

# A1. What are health budget advocacy and accountability?

Health budget advocacy and accountability are the means of ensuring that appropriate resources are allocated to national health budgets, in this case to support UHC. While CSOs, citizens and parliamentarians may conduct health budget advocacy and use the media (particularly nowadays social media) for advocacy, the principles of journalism mean that the media may focus more on health budget accountability.

Health budget advocacy involves lobbying and campaigning to influence the size and distribution of government health budgets, to increase the amount of resources allocated to health to improve health service access and delivery.

An advocate is someone who speaks up (or writes) publicly about the current situation and what it should be. Advocates promote change towards a goal, on behalf of a group or with a group (96). Advocacy is sometimes confused with other concepts, such as fund-raising, awareness-raising or community and social mobilization. Although an advocacy campaign may include specific tactics or steps, the targets of advocacy are decision-makers, and the goals are changes to laws, policies or budgets. In accountability for health budgets, those responsible for allocating and spending money on health services can provide evidence that they have spent the money allocated to health on health.

The media has a strong role to play in accountability: to analyse how health care is funded, how the government prioritizes health spending and how money intended for health care is spent; to explain these issues clearly on the basis of evidence for the wider public; and to provide opportunities for the public to engage with decision-makers about health spending to help improve access to good-quality health services for all (97).

Good accountability is often the result of a system of checks and balances by internal and external stakeholders. Internal accountability includes policies and processes for spending money and deciding on resource and supervisory systems in institutions to check that resources go where they are intended. External accountability includes public oversight (anti-corruption bodies, parliamentary standing committees, supreme audit institutions) and civil society watchdog groups, media and community groups that monitor how public resources are used.

By analysing how health care is funded and how budgets are drawn up, civil society groups and the media have more opportunity to influence how the government prioritizes health spending. The media may not only influence the size and distribution of health budgets but also play an increasingly important role in monitoring governmental commitments and holding public officials accountable for resource allocations and use, ensuring that funds are disbursed and used as planned.

This module will help members of old and new media to understand how they can support the achievement of UHC by monitoring accountability for health budgets. It should give rise to

ideas on making accountability for health budgets interesting, relevant and understandable for all audiences.