HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING ACCELERATOR

Health Systems Strengthening OPEN HOUSE

Insights from a Budget Advocacy Tool: Enhancing Citizen Dialogue for Domestic Community Health Financing in Guinea

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INTRODUCTION

The Challenge

In 2018, Guinea launched a new National Community Health Policy to address longstanding health systems challenges and inequities. The policy aims to professionalize its community health workforce through recruitment, training, and salaried payments. However, its initial implementation has faced systems-level obstacles, including low domestic resource mobilization and strategic allocation. Additionally, citizen engagement in budget processes has been limited and local investment plans often do not align with citizen priorities or the policy. Insights from an Accelerator Study (Improving Linkages between Social Accountability and Social Behavior Change [SBC]) suggest that addressing these systems and inclusivity concerns will require behavioral changes.

The Opportunity

The Accelerator, leveraged its expertise across activities (Building Better Systems for Health Equity Using SBC, Improving Community Health and Immunization Outcomes in Guinea through Integrated Health Systems Strengthening), and among its partners to develop, pilot, and disseminate an SBC oriented budget advocacy tool and accompanying guide. Partnerships with Comité Jeunes Mon Avenir D'Abord (CJMAD) and the Ministry of Health (MOH) (Directorate of Community Health and Traditional Medicine, Office of Strategy and Development) were foundational to these efforts. This ensured that the tool's efforts built upon the Accelerator's successful civil society advocacy, which contributed to a new law mandating the government to pay the salaries of the community health workforce per the policy.

Our Work

The tool guides users: (1) to develop strategies to increase citizen and civil society participation in budget prioritization and oversight processes, (2) how to improve leaders' receptiveness towards involving citizens and addressing their priorities. Applying this knowledge to budget advocacy for the policy aims to inform a more inclusive and responsive budgeting process that supports dialogue and engagement between citizens and civil society with national and subnational decision-makers. The approach outlined in the tool can be adapted and used in other settings.
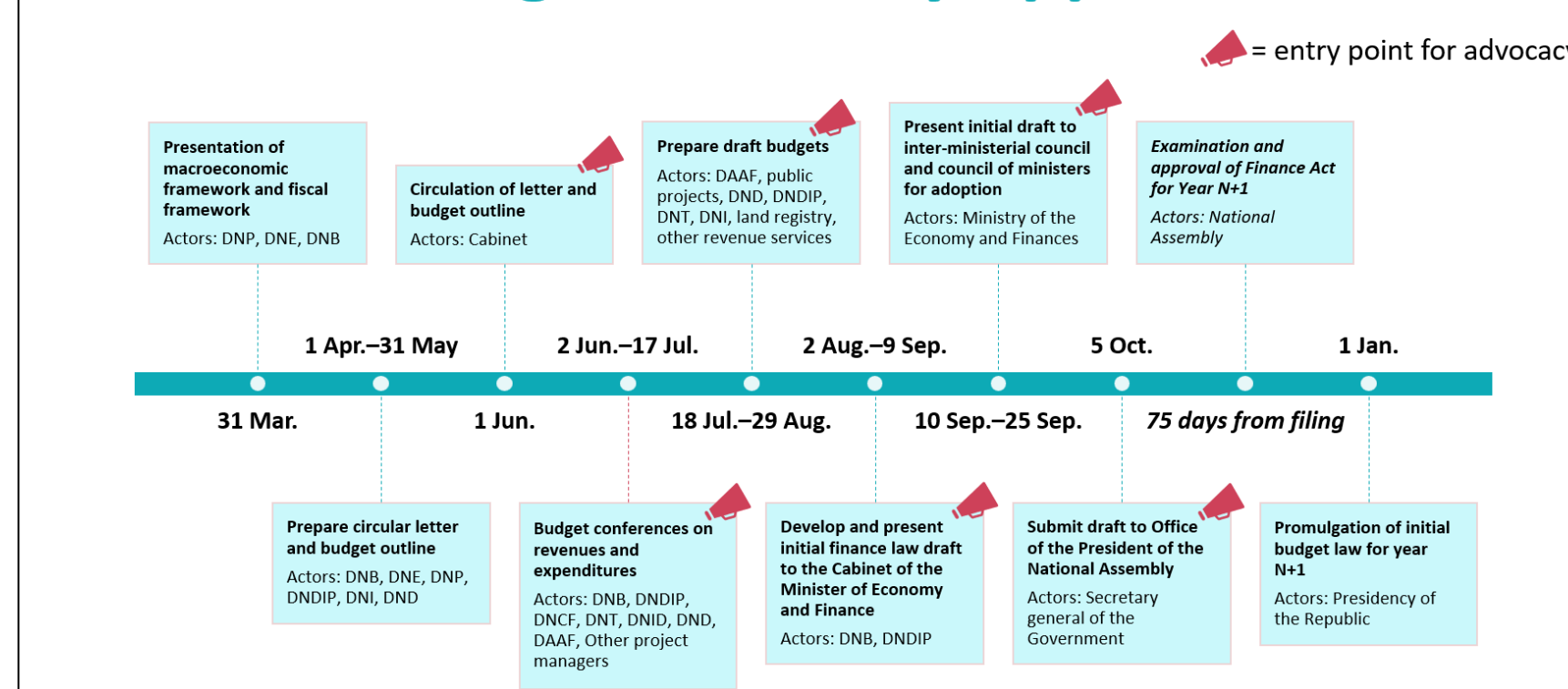
TOOL COMPONENTS

