

## Advocating Reproductive Choices Report

November 2018 - July 2020

Today, we are a strong network of 115 organisations. Population Foundation of India took over the secretariat in 2015. Considering the past two years, there have been various developments in engagement, representation and governances that have strengthened Advocating Reproductive Choice (ARC) coalition to be a more cohesive, efficient and democratic platform. The key updates regarding ARC from the ARC secretariat for November 2018 - July 2020 are as follows:

### Highlights

- **ARC Strategy 2020**

A comprehensive, transparent and inclusive exercise was conducted to revise the strategic plan as per the current family planning advocacy needs and priorities in the country. ARC Strategy 2020 developed identifies coalition objectives, principles, approaches for the way forward and priority actions to catalyse collective efforts of the members. The process led by the secretariat and guided by the core committee, emphasises on strengthening member engagement, accountability and visibility. In addition, the ARC strategy 2020 was then shared with members of the coalition in January 2019.

- **Operational guidelines**

The operational guidelines were revised to align with the new ARC strategic plan. This included detailing governance processes, secretariat functioning and strategy implementation. New features such as processes for selection of new members; termination and transition of members; processes for transition of the secretariat; working groups to lead action on priority areas; knowledge and shared learning, communication and outreach, networking and convening and policy advocacy were included.

- **Initiatives undertaken**

- **Media and Communication Strategy**

The strategy focuses on strengthening coalition's internal and external communications, identifying opportunities to advance media outreach, promoting homogenous messaging, and identifying spokesperson and target audiences for specific messaging.

- **Digital media Strategy**

ARC website has been updated with new features such sign up feature for visitors to join the coalition; resource hub that includes research studies, publications and updates. In addition,

social media strategy was developed to amplify message outreach by connecting with diverse audience through various digital media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn and, Twitter.

- **Website**

The website is updated with new features such as intranet to facilitate communication amongst members, sign up feature for visitors to join the coalition; resource materials-guidelines, research studies, publications; media coverage and blogs; and update on coalition initiatives.

- **Social Media Platforms**

ARC is now active on social media platforms; Facebook and Twitter to amplify message outreach on sexual and reproductive health rights, especially on quality voluntary family planning, crowdsource information engage in conversations to increase our visibility. Through these platforms, ARC aims to be one of the digital repositories and search point on family planning and reproductive health.

### Advocacy to improve quality of care and accessibility to contraceptive services

- **Letter to the TV channels and editors Request for withdrawal of television advertisement by TAXAB on Bharat4populationlaw, February 15, 2019**

Concerning the promotion of coercive population laws through wrong data and facts ARC wrote a letter to Advertising Standard Council of India, TV channels and editors to withdraw television advertisements by TAXAB.

- **Letter to the Union Health Minister on Family Planning and Population Stabilisation, September 20, 2019**

Following Prime Minister's speech on Independence day, August 15, 2019, ARC shared a letter with the Union Health minister on welcoming Prime Minister's mention of planned families to address population stabilisation. ARC highlighted in the letter the country should work together towards attaining population stabilisation through voluntary family planning services. In addition, the letter also stressed that coercive measures are counter-productive, especially for the youth, women and marginalised groups.

- **Letter to the Prime Minister on prioritising family planning services during COVID, April 19, 2020:**

Selected ARC members came together to brainstorm on challenges caused in accessing family planning services due to COVID and lockdown. Following many convening's led by PFI, ARC developed a letter to the prime minister on considering family planning services to be included within the essential services lists.

- **Letter in support to FOGSI's letter on inclusion of implants in basket of choices, April 20, 2020**

In line to FOGSI's step to expand basket of contraceptive choices through introduction of implants in private and public sector, ARC wrote a letter to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for support to the initiative.

- **Article on two child policy on Bastion; May 18, 2020**

The article co-authored by Dr. Kalpana Apte, Secretary general of Family Planning Association of India, a core committee member of ARC and Dr. Sharad D Iyengar, Chief Executive Officer of Action, Research and Training on Health, Udaipur, a member of ARC was drafted and placed by the secretariat. Published on Bastion, the article focuses on an argument against two child policy, especially in COVID times.

- **Letter to Time of India Raipur regarding correct communication on family planning, May 1, 2020**

An article published by Times of India, Raipur miscommunicated facts on family planning, shared by the Raipur Menopause Society representatives. The communication in the article could have been misconstrued as no accessibility of family planning services during COVID. ARC wrote a letter to the Raipur Menopause Society and Editor, Times of India Raipur on request for necessary actions to share correct information on family planning services.

- **Letter to the State Health Society Bihar, June 22, 2020**

A rapid survey on the availability and accessibility of family planning services at the field level during COVID, was conducted in Bihar. A letter comprising of the findings and recommendations received from 11 ARC members covering 26 districts, was developed and submitted to the Executive Director of State Health Society Bihar.

## Collaborations

- **Qualitative research on roll out of injectable in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh**

ARC assisted Population Foundation of India in collating inputs regarding accessibility and availability of injectable contraceptives through members in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. The study was then presented at the national dissemination workshop on injectable roll out by Parivar Seva Sanstha.

- **Webinar on "Prioritisation of Family Planning in India"**

ARC supported Population Services International in hosting a national webinar on Prioritisation of Family Planning in India. 35 participants attended the webinar.

- **Qualitative research on availability of family planning services in Bihar during COVID-19**  
On request from members in Bihar, ARC conducted a qualitative research on ground realities of family planning in the state. Feedback and recommendations from 11 members in 26 districts were received. A similar activity is being held in Uttar Pradesh.

## Engagements and Representation

- **Increased engagement with ARC members**  
Implementation of the developed strategies brought together the coalition members and the Secretariat to strengthen both internal as well as external communications. Initial steps include sharing of media coverage, knowledge and webinar update; representation in events as speakers and participation in policy dialogue with government officials. ARC has also proved to be democratic platform for cross learning and sharing of information.
- **Increased participation and representation at convenings**  
ARC participated and represented in more than 25 national and state convenings by government and civil society organisations.
- **CSO representative in the India FP2020 country engagement group**  
ARC is represented as the focal point for civil society organisations in the FP 2020 country engagement group. The group, also including; UNFPA, USAID, BMGF, Packard Foundation, and a youth representative, guides the government on its commitment made under the FP 2020.

## Meetings

- ARC has conducted in total **14** meetings; 1 general body meeting, 7 core committee meetings, 4 advocacy meetings on increased access to quality family planning and 2 state level meetings in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to develop state specific advocacy strategies. In addition, ARC has been holding one to one interactions with members to increase participation and engagement.