Side event to the 81st UN General Assembly
UN Headquarters New York

OFFICIAL LAUNCH EVENT
OneSCD: A Global Partnership to Advance Equity and Transform Sickle Cell Care

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Hosted by: Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Co-hosted and co-organized by:
UNICEF, WHO, Africa CDC, World Coalition on Sickle Cell Disease, St Jude Children's Research Hospital
Date and time: Wednesday, 23 September 2026 from 3:30–5:00 pm
Venue: UN Headquarters, New York City, Conference Room 11
Modality: 130 participants in-person and livestreamed

BACKGROUND

Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) affects over seven million people globally with more than three quarters hereof living in sub-Saharan Africa where up to 90% of untreated affected children die before age five. In high-income countries survival into adulthood exceeds 95%, underscoring a staggering and avoidable global health equity gap. Cost-effective interventions exist, yet fewer than 10% of children in some high-burden countries receive essential diagnosis or treatment due to low awareness about SCD and insufficient health system capacity to deliver comprehensive care. Since the adoption of World Health Assembly Resolution 59.20 in 2006, the United Nations General Assembly resolution on SCD in 2008, and the WHO Regional Office for Africa (WHO AFRO) guidance documents in 2010, several global, regional, and national efforts have emerged to strengthen SCD prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and care. More recently, these efforts have been significantly reinforced through a series of landmark regional and global policy frameworks. Regional milestones include the adoption of the WHO AFRO PEN-Plus strategy in 2022, the release of the WHO AFRO SICKLE Package of Interventions in 2024, and the launch of the Africa CDC Continental Plan for Sickle Cell Disease and Rare Blood Disorders in 2026. These regional actions are now anchored in global normative standards, specifically the 2025 WHO recommendations on managing sickle cell disease during pregnancy, childbirth, and the interpregnancy period, the consolidated WHO guidelines for childhood and adolescent sickle cell disease management, and a monumental 2026 framework: the WHO technical guidance on strengthening capacity for newborn screening, diagnosis and management of birth defects. Together with the sustained contributions of civil society and non-governmental partners, these initiatives represent a historic opportunity for alignment to standardize early SCD detection and scale up comprehensive care.

However, despite this progress, many SCD initiatives continue to operate independently while having complementary mandates and shared objectives. At present, no global coordination mechanism exists to connect these efforts, translate political commitments into collective action, and mobilize the resources required to support countries implementing sustainable, coherent, and high-impact national SCD responses.

CONTEXT

OneSCD: A Global Partnership to Advance Equity and Transform Sickle Cell Care ('OneSCD') has been

established as a multistakeholder and multisectoral partnership platform for countries, UN agencies, regional health agencies, academia, foundations and funding entities, civil society, private sector, and people with lived experience worldwide. Envisioned as a unified global coordination mechanism, OneSCD seeks to connect existing efforts and drive collective action to support country-led implementation. By converging messages, strategies and actions, the Partnership intends to promote knowledge-sharing, foster mutual accountability among stakeholders, mobilize resources, and scale up equitable, comprehensive SCD care throughout the life course. Ultimately, expanding early diagnosis through newborn screening and providing sustainable comprehensive treatment and care will accelerate progress toward the SDG targets for under 5-year survival and for reduced premature mortality from NCDs, and advance the global rare disease agenda.

The foundational work of OneSCD was catalysed through a high-level roundtable and consultation held in Geneva during the 79th World Health Assembly, co-hosted by the WHO, UNICEF,
St Jude Children's Research Hospital, and the World Coalition on Sickle Cell Disease, which brought together country representatives and key stakeholders. The consultation reaffirmed a global consensus on the need for a country-focused, globally coordinated response to SCD, and underscored the commitment of participating member states and partners to advance a shared vision through the partnership.

To operationalize this vision, the Partnership will pursue three overall objectives:

1) Convene and facilitate political agreements and build consensus toward the formal adoption of standardized global targets for SCD

2) Support governments in translating their political commitment into measurable action by elevating SCD as a priority across global, regional and national health agendas, ensuring its integration into primary health care, Universal Health Coverage, NCD response frameworks, and Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (MNCAH) strategies

3) Advocate for the inclusion of SCD into existing international financing mechanisms, while actively mobilizing resources and fostering strategic partnerships needed to support the scale up of country-led SCD response implementation

By achieving these objectives the OneSCD Partnership aims to empower countries strengthen their health systems by integrating SCD into national health plans and institutionalizing sustainable systems for diagnostics, access to essential medicines, safe blood supplies, robust health information systems and patient registries, sustainable financing models, and a well-trained health workforce.

EVENT OBJECTIVES

OneSCD will be officially launched during the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA81) at United Nations Headquarters in New York. This high-level launch event will provide a global platform to mark a significant milestone in advancing the global response to SCD. The event will reaffirm political commitments from member states and seek to:

1) Highlight the urgent need for global alignment and multistakeholder action to close equity gaps in SCD care, treatment, and survival

2) Present the OneSCD vision, scope, and strategic objectives and highlight successful regional and country-level implementation examples, as represented by the Partnership champion countries and by regional agencies, with a focus on scalable interventions and required resources

3) Present the OneSCD collaborative engagement approach through its founding partners and champion governments, and outline the areas of work to be prioritized in its first phase

4) Formally launch OneSCD as the global coordination mechanism for sustainable financing, comprehensive SCD care, and mutual accountability

PARTICIPATION AND AGENDA

The OneSCD official launch event will be held in person, by invitation only, with advance registration required. Hosted by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the event will be led by government representatives and leaders of the co-host organizations. The launch event will aim to have a high-level segment with the presence of Heads of States and Governments committed to the Partnership, and Heads of Agencies, followed by a panel discussion with the presence of leaders and experts to profile country cases and other initiatives demonstrating successful SCD prioritization and scale-up projection perspectives combined with insights from people with lived SCD experience. The event will culminate with the formal OneSCD launch announcement, endorsing a united commitment to the global SCD response. The event will be livestreamed.