

White Ribbon Alliance and Strategic Accountability Campaigns

White Ribbon Alliance (WRA) has been championing citizen-led accountability in diverse contexts and at multiple levels for more than three years in as many as fourteen countries.

WRA India in West Bengal has successfully managed to mobilize citizens, government officials and non-government organizations to promote safe motherhood through social accountability. WRA India and partners developed a health facility assessment tool (checklist/social audit) that the Government of West Bengal approved as a legitimate data collection instrument that is helping them understand how health facilities are performing and identify areas for action. Consequently, West Bengal's department of health instigated participatory health facility assessment exercises that inform regular town hall meetings. Joint action plans are developed, monitored and implemented to address identified gaps. This work is ongoing.

WRA Nigeria is currently implementing a three-year citizen led accountability project in Niger State. They have educated citizens and state officials on their rights and responsibilities regarding maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH). They have fostered relationships between traditional and faith leaders, parliamentarians, media houses and other prominent individuals within Nigeria. Several public hearings have been organized bringing together citizens and decision-makers, which encouraged the Niger State Commissioner of Health to publicly commit to accountability processes at all levels of the State Ministry of Health. As a result, the State Commissioner formed a multi-stakeholder technical working group that is working on rolling out and imbedding accountability processes within the Ministry of Health operations. On 30th June 2017, citizens, media houses, civil society organization representatives met with Prof Yemi Osinbajo GCON, Nigeria's Acting President, where he pledged to create an enabling environment for citizen led accountability within Nigeria.

WRA Pakistan is also implementing a three-year citizen led accountability campaign aimed at improving maternal nutrition in Sindh Province, where they are working closely with the Scaling Up Nutrition Alliance members in-country. They have mobilized mothers and fathers, bureaucrats, policy makers and media houses to interrogate and collectively find lasting solutions to dangerously high levels of maternal nutrition in the province. They are also partnering with medical training institutions and the ministry of education to incorporate nutrition in their respective curricula. The State Ministry of Health launched the petition signing ceremony in November 2016 and by April 2017, more than 100,000 citizens signed the petition asking the Sindh Government, among other things, to increase the budget for iron and folic acid supplements and ensure that community health workers acquire nutrition counselling skills. The Sindh Ministry of Health has since been allocated a 25% budgetary increase for the 2017/18 fiscal year.

Common themes from the three countries include:

1. Critical mass mobilization and civic education across and between governments and citizens with facilitation from iNGOs and local organizations.
2. Deliberate and sustained momentum in creating spaces for accountability champions both within and outside the government to improve MNCH services and policies.
3. Accountability processes are integrated throughout and between the local, subnational, national and global levels.