



# Stories of change from the HPAF grantees

## Engaging in health policy processes in Pakistan



Interactive dialogue between young advocates and policy makers.

**“Advocacy initiatives require a long time for any tangible outcome.”**

Rahnuma-FPAP

### Organization: Rahnuma-Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP)

A Health Policy Action Fund (HPAF) grant to FPAP in 2012 supported advocacy for provincial health policies in Punjab and Sindh Provinces to include adolescent and youth reproductive health concerns.

Using the grant, FPAP:

- Conducted a comprehensive gap analysis of the National Health Policy and identified avenues to include adolescent and young people’s reproductive concerns
- Developed specific advocacy tools and kits for policy makers highlighting policy gaps
- Carried out capacity-building workshops and held interactive dialogue for a range of stakeholders including civil society organizations (CSOs), media, youth and ministry representatives and parliamentarians
- Developed advocacy champions in parliament, youth, media, CSOs and government institutes to act as advocates and raise a collective voice in order to put pressure on policy makers to address adolescent and youth reproductive health concerns
- Brought technical support to the Provincial Health Departments to help draft the Provincial Health Policies (for Punjab and Sindh Provinces).

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## Highlights of the grant’s outcomes

Rahnuma-FPAP reports that:

- Through advocacy, policy makers realized that adolescents and young people are an important target group that needs attention in health policies and programmes.
  - Adolescent and young people’s reproductive health needs and concerns are now placed high on the political agenda. The agenda was incorporated in a resolution for approval by the provincial assemblies in both Punjab and Sindh.
  - Reproductive health recommendations for adolescents and young people have been included in provincial health strategies and related programmes.
  - The provincial government health departments acknowledged the recommendations and incorporated them into various strategy documents in Punjab: the National Maternal Newborn and Child Health programme, the Adolescent Strategy 2012, and the Youth Policy 2012. In Sindh they were incorporated in the Health Sector Reforms Unit strategy plan.
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## Rahnuma-FPAP's lessons learnt

- Parliamentarians and key stakeholders, especially adolescent and young people, need to have continuous interaction and dialogue.
- It is crucial to actively engage provincial and local health-related departments to improve their understanding on the subject and provide technical assistance in policy development.
- The provincial health-related policies and programmes are not implemented in isolation. A holistic approach is necessary to incorporate reproductive health recommendations in related policies and programmes. This includes the Provincial Youth Policy, Population Welfare Programme, and the Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health programme.

This holistic approach helped create positive conditions for prioritizing the issue in health policies and also ensuring integration among all policies and programmes.

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### Rahnuma-FPAP and health policy dialogue

Adolescent and youth health care in Pakistan is neglected and sometimes considered taboo. Recent Health Sector Strategy Plans are silent on the reproductive health needs of adolescents and young people. For Rahnuma-FPAP, policy advocacy and providing technical support to policy levels are crucial strategies to ensure the reproductive health needs of these groups are met. To carry out effective advocacy and engage with health policy dialogue, a number of CSOs worked together in Punjab and Sindh provincial health policy development processes.

Through the HPAF, Rahnuma-FPAP supported the capacity building of CSOs on the subject of adolescent and young people's reproductive health and processes of health policy development. It carried out extensive networking with like-minded organizations and strengthened alliances and coalitions with CSOs on related subjects. Through these coalitions and alliances, Rahnuma-FPAP was able to voice collective concerns about the need to prioritize adolescent and young people's reproductive health needs in the health sector. This involved improving coalition members' knowledge on policy gaps and updating them on procedures for policy development.

### About Rahnuma-FPAP

Rahnuma-FPAP leads a rights-based movement to strengthen family wellbeing, enable the empowerment of women, support youth and protect children. Rahnuma-FPAP is committed to promoting family planning and sexual and reproductive health as a basic human right in Pakistan. It provides sustainable and quality sexual and reproductive health and family planning information and services to men, women and youth – particularly the poor and rural segments – in partnership with government and civil society. It advocates for the sexual and reproductive health rights of all.

### 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.

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.