

# ADVOCACY STRATEGY

## PAKISTAN POLIO ERADICATION INITIATIVE 2021-2022

### 1. Introduction

Advocacy in communication terms can involve a range of activities<sup>(1)</sup> but, whatever the context, it is not a one-off event; advocacy is a sustained effort to achieve an enabling environment. The Pakistan Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) advocacy element, distinct from awareness-raising, is being refined to focus on mobilising public figures and expanding long-term public and private partnerships to embed widespread effort in support of the eradication goal and in line with 2019 recommendations to focus on sustainability.<sup>(2)</sup>

The PEI has come very close to achieving polio eradication, notably in 2018, but unexpected setbacks, including the COVID-19 pandemic, have interfered. While overall polio vaccination coverage is 95% and refusals are less than 1%, some areas show low uptake and increasing refusals. Recognising the importance of communication and advocacy in the effort to achieve polio eradication, the PEI has developed increasingly sophisticated approaches to address the remaining pockets of polio vaccination hesitancy and refusal and their complex and sometimes changing causality.

### 2. Key Issues

The sense of national ownership of polio eradication has not yet been achieved to drive eradication as a goal thus leaving the PEI, rather than a wider group of national institutions, with the continuing responsibility for mobilisation and engagement in pursuit of the enabling environment and accountabilities needed for polio eradication.

Sustained and consistent mobilisation has been identified as needed from community to national level to broaden and deepen trust in the eradication effort - from the quality of the vaccines to the effectiveness of the actions.

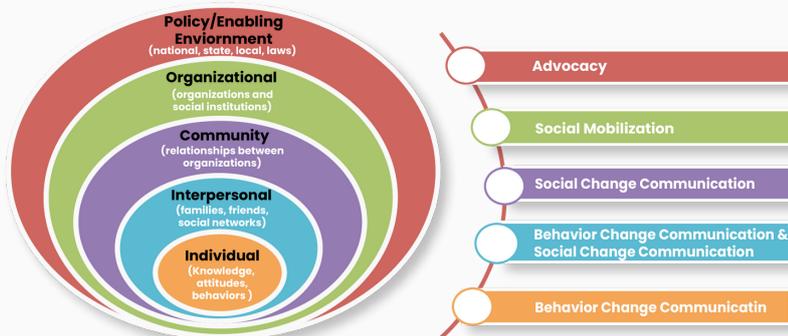
COVID-19 and the measures to control it have had an impact on advocacy and engagement as they have on all areas of work. Individuals and groups have been increasingly engaged with their own activities, sometimes rating the relative risk of COVID-19 as higher than polio, and have found it difficult to re-engage with the PEI.

Celebrity engagement is highly dependent on the Perception Management Initiative (PMI) so low engagement of the latter has secondary impacts, too.

While event-focused, time-bound engagement has been shown to be of limited value, it seems formalised relationships are more likely to add meaning to individual activities when they form part of a longer-term plan, which would lead to more substantive engagement. Specifically, adjustments to the approach to partnership will be made to become more systematic and thus achieve sustainability as well as the benefits of a wider range of influential voices. This could also help to align advocacy initiatives through different levels of the SEM.

(see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Socio-ecological model (SEM)



Medical and health professionals, local authorities, politicians, journalists, celebrities, private sector leaders and NGOs/ Foundations have often shown themselves willing to be

(1) UNICEF’s definition: Advocacy is the deliberate process, based on demonstrated evidence, to directly and indirectly influence decision makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences to support and implement actions that contribute to the fulfilment of children’s and women’s rights.

(2) National Emergency Operations Centre, Concept note: Coalition Building and Partnerships for Polio, re two 2019 Communications Reviews

involved but the management of their contributions has been largely sporadic, even ad hoc. Occasional interactions or information-sharing is not enough for individuals or groups to be effectively engaged in the long-term. Continuing investment in the advocacy effort is needed with every shift in circumstances, whether a new round of vaccination or other changes. It can include convening, co-ordinating, mobilising, and providing platforms, but must always be evidence based and aligned with the concerns and capabilities of those being addressed.

### 3. Goal, Objectives Approaches

The overall intent of the advocacy work is to transform the eradication of polio into a movement, calling all to action.

**Long-term goal:**

To create an enabling environment for promoting vaccine as a social norm by contributing to increasing vaccine acceptance through active engagement with key partners.

**Short-term objectives:**

1. Build national public and private partnerships to rally and support the polio eradication goal and call for vaccination of all by 2022.
2. Engagement with the senators/ parliament members for Influencing policy & legislation for promoting vaccination as a right.
3. Expand the number of public and private partners who prioritize and advocate for polio eradication.
4. Sustain the positive public attitude to polio vaccination.

