

EWENE POLICY BRIEF



CONTEXT AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

In Kenya, an estimated 15 mothers and 92 newborns die from preventable causes, while 93 stillbirths are recorded every day. Maternal deaths are primarily caused by postpartum haemorrhage (bleeding), hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, sepsis, obstructed labour, and complications of unsafe abortion. Newborn deaths are mainly due to prematurity, birth asphyxia, neonatal sepsis, and complications occurring during labour and delivery.

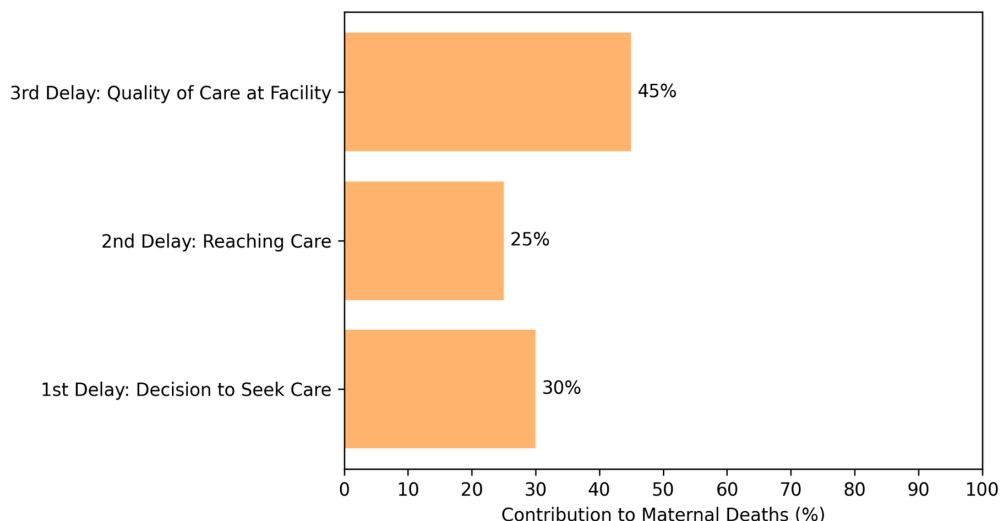
DAILY DEATHS

15 WOMEN
92 NEWBORNS
93 STILLBIRTHS

Drivers for Maternal and Newborn Mortality in Kenya

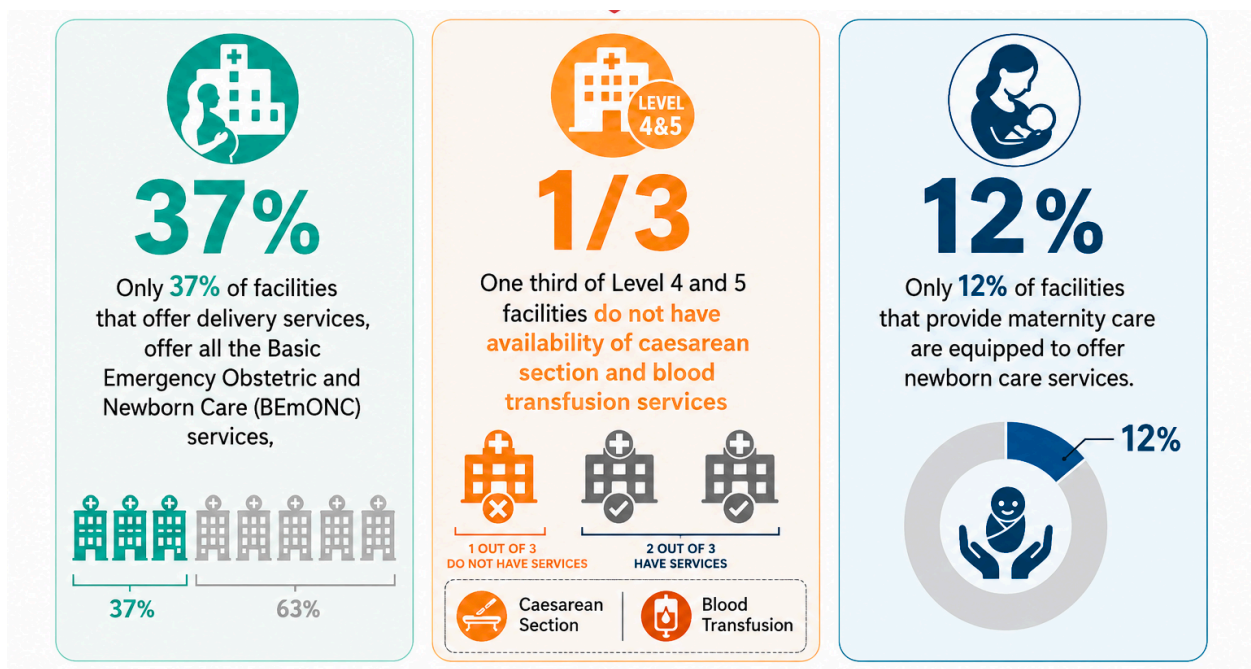
Maternal and newborn deaths in Kenya are driven by three critical delays, 1. delays in deciding to seek care, 2. delays in reaching appropriate care, and 3. delays in receiving timely and quality care within health facilities. In Kenya, the third delay contributes to 45% of maternal deaths, making it the leading cause of preventable maternal and newborn deaths.

