CITIZENS’ HEARINGS: TANZANIA

Citizens’ Hearings were held from 6 – 15 March 2015 across five districts of Tanga Region (Muheza, Kilindi, Handeni, Korogwe and Tanga). A national-level hearing was also held on 26 March, engaging over 2,000 citizens and members of children’s groups, women’s groups and men’s groups, health associations, medical and nursing officers, regional commissioners, councillors, journalists, district directors, faith-based organisations, community based organisations and influential people. Participants shared problems they faced in accessing RMNCAH health services including issues such as cost and quality. District leaders and citizens worked together in developing strong joint recommendations on priorities for the updated Global Strategy. District leaders spoke out to strengthen the call for increased accountability and transparency in decision-making processes and service delivery.

The hearing at national level was broadcast on national TV and radio and the findings from the district hearings were also submitted to the Minister of Health, the Prime Minister’s Office, and the Ministry of External Affairs.

At the hearings, Councillor for Mgamba Ward Ms Fatume Seifu promised to ensure all the challenges raised in the Citizens’ Hearing would be discussed in the council meetings and the district councillor for Kilindi, Tanga Region, Mwajuma Hatibu, promised to conduct feedback meetings with citizens before and after regular council meetings.

As I am sitting in this meeting, I have already sent an SMS to start the follow-up for some of the commitments.

Mwajuma Hatibu Sempule, Ward Councillor, Kwediboma Ward, Kilindi District at the Kilindi District Citizens’ Hearing

The following recommendations were made jointly by citizens and politicians:

- Strengthen transparency and accountability in Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) services by making all information available to citizens.
- Establish district- and national-level mechanisms for citizens to be able to monitor implementation of maternal and newborn health policies, e.g. district political leaders to provide feedback and communicate to citizens about all issues discussed in the last council meetings including the budget for maternal and newborn health services.
- Councils to increase and strengthen their supervisory role in making sure that all health policies, regulations and guidelines are properly translated into actions.
- Leaders at both local and central government to work together to improve RMNCAH services.
- Establish small ‘follow-up’ committees for maternal and newborn health services at village, division and ward levels.
- Place council income and expenditures on health facility notice boards for citizens to track performance.
- Establish citizens’ scorecards to assess availability and quality of services.
- Ensure national and international policies on maternal and newborn health are informed by citizens’ priorities and submitted to leaders.
- Strengthen health systems by ensuring comprehensive emergency obstetric and newborn care services in health centres in every district, and the provision of blood banks and ambulances in all areas (including citizen support in building health infrastructure).
- Improve access to affordable, quality health services including sexual and reproductive health services.
- Improve youth access to services and ensure all social groups in the society are informed about safe motherhood.
- Support women’s access to services including women’s right to safe motherhood within the new constitution and increases in outreach services (including promoting support among men for women’s access to health facilities).
- Increase resources for women’s and children’s health through more predictable international aid flows and domestic spending, alongside increased transparency and space for civil society sectors to monitor financing for RMNCAH.

I have understood that maternal death is an emergency. Tomorrow I am going to work on it by calling an emergency meeting with citizens.

Uzia Juma Komba, Pongwe Ward Councillor, Muheza District Citizens’ Hearing