

Global Health Advocacy Incubator

Call for Participation: CSO Budget Advocacy Accelerator III

The Global Health Advocacy Incubator's (GHA) Budget Advocacy Accelerator program strengthens civil society organizations' (CSOs) capacity for results driven health budget advocacy in low- and middle- income countries. This third cohort of the accelerator is a comprehensive 10-month applied program involving hands-on learning, mentorship and peer exchange on national and subnational health budgets, Public Financial Management (PFM), and domestic resource mobilization. The focus for this cohort is on non-communicable diseases (NCDs), with an emphasis on tobacco control, cardiovascular health, food systems including school meal programs, road safety and drowning prevention, building on lessons from previous cohorts that focused on health security and NCD prevention. Selected CSOs will run a capstone budget advocacy project with mentorship, seed funding, and structured peer learning.

Each year, more than 43 million people die from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes (WHO, 2024). Seventy-seven percent of NCD deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries (NCD Alliance, 2024), yet NCDs receive only 1–2% of development assistance for health (WHO Global NCD Compact, 2020–2030; Allen, 2017).

GHA is inviting applications from civil society organizations (CSOs) in low- and middle- income countries in Africa and Asia to join the third cohort of the Budget Advocacy Accelerator (Accelerator III). CSOs engaged in advocacy to strengthen policies and budgets for the prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), with an emphasis on tobacco control, cardiovascular health, food systems including school meal programs, road safety and drowning prevention are encouraged to apply.

1. Context and Justification

Domestic resource mobilization for critical health issues like noncommunicable disease prevention has never been more important than this current moment in time. Sustainable domestic financing is central for improving healthcare delivery systems and outcomes, and thus progress towards universal health coverage. The ability to allocate sufficient and sustainable resources to health is linked to improvements in healthcare delivery, workforce development, availability of essential medical products, and governance systems.

Many LMICs have historically relied on donor and multilateral funding to support the healthcare sector (Pallas et al., 2015). However, this external support is decreasing progressively as donor countries also face their fiscal challenges. For instance, contributions from the United Kingdom

to global health initiatives, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis, have seen reductions (Sabin, 2022). The recent USAID stop work directive is a point in case.

This shift necessitates that the local government assumes full financial responsibility for the health sector. In light of these challenges and impending changes, urgent action is required to address the financing gaps in the health sector. Prioritizing and strengthening sustainable domestic financing mechanisms for healthcare in LMICs has become necessary, and this involves leveraging government budget allocations to the health sector and ensuring effective utilization of the financial resources to the health sector to ensure optimal delivery of preventive and curative health services.

Historically, countries have struggled to fund national health budgets. For instance, in Africa although the Abuja Declaration of health financing in the year 2001 enjoins all African countries to allocate 15% of their national budgets to health, it is worth noting that after two decades this target is yet to be met. This may partly be due to lack of political will and competing priorities. Since 2018, GHAI's budget advocacy program has raised public demand and political will for increased and sustained domestic resource mobilization for health across several countries in Africa and Asia. GHAI's country-led advocacy approach brings together policy leaders, civil society organizations and media in support of health as a national priority in need of adequate and reliable funding.

Drawing from the lessons learned in our decade of advocacy, GHAI has developed several budget advocacy resources with learnings applicable to a number of health priorities. The [*Budget Advocacy Framework for Increased and Sustained Epidemic Preparedness Investment*](#) and the [*Budget Advocacy Toolkit for Epidemic Preparedness*](#) illustrate the GHAI Prevent Epidemics program's advocacy approach and provide learning tools to bring epidemic preparedness budget advocacy to scale in multiple countries. Additionally, the [*Budget Advocacy Toolkit for Epidemic Preparedness*](#) informed the development of the [*Budget Advocacy Toolkit for Epidemic Preparedness: Facilitator's Guide*](#), a step-by-step course for facilitators to organize an epidemic preparedness advocacy campaign with government and/or civil society. The facilitator's guide describes how to bring stakeholders together to implement each step of the budget advocacy toolkit. The self-paced e-learning course, the *National Budget Basics course*, developed by GHAI in collaboration with SEND Ghana also provides CSOs with tools and information to help advance budget advocacy.

To share the learnings generated from the successes of our budget advocacy program, GHAI in 2024 established a *CSO Budget Advocacy Academy*, to strengthen civil society capacity for budget advocacy globally. Two prior cohorts have supported 20 CSOs across Africa and Asia, generating concrete advocacy outcomes that include technical assistance on National Action Plans for Health Security, the launch of a One-Health Strategic Plan and health budget analyses adopted by government stakeholders. In Cohort 2, specifically, advocacy resulted in the first dedicated tobacco control budget allocation in Addis Ababa's history and a Bangladesh government order institutionalizing a youth-led peer leader model within Adolescent Friendly Health Centers nationwide. This Accelerator does not only teach advocacy techniques; it lays

the foundation for catalyzing sustainable domestic funding and greater accountability in the budget process. The *CSO Budget Advocacy Accelerator III* is a comprehensive 10-month program, which involves hands-on learning and peer exchange to build the capacity of civil society organizations for evidence informed and results driven advocacy.

