

Global Leaders Network for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health (GLN)
High-Level Event on the occasion of the 81st session of the United Nations
General Assembly

**Financing for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health in a Time of
Austerity**

Date	Tuesday, 22 September 2026
Time	15.00 – 16:30 ET
Venue	United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 4, New York
Format	Public high-level panel, web-casted on UN TV
Co-hosts	Governments of Spain, South Africa, and Tanzania, with PMNCH and GLN

1. Background and Rationale

The Global Leaders Network for Women's, Children's and Adolescents Health (GLN) is convening a high-level meeting on the sidelines of the 81st United Nations General Assembly to sustain political momentum for women's, children's, and adolescents' health (WCAH) at a moment of unprecedented financing pressure.

Co-hosted by the Governments of South Africa, Spain and Tanzania, as well as the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), the meeting will bring together GLN member Heads of State and Government, and key strategic partners from governments, global health institutions, the health financing sector, multilateral institutions and civil society.

The meeting takes place against a backdrop of historic contraction in global health financing. Official development assistance fell by [23.1 percent in 2025, the largest decline on record, and is projected to decrease by a further 5.8 percent in 2026](#). These reductions have disproportionately affected low-income and fragile countries that remain heavily dependent on external assistance. Global health investment could decline by as [much as 40 percent](#), representing an estimated loss of USD 10 billion. At the same time, [more than 3.3 billion people live in countries that spend more on debt servicing than on health or education](#), limiting governments' ability to invest in essential services.

GLN members have expressed their desire to highlight the consequences for women, children, and adolescents health. Approximately [260,000 women die each year](#) from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth, almost all in low- and middle-income countries. Since 2015, the pace of reduction in child mortality has slowed by more than 60 per cent, [4.9 million children under five dying in 2024](#), largely from preventable causes. Over 1,1 million adolescents still die each year from entirely preventable causes, including complicated teen pregnancies.

The central challenge is no longer only mobilizing additional resources, but ensuring that existing resources are allocated, protected and used effectively to deliver measurable improvements in maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health outcomes. The financing crisis has exposed structural vulnerabilities

in health systems, underscoring the need for stronger domestic accountability, integrated planning, efficient public expenditure, and greater alignment between external partners and country-led priorities.

The cohosting countries have demonstrated their eminent leadership on issues of financing, particularly in pursuing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. Denmark has demonstrated what sustained political commitment can achieve, maintaining its 0.7 percent ODA-to-GNI target for 45 consecutive years while increasing dedicated investments in sexual and reproductive health and rights. South Africa, Chair of the GLN for WCAH and Tanzania, the African Union Champion for Maternal and Child Health and SRHR, continue to be exemplars of domestic resource mobilisation whilst advancing Global South leadership on health sovereignty and sustainable health financing. The Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), hosted by Spain in Sevilla, established a renewed framework for financing sustainable development. The [Compromiso de Sevilla](#) recognized a USD 4 trillion annual SDG financing gap and committed governments to advancing international financial architecture reform, debt relief, domestic resource mobilization, and the protection of development assistance flows.

Yet global commitments only matter when they translate into concrete national action. GLN governments are pursuing a range of innovative financing mechanisms - including health-earmarked taxation, tobacco and sugar levies, debt-for-health swaps, blended finance instruments, and pooled procurement through the African Pooled Procurement Mechanism - as complements to, and increasingly as substitutes for, declining ODA flows. This meeting will create space for the GLN membership to share new ventures and mobilise global solidarity behind national priorities

2. Objectives

The meeting has four objectives:

- **Accountability:** Review progress against commitments made by GLN member states and identify implementation bottlenecks affecting WCAH financing and service delivery.
- **Policy Action:** Generate concrete policy commitments to strengthen domestic resource mobilization, improve efficiency of health expenditure, expand fiscal space, and protect investments in WCAH.
- **Implementation:** Promote practical country-led solutions that demonstrate how financing reforms are translating into improved health outcomes and stronger health systems.
- **Partnership Alignment:** Secure commitments from multilateral institutions, donors and development partners to align financing and technical assistance behind nationally owned priorities and plans.

3. Proposed Agenda: Moderated by PMNCH Board Chair

15.00-15.04	<i>PMNCH Board Chair</i>	<i>Welcome and context: the state of WCAH financing in 2026 and why this moment demands political accountability.</i>
15.04-15.09	<i>Head of State, Tanzania</i>	<i>Opening Remarks: Country accountability in practice: Tanzania's domestic commitments on WCAH financing, and the AU Championship for SRMNCAH</i>
15.14-15.19	<i>Head of State, Spain</i>	<i>Opening Remarks: From Sevilla to action: what the Compromiso de Sevilla commits governments to do for WCAH financing, and the accountability mechanisms needed to ensure follow-through. Spain's call to GLN peers.</i>
15.19-15.24	<i>O.BO. Head of State, South Africa</i>	<i>South Africa's global diplomacy to mobilise capital for WCAH</i>
15.25-16.00	<i>GLN and Sovereign Partner Heads of State and Government</i>	<i>HOSG panel discussion to table policy positions, discuss South South Collaboration and announce commitments to financing and supporting SRMNCAH</i>
16.00-16.06	<i>Multilateral Development Banks (3 minutes each)</i> 1. <i>World Bank</i> 2. <i>Islamic Development Bank</i>	<i>Commitments to SRMNCAH</i>
16.06-16.20	<i>Partner Statements (2 mins each)</i> 1. <i>Midwife</i> 2. <i>WHO</i> 3. <i>UNICEF</i> 4. <i>UNFPA</i> 5. <i>African Union</i> 6. <i>The Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation</i> 7. <i>The Gates Foundation</i>	<i>Commitments to align with country led efforts</i>
16.20-16.25	<i>Minister of DIRCO, South Africa</i>	<i>GLN Communique Read-out</i>