Citizens’ Hearings for women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health took place at the local and national level in Ghana in June and July 2015.

A local hearing, organised by World Vision in the Ejura district (Ashanti region), brought together around 350 participants – including children, youth, civil society organisations (CSOs), faith leaders, journalists and decision makers. Community members raised the issue of access to health facilities, having to travel to the district capital to reach services, with only irregular visits from health workers to local communities. Citizens also raised the issue of low immunisation coverage. Provincial representatives highlighted the high rate of teenage pregnancies, the inaccessibility of health facilities, poor implementation of the free maternal health policy and the inadequate supply of essential drugs.

The National Citizens’ Hearing in Ghana was hosted by World Vision and the Alliance for Reproductive Health Rights, and brought together citizens and CSOs with the Minister of Health, the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Health, the Director General of the Ghana Health Service, the Deputy Directors in Health, the Policy Planning Director, and other key policy and decision-makers. At the hearing, citizens discussed health barriers and inequalities in the country, assessed Ghana’s performance in relation to the health targets of the MDGs and discussed strategies to enhance women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health.

At the National Citizens’ Hearing, Alex Segbefia, the Minister of Health, confirmed that Ghana will contextualise and roll over all unmet health-related MDGs into national planning for the new SDGs that will come into effect in September 2015. He said there has been some progress to reduce infant and under-five mortality in Ghana, building on the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), high vaccination coverage, increased access to effective malaria treatment and prevention, eradication of guinea worm and improved treatment for tuberculosis (TB). He noted, however, that much still remains to be done to achieve this goal in the MDGs.

Dr Afisa Zakaria, the Ministry of Health’s Director for Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, highlighted the three delays that often affect maternal and child health: community and cultural practices, financial constraints and transportation to health facilities. She noted that a number of interventions being pursued, including a programme created to bring health care closer to communities, monitor pregnant women, providing women with the requisite knowledge for delivery, and support deliveries when necessary as well as expanding ambulance services.

At the National Citizens’ Hearing, the Policy Planning Director and Health Minister committed to implement activities to meet targets in the SDGs.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Establish local health clinics, with skilled health workers.
- Provide adolescent sexual health interventions to reduce teenage pregnancies.
- Implement free antenatal and delivery services in line with existing policy.
- Establish more community-based health planning and services centres with adequate numbers of health professionals.