DEMANDING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR WOMEN’S, CHILDREN’S AND ADOLESCENTS’ HEALTH

CITIZENS’ HEARINGS TOOLKIT 2016
I: JOIN THE CITIZENS’ HEARING MOVEMENT

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Save the Children, White Ribbon Alliance and World Vision are working with organisations across the world as part of a historic movement of Citizens’ Hearings for women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health.

Since the start of 2015, hearings have been held in villages, districts, capital cities, all the way to through the World Health Assembly. Whatever the setting, citizens have united to demand “Nothing about us, without us.” Governments must be accountable to citizens in the healthcare agenda.

The hearings underscore the fundamental rights of all citizens – of all ages, genders and social groups - to raise their voices and hold leaders to account. Now is the time for an inclusive approach to women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health, which elevates citizens voices in setting priorities, reviewing commitments, and monitoring and reforming service delivery.

These hearings are unique in breaking down the barriers between citizens and decision makers. The hearings have brought citizens and community groups, including children’s, youth and women’s rights groups, and faith leaders together with local councillors and chiefs, district leaders, prime ministers, parliamentarians, ministers, health professionals, and policy officials. These diverse groups have united in one single aim: to work together in a partnership for action to achieve a step change for women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health.

The overall objectives of the Citizens’ Hearings held to date have been to achieve the following at local, national, and global levels:

1. Create space for citizens to discuss the key gaps and priorities in access to quality reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services (RMNCAH).
2. Highlight the need for citizens’ voices to be strongly incorporated into RMNCAH health care accountability structures, and to strengthen the feedback loop between global processes and local and national decision-making.
3. Develop proposals for inclusive participatory accountability mechanisms, which include citizens’ voices.

Strengthening leaders’ accountability will ultimately help save the lives of millions of women, children and adolescents.

Join us in this exciting movement working with civil society and citizens to hold governments to account! More information about the hearings is available online at www.citizens-post.org.
“People have exercised their rights...Government can no longer take them for granted. I believe in these interactions...The only option for Government is to deliver” - Hon. Ronah Ninsiima MP, Kabale District, Uganda

“For leaders to be accountable, health policies should be coming from us, citizens and then submitted to government leaders and not otherwise” - Msagati, Citizen at the National Citizens’ Hearing, Tanzania

“It is important to involve citizens when addressing their needs, and when implementing the plans. They are the ones who know exactly what they need. Involve them” - Senior Chief Somba, Blantyre District, Malawi

“Leaders promise many things, ranging from water and roads to provision of health services, but do not deliver. We need to continue demanding results from them” - Mr. Muhumuza, citizen at the Kabale District Citizens’ Hearing, Uganda
2. CITIZENS’ HEARINGS: HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2015

2015 was a critical year for the RMNCAH agenda with the development and launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the updated UN Secretary General’s Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health (updated Global Strategy).

The 2015 citizen’s hearings for women’s children’s and adolescents’ health provided critical inputs to local, national and global leaders in identifying priorities for the SDGs and updated Global Strategy and urged governments to establish accountability frameworks.

The 2015 hearings engaged tens of thousands of citizens in Africa and Asia: in Mauritania, Mali, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, Niger, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho, South Africa, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Pakistan and Indonesia. The very nature of Citizens’ Hearings in calling leaders into dialogue has affirmed the fundamental right of citizens to organise and voice their concerns in realising their right to health. The hearings have developed specific proposals for future participatory mechanisms from high-level councils through to community councils, and highlighted the importance of transparency to facilitate them.

The recommendations from the hearings at district and national levels were taken to the 2015 World Health Assembly, where citizens, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Health Ministers, government delegations and UN agencies met for the first ever Global Citizens’ Dialogue on accountability for RMNCAH.

The hearings highlighted that the targets for RMNCAH in the SDGs and commitments to the updated Global Strategy will only be met for all women, children and adolescents – in every continent, country and

RMNCAH-RELATED TARGETS IN THE SDG FRAMEWORK LAUNCHED IN SEPTEMBER 2015

SDG Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

2.2. By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and children.

SDG Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.

3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births.

3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.

3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

SDG Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
community - if local, national and global level accountability structures elevate citizens’ voices from the start.

The hearings are already catalysing change, with political leaders pledging action.

