



Program Implementers: Actions to Promote RMNCH Self-Care

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.

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 program implementers—including program officers, funders and monitoring and evaluation experts—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 program implementers can take to support self-care within their program. This tool should be used in partnership with health professionals, advocates and decision makers to enhance the quality of women's and children's health and to help realize health rights.



“We work with community leaders, municipal authorities, and families to communicate that the care of the pregnant woman is not the sole responsibility of the woman.”

—Alexia Escobar, Self-Care Project Manager in Bolivia, MSH Peru

Program Implementers

Building a generation of women and girls who practice self-care will require program implementers to proactively engage citizens in self-care, mobilize leaders and enhance health policies and programs. Here are some practical actions that program implementers can take to promote and advance 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 program implementer you can:

Celebrate International Self-Care Day on July 24th

Promote self-care by organizing a community celebration to share self-care best practices. Invite health professionals and decision makers to join the celebration. Don't forget to include a call to action.

Develop public service announcements (PSA) to support self-care

Engage community members by developing PSAs which link self-care activities and program goals and encourage positive self-care behaviors. Reach your audience by leveraging media channels which are most popular with women and families. Don't forget to include a call to action.

Create public opportunities for women to support self-care

When women speak to other women, the message and dialogue has more impact. Work with the women in your programs to share meaningful anecdotes and personal stories of self-care and positive health behaviors. Consider formalizing a story collection process to document, share and archive these stories—it will build women's skills and confidence while also providing you with powerful spokespeople.

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

Create a safe space, such as women's groups, for girls, women and mothers to discuss RMNCH wants and needs. With consent from participants, document specific demands so that they may be incorporated into policies and programs. Make sure to share the results back with women—a best practice when utilizing input from women, it will also help build individual and community investment in your programs.

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

As a program implementer you can:

Invite stakeholders and decision makers to meet with families

Bring together decision makers and families to discuss ways self-care advances positive health behaviors. As program implementers and meeting organizers, be sure to include any evaluation of programs and concrete background information.

Use global health forums to call for the incorporation of self-care into public private sector approaches to RMNCH

Position self-care as a solution to global and national health gaps by joining public private sector discussion forums to share, advance and promote investment in self-care.

Incorporate self-care evidence collection into overall monitoring and evaluation activities

Add self-care evidence collection into your other M&E activities so that you can best understand return on investment, behavior change, overall effectiveness and more.

Meet with local supporters and decision makers

Keep local supporters and decision makers updated on the individual and community outcomes of self-care by setting up regular meetings to discuss program successes, areas for strengthening and opportunities for program support.

3. Enhance Policies and Programs: Program Implementers have the opportunity to make self-care an integral part of health programs and influence policy. To read more about specific policy recommendations, please click [here](#) for our policy paper.

As a program implementer you can:

Enhance educational program activities by incorporating self-care

Integrate self-care education into existing program activities. Reassess education programs and consider adding self-care topics such as reproductive health rights and health literacy for girls and adolescents.

Coordinate ongoing collaboration between health providers and individuals

Garner stronger relationships and informed conversations between health providers and individuals by integrating women-centered, RMNCH self-care approaches. One example would be including respectful maternity care focus groups and forums into trainings and program activities.

Educate and inform key decision makers on the benefits of self-care

Use evidence-based information and stories collected through program activities to promote self-care. Don't forget to include a call to action tied to evidence presented.

Link self-care to social innovation and technology opportunities

Engage funders, technology advisors, social innovators and other health promotion programs to integrate self-care messaging into existing health technology programs such as voice or text programs.



Conclusion

White Ribbon Alliance thanks all program implementers who have committed to creating 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 the remote community of Moxos, Bolivia, women and families received news, including government health information, through the radio and community events. MSH Peru in Bolivia led several outreach opportunities to promote self-care activities that addressed maternal anemia and nutrition deficiencies through daily radio broadcasts and joint government/community sponsored events.

