Citizens’ Hearings were held in Leribe and Koeneng districts in June 2015, organised by World Vision.

The Citizens’ Hearing on 25 June in Koeneng took the form of a Children’s Parliament, enabling over 250 children to lead on advocacy activities on a variety of issues including education, health and disaster risk reduction. The main objective was to engage ministry representatives, village chiefs, councillors, health practitioners, faith leaders, community-based organisations, children and their families in a dialogue about issues that directly affect children and their community.

The child participants recognised the importance of eating three food groups and the dangers of drinking contaminated water in terms of contracting diarrhoea. During the speeches, the health personnel stressed the importance of vaccinations and also urged children to wash their hands with soap and water before preparing food and after visiting the toilet. The chief told his people that the messages they received today were of great importance and that they should pass them on to those that were not there. He further stated that pregnant women and their partners should go to the clinic and also make use of the services and advice offered.

The hearing in Leribe on 1 June brought together around 50 participants to engage children, parents and citizens on child health issues. Local decision-making bodies (chiefs and councillors), religious leaders and health facility staff participated in the hearings. The community discussed problems in accessing health facilities, drug stock outs, and the need for more health workers and improvements to the road network.

The citizens’ recommendations from the hearings were taken by the Ministry of Health representative who committed to establishing a tracking tool to avoid future drug shortages, and to improving the road infrastructure so that communities can better access health facilities. The children are following up on the recommendations made at the hearing and the leaders’ commitments with the relevant ministries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The children and their parents made the following recommendations at the hearings:

- Organise regular community meetings to make people aware of the importance of giving birth at a clinic, eating well and washing hands before handling food.
- Ensure regular outreach to remote communities for the households who cannot afford to travel to a clinic to immunise their children.
- Avoid drug stock outs in health facilities and increase the number of qualified health personnel.
- Rehabilitate the roads to make health services more accessible to communities.