In the district level hearings in Tanzania, health officials pledged to deliver ambulances the very next day, while the Prime Minister in Uganda pledged to increase funding for health centres. The hearings held to date in 2015 must now be institutionalised through inclusive participatory accountability mechanisms in order to ensure pledges such as these, are realised, and citizens’ voices become part of a systematic approach to healthcare delivery, review and reform.

The recommendations from across the 100 hearings in 2015 were synthesised into a Global Call to action which was included in a global report on the Citizen’s Hearings, ‘Nothing About Us, Without Us: Citizen Citizens’ Voices for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ health’, launched in September 2015 at the Global Strategy Accountability meeting.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE UPDATED GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR WOMEN’S, CHILDREN’S AND ADOLESCENTS’ HEALTH – LAUNCHED SEPTEMBER 2015

• The strategy’s over-arching objectives are to end preventable mortality and enable women, children and adolescents to enjoy good health while playing a full role in contributing to transformative change and sustainable development:
  o **Survive**: End Preventable Deaths.
  o **Thrive**: Ensure health and well-being.
  o **Transform**: Expand enabling environments.

• **The new strategy is much broader, more ambitious and more focused on equity than its predecessor.** It is universal and applies to all people (including the marginalized and hard-to-reach), in all places (including crisis situations) and to transnational issues. It focuses on safeguarding women, children and adolescents in humanitarian and fragile settings and upholding their human rights to the highest attainable standard of health, even in the most difficult circumstances.

• **For the first time, adolescents join women and children at the heart of the Global Strategy.** This acknowledges not only the unique health challenges facing young people, but also their pivotal role alongside women and children as key drivers of change in the post-2015 era.

• **The Strategy is fully aligned with the priorities of the SDGs.** It encompasses all locations, social groups and settings, in particular marginalized, excluded and hard-to-reach communities.

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
3. THE CITIZENS’ HEARING PROCESS: FROM LOCAL, TO NATIONAL, TO GLOBAL

IN VOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN THE CITIZENS’ HEARINGS: CITIZENS’ HEARING IN KONENG, LESOTHO

The Citizens’ Hearing in Lesotho took an intergenerational approach through the Children’s Parliament. This Parliament allows children to lead on advocacy activities on a variety of issues such as education, health and Disaster Risk Reduction, to which they feel the need for greater protection. Local representatives of Ministries of Health and Education were invited to receive information on the children’s needs and recommendations on health and nutrition.

Over 250 children attended the hearing. 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 children and their parents made the following recommendations to the local governing bodies present:

- Organise regular community meetings to sensitisise people about the importance of giving birth at the clinic, eating well and washing hands before handling food.
- Ensure regular outreach to remote communities for the households who cannot afford to travel to the 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.

Local initiatives are taking place for children to participate in decision-making processes, but much more needs to be done to leverage their voices and bring their recommendations to the national level. Children-generated data should be used to inform decisions taken at both the local and national levels.

The hearings – whether at local, national or global level, follow the same guiding principles of evidence-based, solution-oriented discussions between citizens – including children – health professionals and decision makers as part of an open and collaborative dialogue between different stakeholders.

The media have played an important role in reporting the hearings themselves, and in committing to hold governments to account on their RMNCAH commitments over the years to come. The National Citizens Hearings in Tanzania, Uganda, Nepal and Mauritania were aired on national television. Local and national press coverage was achieved in almost all countries where Citizens Hearings took place.

Some of the areas discussed in each of the hearings have included:

- Effective accountability mechanisms in country, or best practice examples from other countries.
- Commitments made to date on RMNCAH – highlighting successes and outstanding challenges.
• Proposed global targets for RMNCAH in the SDGs and how these can be addressed nationally.
• The impact of participatory accountability mechanisms.
• Citizens’ direct experiences of health issues and services, including in emergency settings, both in terms of access and quality.

At the end of the hearings, stakeholders discussed plans for the next steps on how government will engage with citizens and civil society in tracking progress on women’s, children’s and adolescent’s health; ensuring that these conversations moved beyond one-time consultations, into ongoing accountability mechanisms. For example, in Malawi, Members of Parliament and Chiefs committed to promote citizen-led accountability by providing guidance to citizens on how to engage the government and track promises and commitments. In addition, local leaders promised to establish, strengthen and empower citizens to engage in accountability structures such as Citizens’ Health Centre Advisory Committees, in order to effectively engage the government and to have a voice in setting up RMNCAH policies.