2. CSO Selection

The selected CSOs will have a well-developed understanding of their country's government and advocacy landscape. CSOs will have some experience in national or sub-national policy advocacy. Experience related to national or subnational budget issues will be viewed as a bonus, especially as it relates to mobilizing domestic resources for health-related issues. In this iteration: applicant organizations must demonstrate clear policy advocacy engagement, an active or recent government relationship relevant to their advocacy focus, and the staff bandwidth to run a capstone advocacy campaign during the program window. Organizations with strong interest/experience in non-communicable disease prevention are encouraged to apply.

Required:

1. Submission of an advocacy work sample produced in the past 24 months (e.g., policy brief, budget analysis, government submission, parliamentary testimony, op-ed in national media). This product will be reviewed as evidence of organizational advocacy capacity.
2. At least three years of organizational operating history in non-communicable disease related programming (with an emphasis on tobacco control, cardiovascular health, food systems including school meal programs, road safety and drowning prevention,) with a domestic-financing angle.
3. Organization based in a low- or middle-income country in Africa or Asia.
4. Proof of legal existence.
5. Ability to receive foreign funding, with documentation where applicable.
6. Ability to speak and write in English to participate in sessions and complete assignments.
7. Two dedicated representatives from each organization who can attend all webinars and in-person sessions, with written support from organization leadership.
8. Reliable access to high-speed internet

Recommended:

1. Some prior budget or policy advocacy experience, or intent to engage in budget advocacy.
2. Engagement in at least one national or subnational budget advocacy campaign and/or policy advocacy campaign within the past three years, evidenced by a meeting report, budget submission, government correspondence, policy brief, or written testimony to a legislature or finance ministry.

3. Evidence of an active or recent working relationship with at least one government counterpart (ministry, parliament, or subnational official) relevant to the applicant's proposed advocacy focus.
4. Organizational strategic plan.
5. Up-to-date membership of a health sector NGO coalition.

Selection Process

Applications will be evaluated through a two-stage process.

Stage 1 is an eligibility screen: all applications will be checked against the required criteria above (prior budget advocacy experience with evidence, work sample submitted, three or more years of operating history with relevant thematic focus, location in an eligible country, legal registration, ability to receive foreign funding, English proficiency, and two dedicated representatives). Applications missing any required criteria will not advance.

Stage 2 is a scored review of remaining applications by a review panel, using the rubric below. Approximately the top 15 scores will be invited to a short interview, and a final cohort of 7 organizations will be selected post-interview.

Criterion	What we are looking for	Weight
Prior policy advocacy experience (Budget experience is a plus)	Quality and depth of the work sample submitted; documented evidence of at least one budget submission, government engagement, or policy campaign in the last 3 years.	25%
Thematic relevance and contextual understanding	Clear focus on non-communicable diseases (NCDs), (with an emphasis on tobacco control, cardiovascular health, food systems including school meal programs, road safety and drowning prevention) and a strong understanding of the domestic financing landscape in the applicant's context.	25%
Identification of capstone opportunities	Applicants list up to three realistic short- to medium-term budget advocacy opportunities in their context and demonstrate understanding of the entry points available to them.	15%
Government access and relationships	Evidence of an active or recent working relationship with at least one ministry, parliamentary, or subnational official (meeting notes, correspondence, invitation to consultation, etc.) relevant to the proposed advocacy focus.	25%
Organizational capacity	Dedicated staff for advocacy, track record of completing funded activities, and indicators of organizational maturity such as a strategic plan or coalition membership.	10%

3. Curriculum

The CSO Budget Advocacy Accelerator is a comprehensive program that involves hands-on learning and peer exchange. The curriculum is available in English and the format for learning is a combination of webinars and in-person workshops which will be conducted in English. The curriculum includes a total of 9-10 webinars and 1-2 in-person workshops. Assignments on the relevant topics are given prior to the webinar and in-person workshops.

