



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.

## Decision Makers: 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 decision makers—including national legislators, parliamentary members, ministry of health leadership and district and village leaders—supporting self-care is a smart investment. Self-care programs empower and educate women and can offset healthcare costs for communities and facilities.

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



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“Self-care actively addresses cross-sectoral priorities: it promotes social inclusion to invest in individuals and support community infrastructure, has positive implications for community prosperity and addresses maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity.”

—Betsy McCallon

CEO White Ribbon Alliance

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### Decision Makers

Building a generation of women and girls who practice self-care requires decision makers to proactively engage citizens in self-care, mobilize other leaders and enhance health policies and programs. Here are some practical actions that decision makers can take to promote self-care in their communities and countries.

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

*As a decision maker you can:*

#### Commemorate International Self-Care Day on July 24th

Promote self-care by organizing or participating in national and sub-national commemoration events.

#### Issue a public statement in support of self-care

Discuss the importance and benefits of self-care and the need to integrate self-care into health management and health programs. The statement can be issued via a government memo or memorandum to public health directors, and shared with the media via public service announcements or radio spots.

#### Support a public health campaign focused on self-care

Leverage media, social and public engagement opportunities to promote self-care actions. Public campaign activities should always include opportunities to meet with women and families.

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

Leverage key moments like International Women’s Day or International Maternal Health and Rights Day to host a listening forum with mothers, women and youth groups to understand how their wants and needs can be incorporated into policies and programs.

**2. Mobilize Stakeholders to Take Action:** Become a leader among leaders by engaging other decision makers at all levels to understand and promote self-care.

*As a decision maker you can:*

#### Convene a stakeholders’ forum

Bring together policy makers, local leaders, health-care providers and other stakeholders to discuss how self-care can advance national health objectives and enhance policies and programs. Make sure to include representatives from health, education, religious affairs, agriculture, local governance, and women and families to promote coordination. Consider inviting experts from other countries to learn from their experiences.

### **Form a technical working group or a multi-sector task force on self-care**

Create an on-going interest group on self-care to take forward actions emerging from the forum and/or to design new policies and programs that promote self-care.

### **Champion self-care at a global forum**

Position your country as a leader in self-care by sharing action steps you have taken to advance self-care and promote investment in self-care related to global health and development goals.

### **Contribute to the self-care evidence-base**

Fund a pilot program on self-care and/or support country efforts to document and disseminate lessons learned from existing self-care policy and program implementation.

### **Develop local support and coordination**

Create a comprehensive, collaborative plan with district officials to expand outreach to women and families to discuss self-care practices and their needs for quality care. Coordination can be conducted through partnerships with trusted NGOs, like White Ribbon Alliance, that has expertise in the self-care global agenda.

**3. Enhance Policies and Programs:** Decision makers have the opportunity to 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 a decision maker you can:*

### **Increase self-care education and literacy through curricula**

Integrate self-care approaches and practices into existing national education and health curricula.

### **Continue to enhance self-care training for health providers, midwives and local health officials**

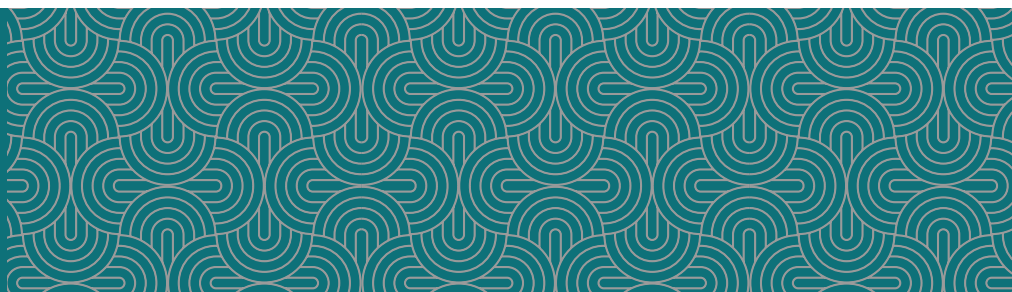
Integrate RMNCH self-care approaches, including a women's centered approach through [respectful maternity care](#), into annual health worker training requirements and broader health promotion programs.

### **Identify current policy enablers to promote self-care, including examining policies from other countries**

Policy examples might include tax incentives, baby registration methods and accommodations for new mothers in the workforce. Once policies are identified, action can be taken to promote them through a citizen campaign.

### **Leverage current technology infrastructures**


Integrate self-care messaging, health promotion and programming into existing phone or texting systems.



## Conclusion

White Ribbon Alliance thanks all leaders and decision makers 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](mailto:info@whiteribbonalliance.org) or click [here](#) to visit the resource page.



In 2017, the government of Nepal launched “My Year of Health,” a self-care campaign, which included a daily self-care pledge by every employee in the Ministry of Health. This campaign was supported by the Prime Minister and Parliament through pledge activities and public statements. [Read more.](#)

