



830 women die every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. More than 2.7 million children die every year in their first month of life and a similar number are stillborn. Most are preventable.

Advocates:

Actions to Promote RMNCH Self-Care

Self-Care is a set of activities that individuals, families and communities can undertake throughout their lives to enhance health and prevent disease. As an essential part of reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health (RMNCH), self-care empowers women and their families with knowledge, skills and confidence to proactively maintain health.

Despite its proven potential, self-care is often overlooked in favor of clinical interventions and disease-specific, top-down approaches to RMNCH. But for health advocates, supporting self-care is a smart investment. Self-care programs empower and educate women and can ease financial and human resource burdens for communities and facilities.

White Ribbon Alliance has created this simple menu of actions that advocates can take to support self-care within their country. This tool should be used in partnership with decision makers, health professionals and program implementers to enhance the quality of women's and children's health and help realize health rights.



“All women, rich, poor, urban
and rural should not be
secondary in their health
care. Regardless of access
to health services, they
need health information
and to know that they are
supported to proactively
take healthy actions.”

—Farhana Ahmad,

National Coordinator,

WRA Bangladesh

Advocates

Building a generation of women and girls who practice self-care will require advocates to proactively engage citizens in self-care, mobilize leadership and enhance health policies and programs. Here are some practical actions that advocates can take to promote self-care in communities and at a national level.

1. Promote Self-care Among Citizens: We know that including citizens in health strategies and dialogue leads to positive and sustainable results.

As an advocate you can:

Establish International Self-Care Day—July 24th—as an annual advocacy day

Develop an annual call to action which promotes engagement from advocates and decision makers. Advocacy actions should always include dialogue about the benefits of self-care for women, families and communities.

Issue public acknowledgment of supportive decision makers

Acknowledge and thank champions in a public forum to build their support for self-care and incentivize others to become champions.

Incorporate self-care into existing and new health advocacy campaigns

Unite current advocacy campaigns discussing the cross-cutting benefits for multiple health areas.

Gather women’s input about their RMNCH self-care needs

Consult with a range of groups, particularly those representing marginalized women, to inform policies and programs that recognize and respect a diversity of views and needs.

2. Mobilize Stakeholders to Take Action: Engage community stakeholders to understand and promote self-care.

As an advocate you can:

Host a community dialogue to address RMNCH self-care

Invite citizens, advocates and decision makers to discuss self-care as a solution and resource to fill gaps in RMNCH.

Activate coalitions to support self-care advocacy agendas

Leverage existing RMNCH coalitions to enhance short and long-term advocacy goals in support of self-care policies and programs.

Ensure self-care is woven into global and national health strategies and commitments

Encourage and equip advocates, including coalition members and decision makers, to position self-care as an approach and resource to help reach global and national goals.

Cultivate unlikely supporters

Conduct a gap analysis to identify potential new partners. Consider engaging religious leaders, educators, men and mother-in-laws as champions of self-care to grow and sustain efforts.

3. Enhance Policies and Programs: Advocates can make self-care an integral part of health policies and programs. To read more about specific policy recommendations, please [click here](#) for our policy paper.

As an advocate you can:

Call on decision makers to integrate self-care into national policies

Create a holistic approach to self-care by including health literacy and health rights to existing policies.

Host advocacy trainings for health providers

Providing advocacy support to health professionals has the potential to improve health care by empowering them to promote self-care approaches to patients and decision makers.

Track and monitor policy enablers to promote self-care

Once policies are identified, consider publishing a white paper to promote them. Examine policies such as tax incentives, baby registration methods and accommodations for new mothers in the workforce.

Advocate for increased technology infrastructure

Work with technology leaders and health officials to bring and/or improve infrastructure to reach women and families with information on self-care.



Conclusion

White Ribbon Alliance thanks all advocates who have committed to making a world where women and families have quality and respectful care. We know that when empowered with knowledge and confidence, women make the best health decisions for themselves and their families. Self-care is an approach that realizes White Ribbon Alliance's strategy to educate and empower people about health and rights and ultimately deliver new or improved policies and practices that are driven by women's needs.

If you would like assistance or support implementing any of the above actions, please contact White Ribbon Alliance at info@whiteribbonalliance.org or click [here](#) to visit the resource page.



In 2017, WRA Zimbabwe successfully launched a self-care project involving village health workers, women and families in the district of Kwekwe. By using a collaborative approach between the Zimbabwe Ministry of Health, Kwekwe Ministry of Health, WRA Zimbabwe and its members, religious leaders and community program implementers, they were set up for success.

