

The President's Foreword



H.E. Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

In my capacity as the Honorary President, I had the singular pleasing duty and honour of launching the Women's Health Commission on April 14th 2010 in Monrovia, Liberia.

In the context of Africa, paramount among the major roles and responsibilities of women is usually the lead role played by them in the development of health and welfare for their families, leading to the overall health and socioeconomic development of nations as well as families. Women face many challenges including a heavy burden of ill health which results in high morbidity and mortality rates among them; they are also subjected to many societal injustices and harmful sociocultural practices which further impact on their health and development.

The launching ceremony provided an opportunity for Africa and the rest of the world to reflect on the health of women, a reminder that the health of women in the Region is deplorable because every minute a woman dies in labour or suffers lifetime complications from pregnancy and delivery.

I am hereby calling on all governments to reinforce their commitments and dedication to accelerating the reduction of maternal and newborn mortality as a fundamental right to life and development. We must also remember to actively involve women in all decisions related to their health and well-being.

I have the utmost pleasure to introduce to everyone this Report of the Women's Health Commission in the African Region, *Addressing the Challenge of Women's Health in Africa*. The Report highlights the dire situation African women face throughout their lifetimes and gives recommendations for advancing the health of women in the Region.

It would be most inappropriate were I to conclude without leaving you with these words: "a nation thrives when mothers survive; we must strive to keep them alive". Though the task ahead may appear daunting, I encourage Africa to ensure that "*No Woman Dies While Giving Life*". Let us all work assiduously together to reduce ill health, improve lifestyles and reduce deaths in the African Region.

H.E. Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

President of the Republic of Liberia