

International Women's Day 2026: Investing in Women's Health Is Investing in Global Prosperity

8 March 2026 – This International Women's Day, observed under the theme “**Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls,**” the Global Leaders Network for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health (GLN) celebrates hard-won progress, and recognizes the urgent work ahead to ensure every woman, everywhere, can access the health services she needs and deserves.

The Challenge We Face

Preventable deaths and unmet health needs remain alarmingly high, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Each year, an estimated 260,000 women die from preventable pregnancy-related causes, with 70% occurring in Sub-Saharan Africa. Millions more lack access to family planning, resulting in unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and avoidable deaths.

These persistent inequities are unfolding at a time of shrinking domestic budgets and increasingly unpredictable external financing. Maternal, newborn, and child health programmes are under severe strain, just as climate shocks, conflict, and growing political resistance to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) threaten to reverse decades of hard-won gains. Without course-correction progress will stall, and in some cases, reverse.

Give to Gain: Investment That Multiplies

This year's IWD campaign message, “Give to Gain”, is both a call to action and a statement of fact: when we invest in women, opportunities and support multiply, strengthening entire societies.

The evidence to support this is clear. Every dollar invested in women's health generates measurable returns through improved productivity, reduced healthcare costs, and stronger economies. When women survive childbirth healthy, they participate in workforces, build businesses, and drive economic growth. When adolescents receive comprehensive health services and stay in school, they become the leaders and innovators who drive shared prosperity.

Leadership in Action

GLN member states are demonstrating that political commitment and investment in equitable healthcare for all delivers results. Denmark recently became the first European

Union country validated by the World Health Organization for eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis, evidence that universal health coverage and integrated maternal care can protect every pregnant woman and newborn.

Other countries in our Network; South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Tanzania – are pioneering innovative financing mechanisms, strengthening community health programmes, safeguarding sexual and reproductive health and rights, and mobilizing domestic resources to build sustainable health systems.

Our Commitment

This International Women's Day, we honour the resilience and leadership of women everywhere, and recognize the significant gains achieved. Yet the unfinished agenda remains urgent: preventable maternal deaths persist, unmet need for family planning remains high, neonatal mortality continues to claim lives, and inequities are widening. Achieving this demands renewed commitment, sustained collaboration, and rights-based policies that transform evidence into action. GLN stands with women and girls worldwide by continuing to:

- **Mobilize political leadership** to keep women's and children's health at the forefront of national and global agendas.
- **Advance evidence-based policy** ensuring SRHR is protected and integrated within universal health coverage reforms.
- **Promote equitable health financing** that shields women, children, and adolescents from financial hardship.
- **Champion women's rights and voices** in all health system decisions.

The future we seek is clear: a world where every woman survives pregnancy and childbirth; where every woman and adolescent girl can access comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services; and where every woman exercises autonomy over her body, her choices, and her future.

When women thrive, communities prosper. When communities prosper, nations flourish. Now is the time to *give* and *gain* a healthier and more prosperous world for all.