

Key advocacy messages to improve the health of women, children and adolescents

76th World Health Assembly, Geneva, Switzerland, 21–30 May 2023



Women's,
Children's and
Adolescents'
Health

Co-hosted by World Health Organization

The 76th World Health Assembly ([#WHA76](#)) opens on Sunday, May 21, 2023. This annual gathering brings together government delegations and other key development stakeholders across the world to agree on priorities and take bold actions to tackle the most pressing issues in the health sector.

In May 2016, the 69th World Health Assembly adopted the resolution to commit to the implementation of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, which requested the Director General, inter alia, to report bi-annually on progress towards women's, children's and adolescents' health to the Health Assembly. This year also marks the half-way point towards the Global Strategy and Sustainable Development Goals.

We are at a critical juncture in the SDG journey. Although progress and achievements have been made, it is insufficient to meet SDG3 targets for women, children and adolescents. The combination of COVID-19, conflict, climate change and the cost-of-living crisis are rolling back decades of progress, with far-reaching effects for the most vulnerable.

Food insecurity, hunger, child marriage, risks from intimate partner violence, and adolescent mental health issues have all increased as noted in the [Protect the Promise](#) – 2022 Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030) progress report and this year's WHA report on [implementation of the Global Strategy](#).

Accelerated action is needed, and the time to act is now. As the health community meets at WHA, PMNCH – the world's largest alliance of more than 1,400 partners working in women's, children's and adolescents' health – is calling for leaders to urgently prioritize the health and rights of women, children and adolescents.

It's time to reflect, share, collaborate and act!

Key message

Healthy and empowered women, children and adolescents are the heart of the SDGs, delivering transformational change to achieve the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. When we invest in women, children and adolescents, we build healthier communities, vibrant economies and more prosperous, peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies.

Advocacy asks

- Strengthen political and financial commitment for women's, children's and adolescents' health and well-being.
 - Accelerate prioritization, financing and implementation of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in national universal health coverage (UHC) plans.
 - Prioritize adolescent well-being in national development plans and strategies and implement adolescent well-being policies and programs.
- Address inequities across the life course and strengthen health systems to improve maternal, newborn, and child health and avert preventable deaths, including stillbirths.
 - Strengthen and support health workforce: they are at the front line of the provision of quality and respectful care to women, children and adolescents.

MNCH

Situation:

- From 2000 to 2020, the global maternal mortality ratio declined by 34 per cent, namely from 342 deaths to 223 deaths per 100,000 live births. While significant, this represents about one third of the 6.4 per cent annual rate needed to achieve the SDG of 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030.
 - We are poised to lose more than 30 million more women and babies by 2030, more than half of them in Sub-Saharan Africa, if we do not change course on maternal and newborn health.
 - Although progress has been made in under-5 mortality, in the year 2021, the global mortality rate for children under 5 years of age was 38 deaths per 1000 live births. 54 countries are off-track to reach the SDG child mortality target by 2030.
 - Almost half of those deaths were among newborns. Every 2 seconds, a baby is born too soon. Every 40 seconds, one of these babies dies. Preterm birth is the leading cause of under-five deaths, nearly 1 in 5 of child deaths, around one million newborns each year.
- For countries these vulnerable newborns represent an enormous loss of human capital and economic growth.

Advocacy ask: Address inequities across the life course to enhance human development, strengthen health systems and primary health care, and ensure greater investment in proven solutions, such as infection prevention, quality of care and integration of maternal and newborn health interventions with other health packages to improve maternal, newborn, and child health and avert preventable deaths, including stillbirths.

Tools: Maternal and Newborn Health Key Advocacy Messages



SRHR

Situation:

- Great progress has been made over the last 30 years in increasing access to several essential SRH interventions especially for maternal care. However not all SRH interventions have received the same support and there is variation in degrees of integration, quality, coverage and prioritization of certain SRH services. Safe abortion and post-abortion care, comprehensive sexuality education, prevention and treatment of gender-based violence, family planning products and technologies, and fertility care are among the services most excluded from publicly funded schemes.
- Almost everyone of reproductive age—about 4.3 billion people—will not have access to at least one essential reproductive health intervention over the course of their lives.
- A key driver of these inequities is out-of-pocket costs of services, which many are unable to afford.
- Fully meeting all women's needs in LMIC's for core SRH services would cost just US\$ 10.60 US per capita annually, and would yield benefits that last across generations.

Advocacy ask: Accelerate prioritization, financing and implementation of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in national universal health coverage (UHC) plans

Tools: [SRHR in UHC Advocacy brief](#)



AWB

Situation:

- Adolescents and young people face multiple and intersecting challenges to their well-being, heightened by climate change, conflict and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- An estimated 2,600 adolescents died each day in 2020, mostly from preventable or treatable causes – or 950,000 total in 2020
- Globally, one in seven 10-19-year-olds experiences a mental health issue, accounting for 13% of the global burden of disease in this age group. Depression, anxiety and behavioural disorders are among the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15-19-year-olds.
- Approximately 12 million girls aged 15-19 years and at least 777,000 girls under 15 years give birth each year in developing regions. Complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death for 15-19-year-old girls globally.
- Globally, one-fifth of young people (aged 15-24) are not in employment, education, or training (NEET). Young women are twice as likely as young men to have NEET status.

Advocacy asks: Prioritization of adolescent well-being evidenced by enhanced and sustained financing, new and updated policy instruments and implementation of strategies and comprehensive national programme implementation plans.

Tools: [Key asks to Member states for Political Declaration outcome document of the SDG Summit](#)



How to engage

If you are part of WHA delegation, actively engage and make your voice heard at the deliberations. There are a number of sessions relevant to women's, children's and adolescents' health. In particular, the agenda item on the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030) is of significance.

Member States are specifically invited to share what actions are being planned to ensure a focus on adolescents in the reporting on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals at the 2023 SDG Summit and to ensure that political and financial commitments are made at the 2023 Global Forum for Adolescents. Non-state actors are also encouraged to make statements in support of this agenda item. Relevant document [A76/5](#) and more comprehensive technical report is available [here](#). All WHA program and documents are available here: [WHA76 \(who.int\)](#).

Join us for the [Lives in the Balance](#) events on the side of the Assembly to prepare, highlight and consolidate critical discussions among WHA delegates.



These will take place from 6-8pm CET:

- **Opening event:** Sunday, 21 May, InterContinental Hotel;
- **Adolescent health and SRHR:** Monday 22 May, Domaine des Penches;
- **Maternal, newborn and child health:** Wednesday 24 May, Restaurant Vieux Bois

See other partner events you may be interested in attending: [here](#)

Join us for the [Walk the Talk](#) to advocate for women, children and adolescents, and [1.8 Billion Young People for Change Campaign](#) and rally support for the Global Forum for Adolescents

Make your voice heard on social media. Use [#WHA76](#); [#LivesInTheBalance](#);

20 Avenue Appia
1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland