

FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME



DEMANDING RIGHTS TO REPRODUCTIVE, MATERNAL, NEWBORN, CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH SERVICES

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The issue

The right to Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) services is crucial to upholding the rights of women, children and adolescents. In addition to providing RMNCAH services, it is necessary to address the barriers that prevent women from demanding and realizing their rights to them.

The past two decades have seen vast improvements in the lives of women, adolescents, and children. Since 1990, the maternal mortality ratio has declined by 45 per cent and the under 5 maternal mortality rate has been halved. Despite this however, over 303,000 women died from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth in 2015. The global unmet need for family planning remains unacceptably high, as 12 per cent of the world's women – more than 140 million women – report an unmet need for family planning services.

The importance of reproductive rights and access to quality health services is enshrined in a wide range of normative frameworks, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Programme of Action of International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Beijing Platform for Action. To date, most efforts have sought to address the 'supply side' of services in work towards RMNCAH rights, without considering the importance of increasing the demand for these service.

Our strategy for change

In order to achieve reproductive rights, gender equality and well-being, we must address the barriers that are preventing women, children and adolescents from demanding and realizing their rights to RMNCAH services.

This requires action on multiple fronts and UN Women has identified four specific outcomes which must be worked on.

1. Rights-based national and local RMNCAH frameworks are established. In order to build the required political commitment and finance women's access to RMNCAH services, it is critical to work with national and local authorities. Efforts will focus on ensuring that policy

UN WOMEN'S FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME INITIATIVES

Demanding Rights to Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Services is one of UN Women's Pipeline Flagship Programming Initiatives designed to ensure that UN Women can deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This Flagship Programme will support national governments to address multiple SDG targets across multiple goals.

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and budgetary processes across the various sectors impacting RMNCAH identify and actively respond to gender-specific barriers.

2. Civil registration of women and children's identity, births, deaths, marriages, and other vital events is increased. Discriminatory laws and policies, restricted access to civil registration services and a lack of capacity to secure civil documentation directly prevents women from accessing the services and support they are entitled to. This is particularly relevant to humanitarian contexts wherein women are in dire need of legal documents to rebuild their lives.

3. Equal gender norms, attitudes and practices on women's rights to RMNCAH are promoted. Unequal social norms and attitudes regarding the (sexual and reproductive) rights of women can prevent women from seeking out and claiming vital and life-saving health services. By engaging men and the wider community, it is possible to identify solutions and transform unequal social norms. For example by working with networks of men in support of women, engaging male champions, as well as working with religious leaders, it is possible to dispel myths and false beliefs about equal gender norms and practices.

4. Women are empowered to exercise their RMNCAH rights and seek services. By engaging women as agents of change and increasing their awareness and knowledge of their RMNCAH rights, women are more likely to claim their RMNCAH rights. In humanitarian settings for example, work and capacity building with women can be focused within social spaces in temporary shelters and in host communities.

How the programme works

The Programme will be built on evidence-based, successful and innovative interventions. The program will also focus specifically on contributing to the evidence base for demand generation in RMNCAH.

Activities will be carried out through those countries in which UN Women is working in the outlined output areas. From the global level, UN Women will support country projects by developing methodologies, providing technical assistance, building global and regional partnerships, convening communities of practice, and ensuring knowledge management through analysis and documentation of results and sharing of lessons learned.

FAST FACTS - THE IMPORTANCE OF RIGHTS IN RMNCAH

- In 2015, over 303,000 women died from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth (WHO, 2016).
- 99% of maternal deaths occur in developing countries; those most at risk of maternal mortality are adolescent girls under the age of 15 and women living in rural and poor communities (WHO, 2014).
- High levels of gender inequality have been statistically linked to high Maternal Mortality (Chirowa et al., 2013).
- A 10% reduction in child marriage can be associated with a 70% reduction in maternal mortality rates (Raj and Boehmer, 2013).
- Approximately 29 countries have discriminatory laws which affect women's ability to register either for their own identification documents or register citizenship to their children (UNHCR, 2014).
- High rates of disrespect and abuse during childbirth in healthcare facilities have been shown to discourage women from attending/returning for those services (Sando et al, 2014).

Partnerships for change

To create the enabling environment for the processes and outcomes to occur, UN Women will leverage its coordination and implementation mandates with a range of partners.

UN Women has strong country presence and established networks at the international, regional, and national levels. This will support the mobilizing of relevant international organizations, national civil society organizations, UN entities and implementing partners such as local NGOs and media organizations. Academic and social-science research organizations will also be key partners for UN Women in this work.

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