CITIZENS' HEARINGS IN UGANDA

The Uganda District Citizens’ Hearings were held in 11 districts including Lira, Kabale Busia, Oyam, Kole, Amuru, Kampala, Butaleja, Kiboga, Kitgum and Pader (organised by The White Ribbon Alliance and World Vision). Each of the hearings brought together over 400 citizens, including women and children, Members of Parliament, and local leaders in each district to share views on accountability and delivering government commitments for women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health.

Citizens discussed the impact of recent citizen-led accountability that has had strong results with the Government accelerating the delivery of its commitments made to the Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health to provide emergency care for pregnant women nearer their homes in health centres.

Citizens made clear recommendations on immediate priorities such as the need to strengthen social accountability, improve emergency services as part of the package of care, and improve access to health services for children and adolescents. They called on the leaders to ensure citizens are engaged in priority setting in the future, as well as budget tracking and monitoring of the services. These recommendations were taken to the Prime Minister on International Women’s Day (8 March 2015). A National Citizen Hearing took place on a national television programme named the ‘People’s Parliament’ where findings were presented from the Citizens’ Hearings at district level to Parliament.
4. CITIZENS’ HEARINGS IN 2016 AND BEYOND

The momentum from the Citizens’ Hearings will continue into 2016 to ensure new global frameworks are integrated at local and national levels. With the launch of the SDGs and updated Global Strategy last year, 2016 marks an important time to influence the design of national implementation frameworks at national and local levels.

Key national and local processes such as elections, budgets and planning cycles also provide opportunities to call on decision-makers to make further commitments.

The power of Citizens’ Hearings has been recognised. The WHO Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health 2015 accountability report highlights that “national hearings connected citizens and key decision makers for RMNCAH in country like never before, and contributed to stronger awareness and accountability around RMNCAH. Citizen participation in monitoring and tracking health systems can be highly effective and the hearings presented an innovative platform for a range of stakeholders to publically call on governments to account for their delivery on the MDGs 4 and 5, and push for a strong accountability framework for the updated Global Strategy and within the SDGs”

2016 will see even more Citizen’s Hearings. IPPF, Save the Children, the White Ribbon Alliance and World Vision and collaborating with partners in making the following call to action. Sign up in support at www.citizens-post.org

As governments develop and implement plans to achieve the RMNCAH targets in the SDGs and Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescent’s Health, they must

1. Reflect citizens’ voices in the priority policies and actions needed for progress on RMNCAH, including the recommendations from the Citizens’ Hearings.

2. Establish robust, participatory and transparent accountability mechanisms at local and national levels that strengthen citizens’ voices in the setting of priorities, reviewing commitments, and monitoring and reforming the delivery of the RMNCAH agenda. This includes investment for meaningful citizen engagement.

3. Support independent, participatory accountability mechanisms at the global level that actively seek evidence and inputs from social accountability processes to create an effective feedback loop for change.
5. PLANNING AN INITIAL OR FOLLOW-UP CITIZENS’ HEARING

If you are interested in supporting a hearing or follow up meeting from a previous hearing, please reach out to Save the Children, White Ribbon Alliance and World Vision offices or the IPPF Member association in your country (if present) to set up a meeting to discuss joint objectives of a local or national Citizens’ Hearings, and also to decide a date, panel members, and discuss resources needed (both financial and personnel).

2016 THEME: EQUITY. The theme of the Citizens’ Hearings in 2016 will be ‘Equity’, to highlight the need for all citizens to have a voice in accountability, including marginalised and hard-to-reach groups. This should form an important principle in the outreach and preparations in advance of the hearings, to ensure that marginalised groups are involved and represented, and feed into the recommendations. The hearings will also mark a key opportunity to call on decision makers to support citizens’ participation – from all social groups - in accountability mechanisms for women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health. Strengthening the voices of marginalised groups in accountability processes is critical to achieving the ambition of the SDGs to ‘leave no one behind’.

Some other helpful hints and ideas for your Hearing are given in this section:

- **Setting a date to host an initial local- or national-level Citizens’ Hearing or follow-up meeting from a previous hearing in 2015:** It’s important to think strategically about when the best time might be for your national Hearing in line with other national processes (elections, budget cycles, planning processes etc).

  Following the launch of the updated Global Strategy, governments have been asked to make commitments by the World Health Assembly in May 2016. The period ahead of this provides a critical time for governments to engage with citizens on the details for these commitments, and therefore is a great time to hold an initial hearing or follow-up meeting from a previous hearing in 2015.

