

C2. Networks: With whom can I collaborate and learn from?

Organizations in various sectors increasingly recognize the potential of greater cooperation to achieve positive change and improve the way they work. Partnerships can include those for capacity-strengthening that are defined as enduring and meaningful and also less intensive partnerships for providing content, training and guidelines.

The media require networks of experts for advice, sources and contributors on health budget accountability and UHC. Collaborations should not compromise editorial independence, and the media should not promote the agenda of other organizations. Rather, such collaborations ensure that media outputs are factually accurate and relevant (105). All partnerships should be based on a mutual desire to promote UHC systems and reliance on health communication to that end. Examples of organizations and people with whom the media could network are given below.

- **CSOs**

CSOs may work on both health budget advocacy and health budget accountability. They can be a useful source of expertise on health budgets and on audience perspectives and interests in the issues. CSOs can also be helpful collaborators for community engagement and community media activities, such as discussions, debates, live dramas and features or personal stories. In return, media's attention to the issues that the CSOs address helps to raise awareness and thereby increase their impact.

- **National and international NGOs**

National and international NGOs provide an additional level of expertise, especially with national parliamentarians and policy-makers, and can provide expertise from international debates and commitments to UHC. National and international NGOs may also support and help coordinate networks of CSOs, providing a useful basis for networking.

- **Parliamentarians**

Engaging with parliamentarians can be complex. The media invite parliamentarians to represent different points of view on programmes and to explain government commitments and also to hold them to account on government health expenditure. The media should be aware of the agendas that parliamentarians may have in working with them and ensure editorial independence. (See module 3.)

- **Engaged audiences**

Some audiences may already be interested in or engaged in health budget accountability. Media that are considering addressing health budget accountability should map how health budgeting is addressed in traditional and new media, particularly social media, in order to identify the areas already covered, gaps and needs, with whom they wish to engage and

any mis- and dis-information that is circulating and that media can help to challenge. Examples of the use of on-line platforms and digital technology by media for health budget accountability are described below. Any information to be shared and due diligence of contributors should be checked before working with them.

Blogging: A blog is an online journal or diary, or even a mini-website, that allows expression of opinions and news, sharing of photos, videos and audio recordings and links to other websites considered to be relevant for the audience and message. The most popular blogging sites are WordPress and Blogger, and see the IBP's "open budgets blog". A blog can be set up by anyone. Bloggers may be useful contacts if they provide factually accurate, useful information and have a large following in the target audience; however, they may spread mis- and dis-information.

Citizen journalism: Digital media make it possible for ordinary people to become journalists. Using computers, mobile phones and digital cameras (including on mobile phones), anyone can publish stories of importance to them. Some citizen journalism sites or organizations, such as Global Voices Online, have an editorial staff to ensure that the stories comply with certain minimum standards. Some citizen journalists have had basic training in journalism from media and media development organizations.

Twitter: This service allows emission of very short messages (maximum, 280 characters) to "followers" and also to follow others to read their "tweets." People use Twitter almost like newspaper headlines: to alert their followers to news or to an interesting website or blog. As in other forms of social media, the information shared is not necessarily checked for accuracy.

YouTube: This virtual platform allows the creation, sharing and viewing of videos online. It has a specific "channel" dedicated to non-profit groups. Many organizations use YouTube to share advocacy information. The information must be checked with reliable sources before sharing it.