



**World Health  
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **Africa**

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**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA**

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## **RESOLUTION**

### **ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE OF WOMEN'S HEALTH IN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON WOMEN'S HEALTH IN THE AFRICAN REGION (Document AFR/RC63/8)**

The Regional Committee,

Recognizing that women in Africa bear an unacceptably high burden of mortality, accounting for 44% of deaths among women worldwide, mainly due to communicable diseases, pregnancy and delivery related conditions and nutritional deficiencies;

Recalling Regional Committee Resolution AFR/RC58/R1 on Women's health in the WHO African Region and Resolution AFR/RC62/R6 reaffirming the right to health of vulnerable and marginalized populations;

Recalling Member States' commitment to the African Union Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) and to the UN Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health;

Cognizant of the fact that women in Africa represent a little more than half of the continent's population and women's health, in addition to being a basic human right, has major implications for socioeconomic development;

Appreciating the fact that women's empowerment is essential to the achievement of better health outcomes not only among women themselves but also among families and children in particular;

Noting with concern the inadequate investment in health in general and in women's health in particular and the fact that most African countries do not yet allocate 15% of their annual budget to health as stipulated in the Abuja Declaration;

Bearing in mind that women's health is a complex issue requiring multisectoral and multidisciplinary approaches across the lifespan;

1. EXPRESSES its profound gratitude to Her Excellency Mrs Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, for her personal involvement in, and leadership of, the Commission on Women's Health in the African Region;
2. ENDORSES the report of the Commission on Women's Health in the African Region entitled "*Addressing the Challenge of Women's Health in Africa*", which focuses on health conditions that are prevalent in women throughout the life course and recommends appropriate actions to achieve rapid and sustainable improvements in women's physical, mental and social well-being;
3. URGES Member States:
  - (a) to demonstrate strong political commitment by according greater priority to women's health in their political and development agendas, and ensure that these are supported by appropriate functional structures and adequate mobilization of resources;
  - (b) to foster national policies and legislation on major aspects of women's health in order to improve health systems' response to women's health needs and enhance sociocultural and economic support;
  - (c) to remove all restrictive policies and laws that limit women's access to financial resources, property and health care services and to overcome the negative impact of some traditional and cultural practices on women's health;
  - (d) to promote, at national and local levels, social education programmes that involve key stakeholders, including men and religious and traditional leaders to increase awareness of the negative health impact of discrimination against girls and women;
  - (e) to intensify high-impact interventions for reducing maternal mortality, including increasing access to family planning commodities, and medicines and equipment of vital importance to maternal, newborn and child health, eliminating violence against women, gender discrimination, sexual coercion, early marriage and harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation;
  - (f) to empower women through education and professional training of girls, and promote women's participation in social, economic and political affairs;
  - (g) to establish strong national mechanisms for multisectoral action on women's health, and adopt holistic, multidisciplinary and innovative approaches;
  - (h) to encourage, support and fund research institutions to conduct qualitative and quantitative research in order to provide accurate and disaggregated data for the identification of women's health problems and for supporting policy-making;
4. REQUESTS international, regional and subregional organizations and development partners:
  - (a) to support efforts by various organizations to harmonize and coordinate strategies on women's health and maximize synergy in addressing the health problems of women throughout their life course;
  - (b) to support governments in repositioning and refocusing women's health and monitor policies designed to implement regional and international commitments such as the UN Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health;

5. REQUESTS the Regional Director:

- (a) to disseminate the report widely to all stakeholders including Member States, civil society and development partners;
- (b) to enhance advocacy for multisectoral actions and resources for implementation of proven and effective interventions aimed at reducing morbidity and mortality among women;
- (c) to propose a regional mechanism to monitor progress towards the implementation of the Commission's recommendations;
- (d) to continue aligning the work of WHO and the African Union on actions to improve women's health;
- (e) to report yearly to the Regional Committee until 2015 on progress made, and thereafter, every two years.