

Public Statement from the Health NGOs Network (HENNET)

Date: 17th May 2025

The Health NGOs Network (HENNET) expresses deep concern over recent allegations voiced on social media and some media outlets of medical negligence at a city hospital, involving the tragic loss of a baby due to alleged mismanagement and negligence during childbirth. The reported incident highlights a serious matter that requires urgent attention and a thorough, impartial investigation.

Obstetric violence is defined as a form of mistreatment and abuse that women may experience during childbirth in health facilities and is a recognized human rights issue and concern. It not only violates a woman's right to respectful and dignified care, but can also endanger her life, the life of the baby, the mother and baby pair health, and well-being. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations have clearly emphasized the need to address obstetric violence as part of ensuring quality maternal health care.

Incidents like this are not isolated. Evidence across Africa shows concerning rates of obstetric violence, including 20% in Kenya, up to 98% in Nigeria, and similarly high figures across the region. These statistics underscore the urgency of tackling this issue systemically and sustainably.

As a network committed to advancing health and human dignity, HENNET urges the following actions on the Nairobi case:

1. **Immediate engagement with the affected mother grieving loss** to understand the full context of the incident.
2. **Provision of psychosocial support** to the affected individual and her family.
3. **A timely and independent investigation** into the allegations, with appropriate action taken based on the findings.
4. **Implementation of measures to prevent future occurrences** of obstetric violence, including improved monitoring and accountability within health facilities.
5. **Strengthening of confidential and accessible reporting mechanisms**, enabling patients and families to report mistreatment without fear of reprisal.
6. **A public response from the Ministry of Health** to clarify steps being taken and reaffirm commitment to respectful maternity care.

We reaffirm that every woman has the right to safe, respectful, and dignified care during childbirth. Obstetric violence must be acknowledged and addressed through coordinated efforts that involve health professionals, civil society, training institutions, and policy makers.

In addition, HENNET endorses the global actions recommended by the World Health Organization and other international frameworks to eliminate obstetric violence. These include:

About HENNET

Health NGOs' Network (HENNET) is a National Membership Organization comprising over 120 members spread across the 47 Counties of Kenya. HenNet seeks to promote civil society's roles and engagements to transform Kenya's health sector in order to enhance their responses towards the health needs of Kenyans with a vision of "a healthy Kenyan Society".

- **Government and development partner support** for sustained research and action to address disrespect and abuse during childbirth.
- **Design and implementation of maternal health programs** that emphasize respectful, patient-centered care as a core component of quality.
- **Recognition and enforcement of women's rights** to dignified and respectful healthcare throughout pregnancy and childbirth, grounded in international human rights principles.
- **Development of systems of accountability**, including data collection, professional oversight, and ethical enforcement for violations.
- **Inclusive stakeholder engagement**, involving women, communities, healthcare providers, training institutions, professional associations, and policymakers in designing and monitoring solutions.

Kenya has committed to ending preventable maternal, newborn, and child deaths including stillbirths through the **Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030)** and **Resolution 77.5** adopted at the 77th World Health Assembly (2024). These commitments affirm *that* Every Woman, Every Newborn, Everywhere (EWENE) deserves safe, respectful, and skilled care during delivery. However, stillbirth rates in Kenya have worsened from 13 to 15 per 1,000 live births between 2014 and 2022. Behind each statistic is a grieving mother, enduring labor, hormonal changes, and lactation without the comfort of a living child. Stillbirth is not just a loss; it is the death of dreams and the silent heartbreak of families.

Ending obstetric violence is not only a medical imperative it is a moral, social, and human rights obligation. Enacting the MNCH Bill would ensure that the correct legal procedures are followed in such cases, providing clarity, accountability, and support for affected families. HENNET remains committed to working collaboratively with the Ministry of Health, civil society, development partners, and all stakeholders to ensure safe, respectful, and dignified childbirth experiences for every woman in Kenya.

Sincerely,



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