CHAZ), a network of Catholic and Protestant Church health institutions, is the largest non-government health provider in Zambia. CHAZ is a partner in the Christian Advocacy for Family Planning in Africa project managed by Christian Connections for International Health (CCIH) funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to build the capacity of religious leaders and Christian denominations in Zambia to advocate for increased funding and supportive policies for family planning services. CCIH is a founding member of Faith to Action Network and serves on its Steering Council, and CHAZ is a member of Faith to Action Network.

Community-based distributors are now allowed to deliver injectables contraceptives

A key milestone for the project was the successful advocacy in 2015 to 2017 by CHAZ and civil society organizations (CSO) to allow community-based distributors (CBD) to deliver injectable contraceptives, greatly increasing access. There are now clear policy guidelines and a national database of CBDs who have been trained to deliver injectables.

CHAZ successfully worked with other CSOs in developing a policy brief which was used in developing the new Zambia FP2020 commitments that were presented at the 2017 FP summit in London. A new feature of the 2017 commitment was the Zambian Government pledge to increase its contribution to family planning commodities to at least \$1.5 million annually by 2021. Thanks to its leadership in advocacy, CHAZ was appointed the lead of the FP Technical Working group, making it the only faith-based organization leading advocacy efforts for a country.



To promote a culture where healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies and family planning is valued, CHAZ gathered 17 church leaders and trained them in family planning. The Church Leaders affirmed their support for and went on to adopt a uniform definition of family planning and 10 of them developed positions specific to their churches on family planning and acceptable methods. The church leadership also met with the Ministry of Health and representatives of other CSOs and partners at a breakfast meeting in May 2017 where they expressed their support for scaling up FP services in Zambia and outlined concrete steps the government needed to take to improve FP outcomes and reduce teenage pregnancies, as Zambia is one of the countries with the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world.

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