



Statement of the *Religions for Peace* Executive Committee
on Ending Preventable Maternal and Newborn Deaths, and
Prioritising Women's Health and Well-being

7 April 2025 | World Health Day

As we commemorate [World Health Day](#), under the theme *Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures*, the Executive Committee of *Religions for Peace* International reaffirms its unwavering commitment to ending preventable maternal and newborn deaths, and to ensuring the long-term health, dignity, and well-being of women across the globe.

We are at a defining crossroads. With only one in five countries on track to meet global targets for maternal survival by 2030, we confront a profound moral and public health crisis. Nearly [300,000](#) women die each year from complications of pregnancy and childbirth, more than two million newborns do not survive their first month of life. These devastating and largely preventable losses represent the silenced voices of mothers and children, particularly from the world's most vulnerable and marginalised communities.

The health of mothers and children is a foundation for just, peaceful, and prosperous societies. As bearers of life and stewards of future generations, the well-being of women and children is inseparable from our collective vision of equity, sustainability, and shared human flourishing.

For centuries, religious and faith communities have been essential partners in delivering critical healthcare services, particularly in marginalised and underserved communities where formal health systems struggle to reach. Their deep-rooted trust, cultural insight, and local presence make faith actors indispensable allies in advancing maternal and newborn health. At *Religions for Peace*, we believe in the transformative power of faith when aligned with evidence-based health, policy, and people-centred approaches. We remain committed to strengthening partnerships that bridge faith, science, and service in pursuit of holistic, inclusive, and sustainable health outcomes.

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In this context, sustainable partnerships between religious leaders, faith-based organisations (FBOs) and global health actors are crucial. A powerful example is the formal partnership between *Religions for Peace* and the World Health Organisation (WHO), established through a historic [Memorandum of Understanding](#) signed in 2022 – the first of its kind between WHO and a global multi-religious leadership platform. This collaboration has since driven [global convenings](#) on national health emergency responses, [high-level dialogues](#) on faith engagement in public health, and [joint webinars](#) to strengthen vaccine confidence and uptake.

The participation of all countries in multilateralism for the achievement of the global health agenda is crucial. We encourage all countries to engage effectively within the WHO as the most effective and agreed multilateral agency advancing global health for all.

Equally transformative is *Religions for Peace's* longstanding partnership and collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) within the [Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families & Communities \(FPCC\) Initiative](#). Together, we have been working to advance faith-led advocacy towards the elimination of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. Having mobilised diverse religious leaders to successfully campaign against the repeal of the anti-FGM law in The Gambia, we remain unwavering in our efforts to equip and mobilise faith leaders for the protection of the rights and well-being of children, families, and communities.

These partnerships illustrate a growing global recognition: that partnerships between faith actors and global institutions are indispensable to achieving global health goals. As we move forward, we urge the international community to collaborate and invest in holistic faith-based approaches to maternal and child health, as a strategic, values-driven pathway to progress.

We also recognise that the challenges impacting maternal and newborn health are deeply interconnected with broader, social, economic, and cultural factors – including gender inequality, poverty, and systemic barriers to healthcare. Effective solutions must therefore be intersectional, inclusive, and rooted in local leadership. Faith-based approaches are uniquely suited to meet the distinct needs of women and children across cultures, regions, and faith traditions.

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On this World Health Day, we reaffirm our collective conviction: that the health and well-being of one is intrinsically linked to the flourishing of all. Ending preventable maternal and newborn deaths is not only a public health priority – it is a moral imperative.

Together, we commit to:

- Strengthening partnerships with faith actors, governmental, intergovernmental, and civil society organisations as well as close partners such as WHO and UNICEF to accelerate efforts in ending maternal and newborn deaths.
- Raising awareness of the pivotal role of faith leaders, actors, and communities in delivering healthcare services, and addressing harmful practices and disparities that threaten the life, rights, and well-being of women and children worldwide.
- Advocating for the inclusion of faith-based approaches in global health frameworks, ensuring solutions are people-centred, culturally sensitive, and sustainable.
- Equipping religious and faith communities to collaborate with diverse stakeholders and engage in evidence-based maternal and newborn health efforts.
- Sustaining and scaling FBO-led vital health services at the global and grassroots levels, with renewed focus on maternal and child health, especially in underserved and hard-to-reach areas.

As part of this commitment, we call upon:

- Religious and faith institutions and communities to raise awareness about the vital role of the holistic faith-based approaches in advancing maternal health and newborn survival. This includes:
- Showcasing evidence- and faith-based strategies that improve global health, ensuring that approaches are people-centred, spiritually and culturally sensitive, and sustainable;

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- Ensuring that religious and faith leaders actively promote maternal and newborn health services and education, integrating health awareness into religious teachings, community gatherings, and places of worship.
- *Religions for Peace Interreligious Councils (IRCs) to:*
- Partner with international organisations, governments, health institutions, and other stakeholders to equip religious leaders and leverage faith-based resources in reducing maternal and infant mortality.
- Develop and strengthen data collection efforts within faith-based maternal and newborn health programmes, addressing gaps in research on the impact of holistic faith-led interventions in improving maternal and newborn survival rates.
- Enhance capacities for faith leaders on maternal and newborn health, enabling them to support women and families in making informed healthcare decisions.
- All religious and faith leaders to:
- Leverage their moral authority to shape the global agenda on maternal and newborn health, ensuring that these issues are recognised as moral imperatives and priorities for humanity.
- Join global health awareness campaigns, using their platforms to advocate for policies, resources, and investments that prioritise maternal health and newborn survival.

On this World Health Day, *Religions for Peace* affirms its commitment to solidarity, compassion, and interfaith action in advancing maternal and newborn health, and prioritising women's long-term health and well-being. Together, as one global movement, we will continue to build a world grounded in shared human flourishing - knowing that a healthy beginning leads to a hopeful future.