

President Ruto Launches National Drive to End Preventable Maternal and Newborn Deaths



Kenya has taken a major step towards ending preventable maternal and newborn deaths with the launch of the [Every Woman Every Newborn Everywhere \(EWENE\) Acceleration Plan 2026–2028](#), a nationally led initiative that combines high-level political leadership, domestic financing and strengthened accountability to accelerate progress for women and newborns.

Unveiled by H.E. President William Samoei Ruto, the plan sets out a clear roadmap to accelerate reduction in preventable maternal and newborn deaths while expanding access to quality reproductive, maternal and child health services through targeted investments, stronger health systems, and a focus on the counties carrying the highest burden of preventable deaths.

The launch comes at a pivotal moment. Kenya continues to face unacceptably high maternal and newborn mortality, with [15 mothers](#) losing their lives to pregnancy and childbirth-related complications and 92 newborns dying from preventable causes every single day. President Ruto spoke about the urgency of the challenge. *"No nation can truly call itself progressive when women continue to lose their lives while giving life. Every maternal death is a profound tragedy, especially because the overwhelming majority of these deaths are preventable."* He noted.

At the heart of the EWENE Acceleration Plan is a commitment to move rapidly from policy to results. [A six-month Maternal and Newborn Health Rapid Results Initiative](#), running through November 2026, with a target of achieving 15% reduction in preventable maternal and newborn deaths within 6 months. The initiative will focus national, county and facility-level

efforts on achieving measurable improvements in maternal and newborn outcomes, supported by clear accountability mechanisms and regular performance monitoring.

Importantly, the initiative is backed by substantial domestic investment. The Government of Kenya has committed an additional KSh4 billion through the Social Health Authority to expand maternal healthcare coverage, ensuring that no woman is denied care because she cannot afford it. Further investments include KSh1 billion for essential maternal and newborn health commodities through the Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (KEMSA), KSh2.5 billion for family planning supplies, and the recruitment and deployment of 5,000 nurses and midwives to strengthen frontline health services across the country.

These commitments reflect a growing recognition that sustainable progress in women's, children's and adolescents' health depends not only on technical solutions, but on political leadership and country-owned financing.



Cabinet Secretary for Health Hon. Aden Duale stressed the importance of leadership in driving change. *"When leadership at the highest level places focus on an issue, systems align, institutions respond, resources are mobilised, and implementation is accelerated. Today marks a shift from commitment to implementation."* He said.

The EWENE Acceleration Plan is aligned with Kenya's commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals and the global Every Woman Every Newborn Everywhere movement, which seeks to accelerate reductions in preventable maternal and newborn deaths through evidence-based interventions, quality care and stronger accountability.

Development partners welcomed the launch as a significant demonstration of national ownership. Speaking at the event, WHO Representative to Kenya Dr. Neema Rusibamayila

Kimambo highlighted the importance of translating access to services into improved outcomes for women and newborns and reaffirmed support from WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and other partners for implementation of the plan.

Civil society organisations also pledged continued support to ensure that commitments are translated into action. Dr. Margaret Lubaale, Executive Director of HENNET and Kenya's CAAP Coordinating Partner, described the launch as a defining moment that reaffirmed that maternal and newborn deaths are preventable and must no longer be accepted as inevitable. *"As CSOs, we are grateful to have contributed to this milestone and stand ready to support implementation. Together we will move EWENE plans beyond policy into coordinated action at national, county, facility, and community level through joint planning, accountability, and sustained investment."* she added.

For the Global Leaders Network, to which Kenya is a member, the country's EWENE Acceleration Plan demonstrates the kind of political leadership, domestic investment and accountability needed to accelerate progress for women, children and adolescents. At a time when many countries face growing fiscal pressures and health systems challenges, Kenya's decision to place maternal and newborn survival at the centre of its national agenda sends a powerful message: preventable deaths are not inevitable, and with leadership, investment and accountability, they can be ended.