

Definitive Action for Women, Children, and Adolescents: AU Side Event Sparks Concrete Recommendations



On the sidelines of the 38th African Union Summit, the Global Leaders Network for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health (GLN) and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) convened a high-level breakfast roundtable. The event, titled *Definitive Action for Women, Children, and Adolescents*, gathered Ministers of Health, policymakers, developmental partners, regional leaders, and key stakeholders to drive urgent action towards advancing investments and policy reforms for women's, children's, and adolescents' health across Africa.

Urgent Health Challenges Demand Coordinated Action

Women, children, and adolescents continue to bear the brunt of health inequities, compounded by weak health systems and the adverse effects of conflicts, climate change, geopolitical shifts, which affect development financing and the anti-rights movement. The discussions underscored alarming statistics, including the fact that Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most dangerous region for pregnancy and childbirth. See presentation [HERE](#).

A primary focus of the event was to discuss how to leverage the Global Leaders' Network to practically promote policy and financial prioritization for women's, children's, and adolescents' health in a time where resources for health are dwindling, and to push for the fulfilment of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the face of mounting resistance. Participants highlighted the need for sustained investment in sexual, reproductive, maternal and child health, particularly through innovative financing mechanisms that can buffer against the unpredictable landscape of international development aid. Participants also noted the need to stimulate economic growth of African countries, advocate for the reduction of debt, and work towards efficiencies such as localized and pooled manufacturing and market shaping for WCAH commodities on the continent.

Strategic Policy Advancements and Multi-Sectoral Partnerships

The event emphasized the necessity of advancing universal health coverage (UHC), ensuring equitable access to sexual and reproductive health services, and promoting progressive law-making to safeguard the rights of women and girls. Attendees discussed opportunities to leverage regional and global initiatives such as the CARMMA Plus Initiative, Maputo Plan of Action, and the AU's Agenda 2063 to strengthen health governance.

With representatives from governments, development agencies, and regional bodies in attendance, the side event reinforced the spirit of multilateralism and solidarity. Participants called on Heads of States and Government that form the Global Leader's Network to act as Exemplars, demonstrating change in their own countries, including around SRHR, as they broker agreements with donor countries for more sustainable and predictable funding.

Driving Accountability and Action

As the discussions concluded, leaders called on the GLN leaders to ensure concrete action through:

- **Resource Mobilization:** Definitively addressing the funding crisis being faced by the health sector and ensuring that women, children and adolescents are not left behind in the solutions
- **Advocacy and Awareness:** Push for implementable policy shifts in line with regional and global commitments to WCAH, in particular SRHR.
- **Mutual Accountability:** Ensure policy turns into action and establishing measurable targets and tracking mechanisms to monitor progress.

Meeting participants also committed to align their efforts and resources to support the GLN.

A Call for Collective Action

The urgency of the health crisis affecting women, children, and adolescents requires decisive action in the interest of global health security. As H.E. President Cyril Ramaphosa, the founder of the GLN, emphasized: *"If we secure the health of every woman, child, and adolescent, we will fundamentally improve the well-being of all humanity."*

The meeting participants called for:

1. Sustained political will to secure women's, children's and adolescents' health;
2. A concrete programme of action that will be undertaken by GLN Heads of State and Government;
3. For more Heads of State and Government to join the Global Leaders Network and amplify the political position;
4. For smarter and more effective use of limited resources;
5. Leveraging emergency response infrastructure for women's, children's and adolescents' health;
6. All stakeholders to strengthen advocacy efforts; and
7. For Ministers of Finance to be drawn into the discussions on strengthening health financing.

With this call to action, the GLN will forge ahead with increased vigor and purpose to ensure that its work leaves a lasting legacy of health security for every child, woman and adolescent across the world.