  The launch of the SDGs in September 2015 also marks the start of a key process in which governments develop implementation plans or frameworks to achieve these goals and targets at national and local levels. Timing a hearing or follow up meeting to influence the development of national plans for the RMNCAH-related targets can also be impactful.

- **Setting the objectives:** The broad objectives of the hearings are to (i) create space for citizens to discuss the key gaps and priorities in access to quality RMNCAH services, (ii) ensure citizens’ voices are strongly incorporated into RMNCAH health care accountability structures, and (iii) develop proposals for inclusive participatory accountability mechanisms, which include citizens’ voices.
The call for national commitments to the updated Global Strategy and national implementation frameworks for the SDGs provides a key post-2015 context in which to realise these objectives, in addition to other national and local processes and opportunities.

- **Reaching out to key stakeholders**: Invite people to speak who have direct experience of health issues affecting women, children and newborns, e.g. health workers, community leaders, women, children and mothers, local and national government officials. Chiefs, Health Ministers (and other ministers) and Prime Ministers are also key targets to invite to the hearing.

  Ensure that all social groups are represented at the hearing and feed into the preparations, including marginalised and hard-to-reach groups.

- **Capture the outcomes from the hearing or follow up meeting and next steps**: Call for a concrete plan for how your government will be accountable to commitments made to women’s, children’s and newborns’ health, with clear engagement of civil society and citizens, and capture the outcomes of the discussion in the Citizens’ Hearing Outcome Form (available at [www.citizens-post.org/toolkits](http://www.citizens-post.org/toolkits)).

  Make plans for the next Citizens’ Hearing to ensure the hearing is not a one-off consultation but part of a longer term inclusive, accountability mechanism (which includes citizens’ voices from all social groups, including marginalised and hard-to-reach populations).

**What should be discussed at a Citizens’ Hearing?**

- Explore priority issues and actions for RMNCAH, building on citizen-led evidence.
- As the theme of the Citizen’s Hearings in 2016 is ‘Equity’, participants could explore equity in relation to accessing health services or accountability structures.
- Share examples of inclusive, participatory models of accountability which work well and should be in place.
- Call on local, district and national leaders, as they develop national frameworks to deliver the RMNCAH targets in the SDG framework and develop the details of commitments to the updated Global Strategy, to:

  (i) **Reflect citizens’ voices** on the priority policies and actions needed for progress on RMNCAH, including the recommendations from the Citizens’ Hearings.

  (ii) **Establish robust, participatory and transparent accountability mechanisms** at local and national levels that strengthen citizens’ voices in the setting of priorities, reviewing commitments, and monitoring and reforming the delivery of the RMNCAH agenda. This includes investment for meaningful citizen engagement.
(iii) Support independent, participatory accountability mechanisms at the global level that actively seek evidence and inputs from social accountability processes to create an effective feedback loop for change.

CITIZENS’ HEARINGS FORMAT

The format of the Citizens’ Hearings is flexible and can be adapted to facilitate the most meaningful discussion and participation of all people as is possible. The following case studies set out some options to consider:

TANZANIA - HANDENI DISTRICT HEARING

In Tanzania national partners held a District Hearing in Handeni District, Tanga Region. The hearing had over 200 participants who were split into smaller groups of children, men and women for initial discussion; each group had a facilitator to help the discussion flow. This approach allowed citizens, who may not usually speak out at large public meetings, the opportunity to have their voices heard.

After group discussions concluded, the groups joined together and the floor was opened up to questions and general debate. Questions and issues raised in the smaller groups were also presented to decision-makers through group spokespeople. Joint district community recommendations for health were developed based on the day’s discussion.

INDONESIA - DISTRICT FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In Indonesia 42 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held in 40 districts. The FGDs were small groups of health professionals, citizens, young people or mixed groups led by a facilitator to gather their recommendations for health and the issues faced in their communities. Outcomes and recommendations from the FGDs were presented at the National Citizens’ Hearing by group representatives for discussion and inclusion in the national recommendations.
UGANDA—KABALE DISTRICT HEARING

The Kabale District Hearing in Uganda was attended by hundreds of people and featured on a district radio station, opening the discussion up to citizens who were unable to travel. The hearing started with a press briefing followed by an overview of the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals to inform discussion.