The tool is a detailed slide deck with supportive materials including worksheets. It is divided into three sections:
1) **Understanding the Tool** – Background, Guiding Concepts, Budgeting, National Community Health Policy
2) **How the Tool works** – Starting Points, Actors and Roles, Budget Process
3) **Process of Using the Tool** – Behavior Mapping Design, Behavior Mapping Implementation, Advocacy Timing

The supportive materials are designed to apply the tool's information by completing the following worksheets:
- Advocacy Prioritization Worksheet
- Behavior Mapping Worksheet
- Advocacy Strategy Worksheet

PROCESS & INSIGHTS

Development
- Consultations with civil society, key actors in the Mamou region, and the MOH informed the tool's content and approach, resulting in tool sections on the policy, budget process, and behavioral mapping with user worksheets.
- To ensure broad accessibility, the tool includes key background information to inform tailored advocacy efforts.

Pilot
- It was piloted in a two-day meeting facilitated by CJMAD and the MOH for civil society participants from Conakry, Kindia, and Labé, which demonstrated the tool's ability to support integrating SBC approaches into advocacy.
- The MOH led rich discussions on using SBC insights to understand engagement issues within local institutions.

Dissemination
- Presented and shared the tool for public use through a Conakry dissemination meeting with participants from civil society, technical partners, and relevant government entities led by the MOH and CJMAD.
- Participants noted keen interest to use the tool, including for other practice areas, demonstrating its versatility.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Based on the tool experience our key takeaways include:
- **Versatility of the tool**: The tool's design allows it to be adapted for other advocacy topics and settings by updating the contextually relevant details based on the area of interest as well as user needs and preferences.
- **Impact of behavioral insights:** Integrating a behavioral lens enhances the impact of advocacy, by adapting and applying contextually sensitive methods to solve longstanding issues across diverse advocacy topics and settings.
- **Challenges of budget advocac**y: Effective efforts require comprehensive technical expertise beyond the budget process itself, necessitating thorough guidance to support inclusive and representative advocacy.
- **Value of systems thinking:** This approach helps to navigate complexity, drive meaningful change, and foster more inclusive and effective activities for impactful social accountability efforts.
- **Benefits of collaboration:** An inclusive approach ensures that products like the tool reflect local context and needs of its users, enhancing its relevance and sustainability for ongoing use.