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Plan to reduce newborn deaths ignores effect of prior abortions

New effort approved at World Health Assembly in Geneva

GENEVA, Switzerland — The World Health Assembly (WHA) last weekend adopted a plan to improve the health of newborn babies worldwide. “Every newborn: An action plan to end preventable deaths” aims to reduce high rates of neonatal mortality in large parts of the world.

Each year, the action plan explains, an estimated 2.9 million children die within the first month after birth, and 2.6 million babies are stillborn. Neonatal mortality has declined at a slower pace than both under-five mortality and maternal mortality.

“Improving the quality of health care during labor, childbirth and the days following birth will substantially reduce newborn deaths in addition to improving maternal health,” commented Scott Fischbach, executive director of Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Global Outreach (MCCL GO), from Geneva. “Proven measures that have saved the lives of newborns should be extended to countries and areas suffering from high neonatal mortality.”

Prenatal care and nutrition are also crucial to the survival and health of newborns. Malnutrition during pregnancy can prevent healthy growth and lead to low birthweight and fetal growth restriction, increasing the risk of neonatal death and disability.

“It is wise to situate the issue of newborn mortality in the context of a continuum of care, covering healthy reproduction, maternal care, and infant and child care,” Fischbach said. A new brochure produced by MCCL GO, [released last week](#) at the WHA, highlights the importance of the first 1,000 days in the life of a human being—from conception to the second birthday. This window of time is critical to the health and flourishing of mothers, babies and society as a whole.

MCCL GO participated in the [online consultation](#) on a draft version of the “Every newborn” plan. Fischbach [noted](#) that while preterm birth is the leading cause of newborn mortality (and second leading cause of under-five deaths), the action plan fails to mention a significant risk factor for premature delivery. A wealth of [worldwide research](#) has shown that induced abortion substantially increases the risk of preterm birth in subsequent pregnancies.

“The prevalence of abortion significantly contributes to the problem of neonatal mortality,” Fischbach observed. “The plan to end newborn deaths should have taken into consideration all of the known risk factors.”

MCCL GO’s brochure “1 to 1,000” is available in English, French and Spanish in the Resources section at the MCCL GO website, www.mccl-go.org.

MCCL GO is a pro-life NGO global outreach program of the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Education Fund with one goal: to save as many innocent lives as possible from the destruction of abortion. Learn more at www.mccl-go.org. Please subscribe to our [RSS Feed](#).