The hearing started by opening the floor first to district leaders, and then heard testimonials from women and youth and health professionals. General discussion followed, allowing space for citizens to ask questions of district officials directly. After a brief recess the hearing resumed for the whole community to approve district recommendations for health together. Read the formal agenda.

TOP TIPS FROM PREVIOUS HEARINGS

✓ **Involves government officials and political leaders early on:** Government officials and political leaders need to be involved in key preparations such as developing the agenda, to encourage their active and collaborative participation at the hearing. Clarity on the purpose and tone of the event need to be managed to ensure the event is a space for open dialogue between decision makers and citizens.

✓ **Manage facilitation carefully to ensure the hearing models equity so that everyone can be heard:** It is important to structure the day to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to input to the discussion, rather than a few individuals. Break-out sessions can be useful as well as focusing on key questions or issues for collective input. The hearings should create space for women, children and young people to speak directly for themselves.

✓ **Be collaborative and solutions-focused:** The hearings are an opportunity for people to raise their concerns. Identifying clear recommendations from local-level through to national and global levels ensures an agenda for action to formalise participatory accountability over the long term.

✓ **Involve the media early on:** The media help to amplify the discussions and recommendations made at the hearing. In 2015, tens of thousands more citizens heard about the discussions at the hearings through live TV broadcasts, radio and print media.

✓ **Update the Global Citizens’ Hearing team on the hearing outcomes:** Assign a lead to complete the template feedback form to capture the discussions and recommendations from the day, as well as media coverage. These findings will form the basis of future advocacy at the global level.
Issues to consider in planning a hearing:

THE CHAIR

• Who would be a good chair for the meeting so that the outcomes can be taken forward?
• Will this person be able to make sure citizens lead the meeting and have their voices heard?

SPEAKERS & DECISION MAKERS

• Who needs to be present for the hearing to have legitimacy? For national level hearings, which ministries must be included for the outcomes to be taken forward?
• Have you got representation from key local and national decision makers and influencers as well as experts, health professionals and citizens?

THE EVIDENCE

• Which data should be shared with the panel and the audience? Briefing attendees first can be helpful for discussion.
• Which CSO groups, community leaders, children and young people could present on their experiences? What support do they need to be able to contribute?
• What evidence could you use to show progress, or lack thereof, on national accountability for women’s, children’s and newborns’ health? Is there and evidence collected by citizens that can be profiled?

THE AUDIENCE

• Who are the targets for your Citizens’ Hearing? Are they national, regional and/or local? Think about the most suitable content for your target.
• How will you make it transparent and accessible for the public?

PROMOTION

• What is the hook for the media? Will you write a press release to encourage media to attend?
• How will you promote the hearing to the public and encourage affected communities and influential groups to attend and be involved?
• Will you encourage media to broadcast your Hearing live?

THE RISKS

• What are the potential risks associated with your Hearing? How can they be mitigated?
FOLLOW UP

• How and when will you follow up with decision-makers on their commitments or responses to citizens?
• How will you keep citizens informed about follow-ups you make or progress since the hearing?

THE OUTCOME

Please assign a lead at the hearing to complete the Citizens’ Hearing Outcome Form available at www.citizens-post.org/toolkit and share the outcome of the discussions from your Hearing with IPPF, Save the Children, the White Ribbon Alliance and World Vision contacts listed at the end of this toolkit. This will be used to influence other global accountability processes. Please include details on:

• The specific gaps/priorities identified in the delivery of existing commitments to women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health.
• Any ideas given on how government can be more accountable to citizens and civil society on commitments made to women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health moving forward.
• Any specific outcomes relating to how citizens and government will engage on women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health moving forward.
• Any commitments made by decision-makers at the hearings.
• The central theme for the Citizens’ Hearings in 2016 is Equity. Were there particular examples given from citizens on the issue of equity that made a strong impact? For example how does equity affect citizens’ access to health care or accountability structures?

Other information to share:

• Please list the participants who took part in the Hearing.
• Please list the political champions who are actively pushing for increased dialogue between citizens and government on women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health.
• Was the session photographed and filmed? If so, who is the contact for the footage and photos?
• Were there particular examples given from citizens on their experiences that made a strong impact? Please share those examples.
• Please share any links or scans of media coverage from the event.

Resources

• The Global Citizens’ Hearings Report
• The Global Citizens’ Hearing Film
• The Citizens’ Post
• Citizens’ Hearings Outcome Form
6. CONTACTS FOR SUPPORT AND TO SHARE OUTCOMES

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Published 2016