

# Governance and accountability at Options

## What we do

Effective governance and accountability are essential to drive improvements in health and social outcomes, especially for women, children and the most marginalised. Options works closely with local stakeholders to design and deliver approaches that strengthen country ownership for improving the health and well-being of their populations. Over the last decade our work has focused on:

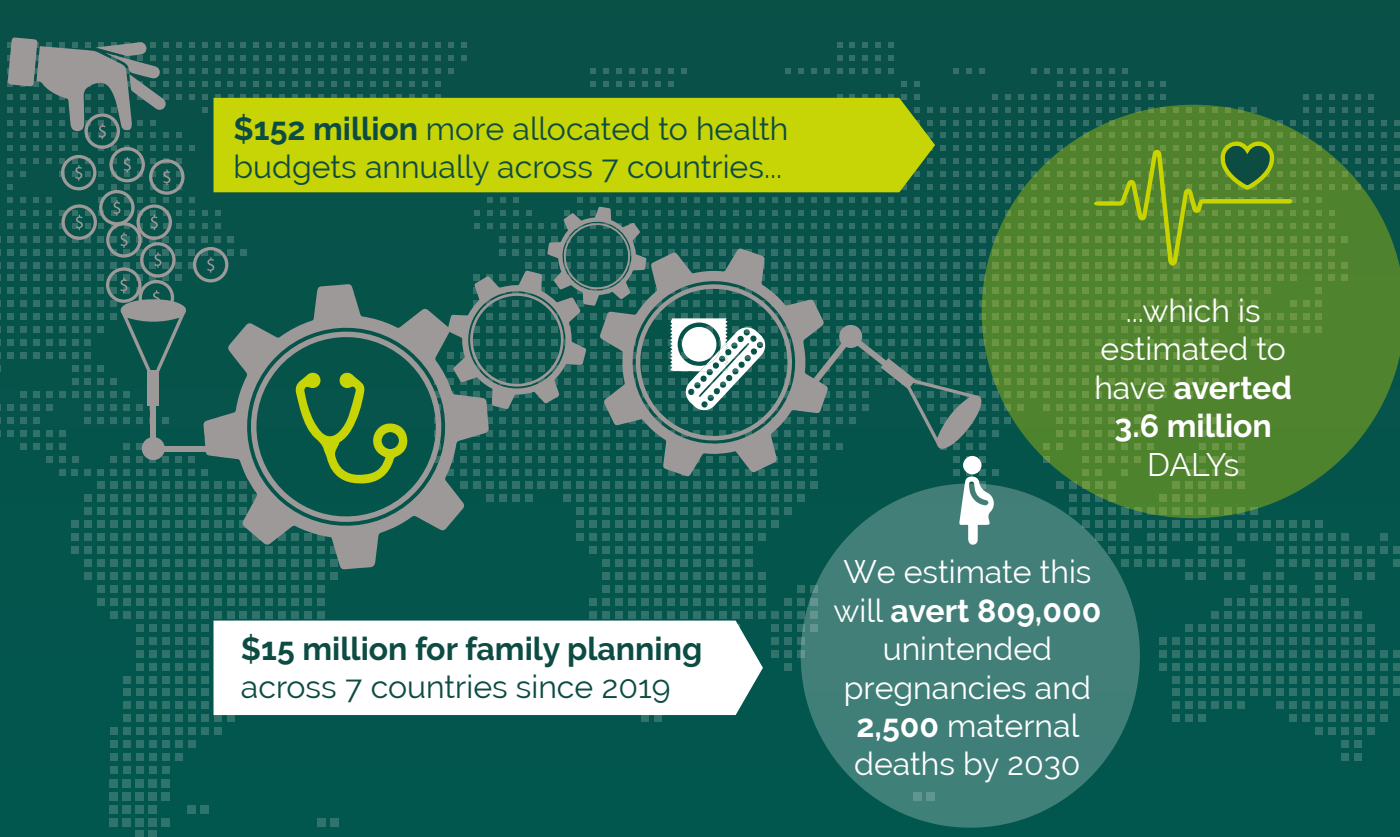
- ▶ Strengthening government stewardship for high-quality, inclusive and equitable health outcomes.
- ▶ Supporting inclusive and participatory health systems to ensure they respond to the needs of those who are most marginalised.
- ▶ Strengthening citizen-led agendas by providing training, mentorship and funding to civil society and community groups in a way that responds to the priorities of those that are directly affected.
- ▶ Building trust and strengthening ties across different actors including government, healthcare workers, civil society, academics, media and the private sector to collaboratively identify and solve the root causes of poor health outcomes.
- ▶ Increasing access to information and improving transparency so that the right data is available at the right time to inform decisions and hold those in positions of power to account.