The *CSO Budget Advocacy Accelerator* curriculum will cover the following topics among others:
The CSO Budget Advocacy Accelerator curriculum will cover the following topics, among others:

- a. **Conducting a landscape assessment** and developing policy objectives, including stakeholder mapping, power analysis, and identification of advocacy entry points.
- b. **Leadership skills** for impactful budget advocacy, including coalition building and managing relationships with government counterparts.
- c. **Health financing fundamentals:** an overview of health financing mechanisms, public financial management (PFM), and domestic resource mobilization strategies in low- and middle-income contexts.
- d. **Budget basics and the budget cycle:** linking problems, plans, and budgets; finding and interpreting budget information; the budget formulation, approval, execution, and audit stages; and common budget-related problems and bottlenecks including underfunding, underspending, wastage, and the concept behind budget calculations.
- e. **Sustainable financing and accountability mechanisms:** budget tracking, expenditure monitoring, oversight of disbursement and absorption, and tools for holding government accountable across multiple budget cycles.
- f. **Legal aspects of health financing:** the role of legislation, regulation, and parliamentary processes in effecting budgetary changes.
- g. **Communications and the role of media** in creating a conducive advocacy environment.
- h. **Capstone project ideation and implementation.**

4. *CSO Budget Advocacy Accelerator* Faculty/Mentor

The Accelerator faculty and mentors will be drawn from across GHAI's wide bench of health policy and advocacy expertise, including specialists in NCDs, tobacco control, health financing, public financial management, health taxes, and budget advocacy, alongside in-country consultants and existing GHAI budget advocacy partners with track records of mobilizing domestic resources at national and subnational levels. Each CSO will be paired with at least one mentor who will provide bi-weekly guidance throughout the program, supplemented by faculty input during webinars and the in-person workshop.

5. Capstone Project

The selected CSOs will develop a Capstone project leveraging knowledge acquired throughout the course. This project will involve the development of one or more aspects of a budget advocacy campaign for NCDs, with an emphasis on tobacco control, cardiovascular health, food systems including school meal programs, road safety and drowning prevention. Capstones must demonstrate evidence of government engagement, alignment with national priorities, and a

clear path to sustainability beyond the grant period. They will include an outline of a comprehensive plan with a timeline, budget, key steps, and measures of success. At the end of the program, participating CSOs will have an opportunity to present their Capstone project to the faculty, peers, and international donor community. Seed funding of up to \$10,000 will be provided to each selected CSO to develop the Capstone project as part of the course. The Accelerator is hosted within GHAI's [HATCH](#) platform and follows an incubation-to-graduation model: participating CSOs are supported to build the technical skills, government relationships, and institutional practices needed to sustain budget advocacy across multiple cycles without ongoing GHAI support.

6. CSO Budget Advocacy Accelerator Deliverables

- (i) Written assignments prior to or after webinars and in-person sessions.
- (ii) Active participation in the three-day in-person workshop, including initial ideation and presentation of the capstone concept for peer and faculty feedback.
- (iii) The concept notes for the Capstone project.
- (iv) The Capstone project itself includes a program plan with a timeline, budget, key steps, and measures of success. Each CSO will have unique deliverables based on the approved workplan, including but not limited to meeting reports, policy briefs, fact sheets and informational slide decks.
- (v) A midpoint presentation on Capstone progress, surfacing early implementation lessons, course corrections, and emerging results for peer and faculty review.
- (vi) A final endpoint presentation of Capstone outcomes at the close of the program, delivered to faculty, peers, and the international donor community.
- (vii) PowerPoint slides supporting the Capstone presentations, developed with the support of GHAI.

7. Application Process

- All applicants should fill out the application form located [HERE](#). Please ensure that all fields are completed and submitted no later than 5pm EST/ 10pm UTC on June 1, 2026.
- Applications must include:
 - (i) One advocacy work sample produced in the past 24 months (policy brief, budget analysis, government submission, parliamentary testimony, or op-ed in national media);
 - (ii) A short narrative identifying one to three realistic short- to medium-term budget advocacy opportunities the organization would pursue as a capstone; and
 - (iii) Supporting documentation demonstrating that the organization meets all required eligibility criteria listed above (legal registration, ability to receive foreign funding, three or more years of operating history with thematic focus on non-communicable diseases with an emphasis on tobacco control, cardiovascular health, food systems including school meal programs, road safety and drowning prevention; location in an eligible country, and confirmation of two dedicated representatives with leadership endorsement).

- Applicants are strongly encouraged to also submit evidence of an active or recent working relationship with at least one government counterpart relevant to the proposed advocacy focus. While not required, this evidence will be considered in the scored review and meaningfully strengthens an application.
- Applications missing any required component (i, ii, or iii) will not advance past the eligibility screen.
- Shortlisted CSOs will be invited for an interview in late June or early July 2026, with final selection communicated in mid-July 2026 and program onboarding beginning in July–August 2026. The program runs through March 2027, when participating CSOs present their capstone projects.
- For general questions regarding the RFP, including the application process, please contact cyoung@advocacyincubator.org

The request for proposals will open on May 13, 2026, and close at 5:00 PM EDT (9:00 PM UTC) on June 1, 2026. Applications submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

About GHAI

The Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAI) supports civil society organizations and governments that advocate for public health policies that reduce death and disease. We use a proven advocacy approach built on a 25-year track record of success across multiple issues in more than 60 countries. GHAI is an initiative of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. For more information visit: <https://www.advocacyincubator.org/>.