



# Stories of change from the HPAF grantees

## Engaging in health policy processes in Uganda



Health policy advocacy by AGHA.

### Highlights of the grants' outcomes

AGHA reports that through the HPAF funding:

- AGHA has promoted greater accountability between development partners and donors.
- AGHA has helped to hold government officials to account for public funds.
- Members of Parliament (MPs) have become strong CSO allies, and are more active in holding bureaucrats and donors accountable in the implementation of the national health plans and strategies.
- MPs say the CSO alternative health sector performance report is key in shaping planning and resource allocation in the health sector.

### Organization: Action Group for Health, Human Rights and HIV/AIDS (AGHA)

AGHA received two Health Policy Action Fund (HPAF) grants, in 2010 and 2012. The grants supported civil society's ability to engage in policy development processes. It helped bring civil society organizations (CSOs) together to speak with one voice to the Ministry of Health on the implementation of national health policies.

With grant one, AGHA:

- Organized a two-day training for CSOs working on health rights
- Translated policies on patients' rights and HIV/AIDS into two local languages so that they could be easily read and understood by community members, enabling them to demand accountability from duty bearers
- Coordinated CSOs to meet with the Ministry of Health and discuss the draft national policy on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD)
- Mobilized CSOs to attend monthly Technical Working Group (TWG) meetings so they can influence the policy process.

**“Health policy advocacy is not for cowards; it takes boldness to achieve results.”** AGHA

With grant two, AGHA:

- Produced the third edition of the CSO alternative health sector performance report for Financial Year 2011/12
- Organized a half-day CSO meeting to discuss the implementation of the Health Sector Strategic Investment Plan III, in order to increase awareness of its progress
- Participated as a CSO coalition in the 18th Health Sector Joint Review Mission, which was organized by the Ministry of Health and development partners as part of sector monitoring and evaluation.

### About AGHA

AGHA is a health rights advocacy organization in Uganda dedicated to raising awareness of the human rights aspects of health, and the quality of health and health care for all Ugandans. Grounded in a rights-based approach, AGHA mobilizes health professionals, in collaboration with communities, to be health rights advocates promoting equity and social justice for all Ugandans, with a particular focus on marginalized and vulnerable populations.

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## AGHA's lessons learnt

- Persistence is key in health policy advocacy
- Working with government officials as allies increases the momentum to succeed in health policy advocacy
- Using confrontational approaches as well as diplomatic ones can increase results
- Working in coalitions leverages resources for effective health policy advocacy
- Engaging media in health policy advocacy increases awareness among citizens and exerts pressure on government to be more accountable.

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## About the Health Policy Action Fund (HPAF)

HPAF provides grants to southern CSOs, networks and coalitions in IHP+ partner countries to help them become more effectively engaged in national health policy processes. Twenty-three grants were issued through two rounds of funding in 2010 and 2012.

IHP+ is an initiative to improve development cooperation in health. Governments and development partners sign a compact and make commitments to change the way they work together, in order to achieve better health outcomes.

## AGHA and monitoring health sector performance

AGHA takes on a watchdog role to examine the implementation of national health policies to improve health outcomes in Uganda. A number of CSOs, including AGHA, conduct activities such as budget analysis and tracking. AGHA also engages with health policy processes and holds dialogue with policy makers. It advocates to both government and health development partners on financing health care in Uganda, and publishes an annual shadow CSO report on health sector performance.

According to AGHA, the HPAF grant helped them to:

- **Increase accountability** The HPAF grant contributed to changes in AGHA's work on increasing accountability between different health sector stakeholders. Mutual accountability between government and donors has increased around implementing the pledges made in the country compact. For example, when donor funds were misused in 2010 and 2012, development partners requested the government to improve country financial and procurement systems. This had led to better national financial management. AGHA contributed by staging protests and petitions, putting pressure on the government to show leadership in addressing mismanagement of public funds.
- **Ensure action was taken against corruption** AGHA pushed for strong action against corruption in government institutions. For example, in 2011 AGHA presented a petition to parliament demanding the arrest and resignation of government officials that were implicated by the Office of the Auditor General in misuse of Global Fund and GAVI monies. Donors also demanded accountability. The government investigated allegations and some officials were arrested, and are no longer serving in public office.
- **Hold dialogue with MPs** Some MPs have become good allies of CSOs in health policy advocacy. They are more active in holding bureaucrats and donors accountable in implementing national health plans and their oversight roles have increased.
- **Shape the health sector** The CSO shadow report on health sector performance is reported to have an important influence in shaping planning and resource allocation in the health sector. The Ministry of Health uses the report's findings to determine priority issues for health. AGHA has developed a good working relationship with the Ministry of Health to engage in different policy processes, such as health policy working groups and joint review missions.

IHP+ is a group of development partners, governments and civil society organizations committed to improving the health of citizens in developing countries by improving development cooperation in health.