



Stories of change from the HPAF grantees

Engaging in health policy processes in Uganda



Organization: Coalition for Health Promotion and Social Development (HEPS Uganda)

Project: A Health Policy Action Fund (HPAF) grant to HEPS in 2012 supported its work to safeguard public health through full use of Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) flexibilities in Uganda. HEPS encourages policies which promote and protect importers and manufacturers of generic medicines in order to increase access to affordable medicines for poor and vulnerable citizens in the long term.

“Working as a coalition contributes to the success of advocacy campaigns.” HEPS

The project brought together 40 civil society organizations (CSOs) under the umbrella of the Uganda Coalition for Access to Essential Medicines (UCAEM). The coalition advocates for consumer-friendly health laws and policies at all levels through policy analysis, research, policy formulation and monitoring policy implementation. The project specifically focused on influencing development of an Intellectual Property (IP) policy framework for the country to ensure that IP policies fully use the flexibilities set out in the TRIPS Agreement.

Highlights of the grant's outcomes

HEPS reports that the HPAF grant supported the project to:

- Contribute to the enactment of IP policies that fully utilise TRIPS flexibilities in the Industrial Property Act and the Anti Counterfeiting Goods Bill. The project successfully influenced the Industrial Property Bill and it was passed into law in August 2013, incorporating all recommendations by HEPS and the CSO Coalition group on IP rights. The Act was passed by the President on 6 January 2014. The Act incorporates TRIPS flexibilities and Uganda now has a law that promotes the production and importation of generic medicines.
 - Participate in the drafting of the regulations and ensure that public health interests were maintained in the regulations that will make the Industrial Property Act operational.
 - Lobby and bring onboard the Ministry of Health, which originally was not involved in the drafting process.
 - Build the capacity of over 80 members of civil society in relation to IP and access to medicines. Some of them have integrated IP and access to medicines into their organizational programmes.
 - Build the capacity of over 20 media houses in Uganda. Most media houses now follow up issues of IP and access to medicines whenever they are being debated and discussed by legislators. They also make a feature of international IP calendar days.
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HEPS lessons learnt from engaging in the policy processes

- The media plays a key role in attracting legislators' attention. HEPS trained journalists in IP rights and public health, which helped to popularize the issues, and raise awareness among a wide range of stakeholders.
 - Simplifying IP rights issues and using innovative ways to reach legislators is more likely to get their interest. Most legislators were not interested in issues to do with IP because they were so technical. HEPS used documentaries and comic booklets with simplified messages to communicate complex issues about the politics of IP and public health.
 - Continuing engagement with legislators until the very last minute ensures that the issues are fresh in their minds so they can better articulate public health issues during the debate in Parliament.
 - Establishing a good working relationship with the officials who were drafting the IP-related Act helped HEPS to access important information.
 - Working as a coalition contributes to the success of advocacy campaigns.
 - Involving different stakeholders in IP rights campaigns is integral to their success. For example, academia, agricultural and health sectors are all affected by IP and involving them all in campaigning creates a broad base and voice for advocacy.
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HEPS hold a lobby meeting with members of parliament on the legal and trade committees.

About HEPS

HEPS Uganda is a health and human rights organization that advocates for health rights and health responsibilities of Ugandans, especially giving voice to poor and vulnerable men, women and children, and the elderly. HEPS Uganda has a special focus on working to increase access to essential medicines and promote the rational use of medicines. HEPS Uganda works at national, local government and community level to reach out to the most vulnerable people in society.

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.