### 4. Key Actors

According to the Communication for Eradication Strategic Framework, advocacy and partnership efforts will be mostly at the national and provincial levels but, through close interaction with C4D, will be linked with the community and family levels for consistency and comprehensiveness. At all levels, partners and alliances are expected to promote and boost trust in the value and acceptability of the polio eradication initiative, answer common questions, concerns and misconceptions.

The PEI identified key partners through comprehensive mapping of civil society organisations and institutions working at both national and provincial levels. Careful analysis and deliberation will help ensure clear, formalised engagement with a mandate, plan, deliverables, and accountabilities for each group or coalition. Partners need to be re-assured about the value of their contribution and may need explicit recognition, including visibility, of this.

For the PEI, key actors are policy-makers, inc. politicians/ parliamentarians, government officials and public servants; private sector leaders, opinion makers such as journalists, celebrities; large NGOs/ foundations, medical and health associations (PIMA, PPA, PMA), education institutions, sports associations (PCB), religious institutions and leaders (Wafaa UI Madaris, NIAG), multinationals/ private sector and media institutions.

#### Key Principles for Engagement

Considering the reasons for weak engagement of different stakeholders in the advocacy effort, the PEI has developed the following principles for building coalitions and partnerships.

- **Results-based coalition building, partnerships:** The programme will engage in those partnerships and coalitions that provide the greatest opportunity to catalyse change and bring about results for the health of children. Programme resources will be used proportionately to the scale of results expected.
- **Prioritisation:** Deeper engagement and more strategic focus will be specifically given to coalitions, prospective partners, and activities that could help the programme achieve maximum impact.
- **Holistic partnering:** Each prospective partner will be viewed through a holistic approach, considering opportunities for both financial and non-financial engagement, thus leveraging the partner's full assets.

## 5. Approaches, Strategies and Actions

The PEI will focus on three specific approaches to building sustainable engagement for polio eradication:

- Building and cultivating strategic partnerships with civil society organisations/ influencers
- Engaging with policy makers (parliament members, political parties, influencers)
- Working with private sector (media houses, statutory body of pharmaceutical companies, corporate entities)

It is important to flag that different contexts and challenges call for different relationships; implementing the PEI advocacy strategy is based on mapping and analysis that points to the most appropriate relationship – alliance, coalition,<sup>(4)</sup> network, or partnership - for each given situation.

### **Immediate Strategies:**

- Building credibility for the polio brand through the engagement of brand ambassadors, opinion leaders, celebrities and steering the media narrative in line with programme.
- Leveraging private sector funds/ CSR and other resources for scale-up and sustain critical communication interventions through joint partnerships.
- Influencing policy and legislation through engagement with parliamentarians and other policy makers

Once initial engagement with partners is achieved, later actions will include:

- Organisation of key partners into coalition – with support for planning, information-sharing, promoting vaccination
- Periodical Roundtable meeting(s) with partners – with online platform for updates of developments/ results
- Capacity building – through formal and informal orientation/workshops
- Monitoring and evaluation –with regular information sharing, updates
- External communication recognition of partners – visibility and public event

**Follow-up actions** to embed the advocacy strategy will include:

- Support for direct engagement, e.g., pediatricians with parents
- Support for counteracting/dispelling negative propaganda against immunisation at different levels
- Support to be an independent voice

The PEI liaises closely with the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) to ensure the advocacy elements of both complement each other and contribute to progressing the discussion of campaigns vs routine immunisation and the possible outcome of greater reliance on routine. Co-operation on the immunisation caucus is an example.

## 6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The principal monitoring and evaluation users will be the PEI leadership and communication staff, advocates, and partners. While specific approaches will apply as appropriate, overall monitoring and evaluation will be used for review, adjustment and course correction.

Both quantitative and qualitative data are needed and the frequency/ timing of data collection will be specified. Each phase of the advocacy actions will have process indicators, but at the overall outcome levels, the following indicators are the main ones:

- Number of CSO networks / partners who prioritized polio as part of their programme.
- Number of CSO / partners advocating for polio eradication through their programme.
- Number of private sector companies prioritized polio as part of their CSR programme.
- Number of parliamentarians who are engaged in promoting vaccination in public events/meetings.



(4) Alliance: group that forms around a common issue (at district/ community level through C4D under PEI); Coalition: diverse groups with similar policy beliefs; Network: free space that enables ideas, proposals and experiments to emerge; Partnership: link between two or more organisations with specified objectives and roles (at provincial and national level under PEI)