## What we've achieved

### Strengthened government stewardship for high-quality, inclusive and equitable health systems

Since 2019, Options has supported 120 sub-national governments to improve their health systems across nine countries by:

- ✔ Strengthening government stewardship to develop and implement over 70 policies, strategies, guidelines and plans on reproductive health, maternal and child health, pandemic preparedness, human resourcing, mental health as well as gender and social inclusion.
- ✔ Supporting improved delivery of high-quality, inclusive and equitable care in over 4,000 health facilities.
- ✔ Improving public investment in health to increase annual health budget allocation.



### Contributed to building inclusive and participatory health systems

Since 2019, we have supported 1.3 million people, including gender-based violence (GBV) survivors, people with disabilities and mental health conditions, to access and receive the care they need.

**In Ghana, we have:**

- Established a Parliamentary Caucus together with the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations to support the progression of the Disability Amendment Bill.
- Worked with key state agencies and Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations to revise the District Assembly Common Fund Guideline, making it more responsive to the needs of people with disabilities, including mental health conditions, and improving access to funding for assistive devices.

**In Nepal, we have:**

- Supported the government to establish 88 One Stop Crisis Management Centres, which have provided services for 1.2 million GBV survivors, including treatment, legal protection, personal security and rehabilitation, since 2016.

### Strengthened citizen-led agendas

Since 2017, we have supported approximately 300 civil society organisations to strengthen their technical and organisational capacity to advocate and hold governments accountable for improved health outcomes.



As a result of our support, **193 grassroots organisations** have accessed over **US\$9.8million of funding** supporting lasting impact at the local level across **ten countries** in Africa.



We have helped set-up and facilitate over **39 accountability mechanisms and coalitions** across **19 countries**, supporting increased dialogue and joint problem solving amongst communities, governments, health providers, and the private sector.

As civil societies organisations (CSOs), all along we have been known as 'watu wa matawi' [people of the twigs (refers to the waving of twigs during demonstrations)] but the narrative has changed in the recent past since we have been able to sit with the policymakers and advocate for different issues, such as maternal and newborn health. We have been able to approach the government as allies and, through this, we have been able to achieve what we have advocated for. **CSO member, Nairobi**

### Increased access to information and transparency

Access to information is central to individual and collective decision-making.

- Since 2018, we have reached over **203,380 girls** in Kenya and Nigeria with information on adolescent sexual and reproductive health.
- Between 2016 and 2017, we supported **625 activist organisations** across sub-Saharan Africa to reach **240,000 people** with the campaign to end female genital mutilation (FGM).
- We have supported civil society, health managers and governments to access, interpret, analyse and present information from health management information systems – supporting more **evidence-based decision-making**, planning and budgeting for health.

## Options' governance and accountability achievements

<p><b>2011</b></p> <p>Launched the E4A-MamaYe programme to champion new models of accountability and citizen-led advocacy across six countries in sub-Saharan Africa.</p>	<p><b>2013 to 2014</b></p> <p>Supported Tanzania's Mara Region to develop a regional strategy to accelerate the reduction of maternal and newborn mortality. This resulted in an upgrade of 11 health centers to comprehensive emergency obstetric care status and increased health-seeking behaviour. From the beginning of 2014 to the end of 2014, there was an increase in number of women:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having institutional deliveries from <b>44% to 61%</b></li> <li>• Accessing postpartum care from <b>38% to 63%</b></li> <li>• Accessing postnatal care for their newborns from <b>37% to 59%</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>2015</b></p> <p>Worked with the government of Sierra Leone to strengthen the capacity of district health management teams and health facilities to input, review and use data from their Health Management Information System. As a result, data completeness was rated at over 95% for all the districts when the work was finished.</p>	<p><b>2016 to 2021</b></p> <p>Supported the Lagos State-Led Accountability Mechanism to collect and analyse data on the availability of essential life-saving commodities across the state. In 2021, for the second year running, the state reported zero stock-outs of essential life-saving commodities, including misoprostol, oxytocin, magnesium sulphate and ORS/ zinc.</p>
<p><b>2018</b></p> <p>Reached over 1.5 million people with end FGM messaging across Africa through our The Girl Generation movement, youth networks and end FGM ambassadors.</p>	<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>Supported the establishment of 829 facility health committees in primary health care facilities in six states in Northern Nigeria. These facilities mobilise communities to improve the quality of health services and promote utilisation of maternal and child health services.</p>
<p><b>since 2019</b></p> <p>Increased budget allocation for family planning by USD\$9 million in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania and Madagascar through evidence informed advocacy and technical assistance.</p>	

## What we've learned

- 1 Strengthening national ownership must be driven by national stakeholders and supported by national and locally based teams who understand the political economy context and can navigate existing networks and power dynamics.
- 2 Improving health governance and accountability is a journey that is not always smooth. Administrations change, political allegiances shift, and external events can transform priorities. Programmes must be flexible and adapt quickly to unexpected changes.
- 3 Building trust and dialogue is critical to change. Governance and accountability programming can play an important role in brokering relationships, facilitating discussion between disparate actors and reducing perceptions of "us against them".
- 4 Inclusive programming should be prioritised during the programme design stage, with budgets built to accommodate the needs of different groups and ensure equitable participation.