Three delays contributing to maternal and newborn mortality:



Source: MPDSR Report 2024

The Kenya Quality of Care Health Facility Assessment 2024 highlighted significant gaps in maternal and newborn health service readiness and quality showed that:



All this compounded by persistent system-level constraints which include inadequate infrastructure with underserved and remote counties most affected, stock-outs of lifesaving commodities, blood, suboptimal oxygen availability, limited lab and radiology diagnostics, shortages and uneven distribution of skilled health workers, weak referral pathways, fragmented program implementation and pilots that do not scale

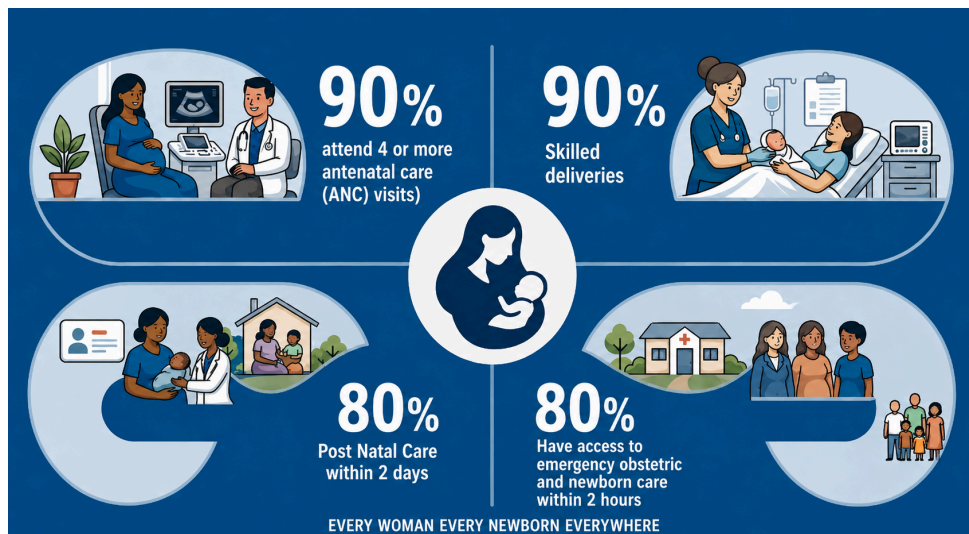
Kenya’s Response: The EWENE Acceleration Plan 2026–2028

In response to the persistent burden of preventable maternal and newborn deaths, Kenya has developed the Every Woman Every Newborn Everywhere (EWENE) Acceleration Plan 2026–2028, which is aligned to the global EWENE initiative. The National EWENE Acceleration Plan provides a coordinated national platform aimed at rapidly reducing preventable maternal and newborn mortality and stillbirths through strengthened facility readiness, improved health workforce capacity, resilient supply systems, stronger referral pathways and enhanced accountability at national and county levels to provide timely, respectful, and high-quality maternal and newborn care.



Expected Outcomes

The National EWENE Acceleration Plan aims to achieve the EWENE 90–90–80–80 targets which are:



Maternal and Newborn Health Rapid Result Initiative (RRI)

The RRI kickstarts the implementation of EWENE acceleration plan and campaign through rapid scale-up of high impact maternal and newborn health interventions in the whole country with intense focus in high burden counties to drive early reductions in preventable deaths and deliver measurable results. The RRI will run for a period of six months from 28 May 2026 to 28 Nov 2026 during which County level MNH progress will be tracked on a weekly basis.

Policy Recommendations

	<p>Increase and Protect Domestic Financing for Maternal and Newborn Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National and county governments need to ring-fence domestic financing for maternal and newborn health commodities and services, including Facility Improvement Funds (FIF) to address service delivery gaps without replacing core county government health financing responsibilities.
	<p>Ensure Uninterrupted Availability of Lifesaving Maternal and Newborn Commodities and Technologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise procurement and ensure zero stock-outs of lifesaving maternal and newborn commodities and technologies. These include oxytocin, heat-stable carbetocin, magnesium sulphate, antenatal corticosteroids, postpartum hemorrhage drapes, antibiotics, foetal monitors, patient monitors, caffeine citrate, incubators, phototherapy machines and CPAP machines.
	<p>Strengthen Emergency Maternal and Newborn Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counties should prioritise improving theatre capacity for caesarean section, blood availability, laboratory and diagnostics, and newborn units in all county referral and high-volume maternity facilities.
	<p>Invest in Adequate and skilled Health Workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National and county governments should recruit, equitably deploy, and retain nurses, midwives, nutritionists, medical doctors and specialists, while strengthening hub-and-spoke models where specialists support lower-level facilities through mentorship and outreach.
	<p>Build Clinical Competence at Scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each county is encouraged to establish at least one functional maternal and newborn skills training hub within a high volume facility to support both medical students and healthcare workers receive simulation and skills based training and follow-up mentorship to support diagnostic and treatment accuracy.
	<p>Improve Referral and Emergency Transport Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counties should strengthen referral coordination, emergency transport systems, ambulance services, and communication systems to reduce delays in accessing lifesaving maternal and newborn care.
	<p>Strengthen Community Empowerment for Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> County governments are to actively involve women, families, and community leaders to promote healthy behaviors, timely care seeking, holistic nutrition, and use of maternal and newborn services including vaccinations.
	<p>Roll out coordinated EWENE campaign</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Champion the EWENE awareness campaigns through mass media, digital platforms and innovations like Rika PROMPTS SMS, to reach at least 5 million households by 2028, focusing on high-burden communities.
	<p>Improve Accountability and Data Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR) coordination with the aim of promoting accountability through routine maternal and newborn audits, improved data use, and improvement of systems such as the MPDSR dashboard