Understand Your Context
An Overview of Landscape Assessments

The landscape assessment is the initial step in advocacy strategy development and implementation. The assessment provides the platform on which to build an advocacy initiative.

The information and evidence collected for a landscape assessment is used to help understand entry points for advocacy and assess the likelihood of influencing policy development. It should suggest where and how advocates can add value to the existing debate and provide insight about key decisionmakers, change-agents, champions, individuals, and organizations that will be needed partners and potential targets of an advocacy strategy. In this way, both the process and the outcome of an assessment can guide the partner toward the most strategic investments of time and resources.

EVIDENCE

A landscape assessment for family planning will incorporate evidence on

- Current family planning indicators, typically from surveys of individuals and healthcare providers.

- Policies and regulations that influence the financing and supply of services from government sources.

- Support from key informants—policymakers, health professionals, and civil society—and whether they judge family planning to be central to or marginal in political and policy discourse.

Evidence-based assessments lead to a better mapping of advocacy challenges and opportunities. The more specific the information to the national and subnational context and priorities, the greater its utility as a platform. A reader of a landscape assessment should be able to quickly grasp which critical issues need advocacy and which will deliver quick wins in the current environment. Most important, a good assessment provides clarity on the current environment using local experience and advice to interpret available evidence.

USE

The policy landscape is never static. Monitoring changes in the landscape is helpful for course corrections and refinement of a strategy to deliver short- and long-term results. Therefore, the assessment should be updated periodically and then used to guide work planning and strategy development. It serves as a benchmark to compare the current situation to desired outcomes—whether it is based on country or regional targets or global compacts like Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) or the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

RESOURCES

The online Advocacy Portfolio (www. advancefamilyplanning.org) includes links to useful tools for conducting an assessment—such as the RAPID (Resources for the Awareness of Population Impacts on Development) model developed by Futures Group; the datasheets created by Population Reference Bureau; the Measure DHS STATcompiler; and the World Population Prospects database maintained by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division.

The Landscape Assessment and AFP Results Cascade

Unlike the AFP Results Cascade, which focuses on a single change, the landscape assessment enables a big picture view to answer the questions: Overall, has the environment to meet the existing unmet need for family planning changed? How so?