

NEWS

Global Efforts Intensify to Accelerate Progress on Maternal and Child Health Targets

A report on the 154th WHO Executive Board Meeting

Journal of Women and Child Health (JoWaCH)

Volume 2 Issue 1 April 2024



Reducing maternal mortality (SDG 3.1) and child mortality (SDG 3.2) is an area where progress is falling short of target, with just six years remaining to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a result, Member States acknowledged the WHO Director General's report on **Acceleration towards the Sustainable Development Goal targets for maternal health and child mortality** at the 154th Executive Board (EB) meeting of the World Health Organization, which was held from January 22–27, 2024. The research points out that by 2030, 46 countries are expected to have a ratio of more than 140 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, which is more than double the threshold established by goal 3.1. By 2030, 63 nations will not have met the objective for neonatal mortality, and 54 will not have met the target for under-5 mortality.

In response, Somalia has proposed a resolution to the World Health Assembly to identify gaps and reach a consensus on the need of expanding the coverage of critical treatments in order to save the lives of expectant mothers, infants, and children. Following four rounds of informal consultations, the current **draft decision** on Accelerate progress towards reducing maternal, newborn, and child mortality in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal targets 3.1 and 3.2—co-sponsored by Egypt, Ethiopia, Paraguay, Somalia, South Africa, and the United Republic of Tanzania—was brought up for discussion at the WHO 154th EB.

Member states spoke out at the EB meeting over the report's substance and the draft decision that Somalia and the other sponsors had submitted. The session that was

recorded can be accessed [here](#).

The implementation of strategies like the Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP), Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality (EPMM), and Child Survival Action (CSA), as well as multipronged approaches and increased investments, are just a few of the ways that Member States have expressed broad support for the need to accelerate progress in reducing maternal, newborn, and child mortality. The significance of sexual and reproductive health and rights in improving the health of mothers, newborns, and adolescents has been highlighted by a number of Member States. These include the need of promoting family planning, particularly for teenagers, comprehensive sexual education, and access to reproductive health care. It is imperative to address gender inequality, which calls for the provision of basic services to women and girls, the encouragement of women's education, and the prevention of gender-based violence. Numerous nations also emphasized the necessity of fortifying healthcare systems, emphasizing the need to move toward a Primary Health Care approach, expand workforce capacity, especially for midwives and community health workers, and improve access to medical equipment and quality of services. Inequalities in access to MNCH services should be addressed, particularly in low- and middle-income nations and in environments that are already fragile and humanitarian.

Sixteen Member States thanked Somalia for leading the effort to present the draft decision and their support for the resolution, which will be presented at the 77th World Health Assembly in May 2024. These Member States

included the African region (AFRO), the Eastern Mediterranean region (EMRO), and eight Nordic and Baltic States.

In a different EB item, the Russian Federation intervened on behalf of ten non-EB member states (Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Palestine) to urge the EB to reconsider granting the **Center for Reproductive Rights** such status while the board was considering additions to those listed as being in "Official Relations" with WHO. During its **intervention** (Session 13, timestamp: 43:57), the Russian Federation brought attention to the divisive nature of sexual and reproductive rights in the international arena as well as the risk of creating a precedent wherein WHO is perceived as advocating for the interests of a limited number of groups within states while ignoring the concerns of others. In response to this intervention, **Women in Global Health**, the **Global Health Council**, and **Health Policy Watch** released partner statements that further emphasize the need to protect sexual and reproductive health and rights throughout the world as a means of promoting women's and girls' health and wellbeing.

A number of PMNCH members who have formal connections with WHO also made interventions during the EB to express their endorsement of the concerns. Complete member statements are available at this link:

- [International Baby Food Action Network](#)
- [International Federation of Medical Students' Associations](#)
- [International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation](#)
- [International Planned Parenthood Federation](#)
- [Medicines for Malaria Venture](#)
- [The Save the Children Fund](#)

A **tracking document** has been created by PMNCH to provide an overview of the concerns that were brought up in Member State interventions.



Ready to submit your research? Choose THoQN and benefit from:

- Fast, convenient online submission
- Thorough peer review by experienced researchers in the field
- Rapid publication on acceptance
- Support for research data, including large and complex data types

At THoQN, research is always in progress. Learn more

https://www.jowach.com/index.php/js/author_guidelines