

Liberia's Call to Accelerated Action for Newborn and Child Survival

We, the children parliament, the government representatives, the health leaders at national and 15 counties and stakeholders who convened at the Newborn and Child Survival Forum held in Margibi County of Liberia from 8th to 9th of October, 2024.

Affirm our commitment to the principles of child rights and welfare as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to which Liberia ratified in 1993, and to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3.1 and 3.2. Our recent endorsement of the Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health Resolution (WHA77.5) at the 77th World Health Assembly held in Geneva underscores our unwavering dedication to the health of African women, newborns, and children. Protecting and nurturing these vulnerable groups is a crucial investment in our nation's future.

Cognizant of the severe burden of neonatal and child mortality that our country faces with worsening neonatal mortality from 2013 to present and stagnating under-five mortality rate; these alarming statistics reveal an urgent need for comprehensive and immediate action to safeguard the lives of our youngest citizens and their mothers.

Recognize the urgency of newborn and child survival and that many of these deaths are due to preventable and treatable conditions. Key drivers include complications from preterm births, birth asphyxia, sepsis, and common infectious diseases among older children such as malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea, and measles, with malnutrition being a major risk factor. These challenges can be effectively addressed through enhanced access to quality integrated primary health care.

Note with concern that without immediate and robust action to reduce under-five mortality to 52 deaths per 1,000 live births by 2028, Liberia risks failing to meet its health targets by the 2030 global targets. It is critical that we keep accelerating our efforts to meet the specific targets of reducing neonatal mortality to less than 12 per 1000 live births and under-five mortality to less than 25 per 1000 live births.

Emphasize the importance of maternal, newborn and child survival and health as a foundational element of sustainable development and economic growth. We must be ready to build a resilient system to stand for emerging challenges including climate change and outbreaks of infectious diseases. By prioritizing these areas, we not only meet our national health development commitments but also build a stronger future for Liberia.

We hereby call on the highest level of leadership in Liberia with all actors and stakeholders, in line with national priorities, to:

1. **Recognize** newborn and child survival as a public health emergency and to organize dedicated, coordinated, comprehensive governmental support and incremental financing for newborn and child survival.

2. **Support** the integration of newborn and child survival into national health policies and strategies; develop and fund acceleration plans to end preventable deaths under the strong leadership of government; and scale up human-centered and multisectoral services especially through a robust primary health care system to meet global targets, particularly for reducing neonatal and under-five mortality.
3. **Adopt** these health commitments and realign investments to ensure adequate allocation of resources towards life-saving interventions, human resources for health, essential medicines, and health infrastructure.
4. **Strongly encourage** the accountability for every pregnant woman, stillbirth, newborn and child at national and sub-national levels by ensuring each one is counted, recorded, and analysed through strengthening health information systems, real-time monitoring and innovative technology for evidence-based decision-making and timely health interventions to reduce inequities and drive local change.
5. **Insist on** multisectoral partnerships that unite different arms of government, civil society, private sector, international bodies, bilateral agencies, multilateral organisations and communities to amplify efforts and share best practices for a healthier Liberia. Encouraging partners alignment of investments behind Liberia's priorities.
6. **Request** the First Lady to chaperon child health as the champion since she is already the champion of maternal and newborn. Thereby, becoming the champion of maternal, newborn and child health for the continuum of care.

Together, we can create a brighter, healthier future for our children.