



Honoring every newborn

By Carolyn Miles and Rep. Frederica Wilson (D-Fla.)

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By the time you finish reading this, approximately five newborns around the world will have died. That's five mothers and fathers who are now mourning the loss of a child, and five families whose lives have been irrevocably upended.

As an increasing proportion of child deaths, newborns now account for 44 percent of under-five child deaths globally. Yet, it's not that we know how to save a 4-year-old and not a 4-day-old.

We do.

In fact, there are existing interventions that, if scaled up, have the potential to reduce newborn deaths by as much as 75 percent. What's lacking is the political will and funding to deliver these solutions to all the mothers and babies who need them.

That's why Save the Children has declared 2014 the "year of the newborn." With today's launch of the Ending Newborn Deaths report, we hope to build steady momentum leading up to the World Health

Assembly in May, where the Every Newborn Action Plan—a roadmap for ending newborn deaths from preventable causes—will be presented to world leaders.

We know that without greater investment and support for newborn programs, we will never be able to reach the fourth Millennium Development Goal (MDG 4) of reducing by two-thirds the under-five mortality rate by 2015. Unfortunately, time is not on our side. With a little less than two years to go before world leaders meet in New York to discuss the post-MDG framework, it is imperative that we tackle, in earnest, the scandalously high number of newborns deaths.

We have seen the progress that can be made when political action is taken. Ethiopia, for example, has made great strides in reducing child mortality, recently achieving its MDG 4 targets. Newborn mortality has also decreased from 54 to 29 between 1990 and 2012, leading to health and nutrition improvements, particularly in

rural areas. For a country that had one of the worst child mortality rates in the world just two decades ago, this gives us hope that success elsewhere is possible.

In 2012, the U.S. joined 173 other nations and pledged to end preventable child deaths. We will never reach this goal without focusing more intently on the newborn.

To that end, we are calling not just on our government, but on all world leaders to reaffirm their commitment to ending newborn deaths once and for all.

Together, we can ensure that the five babies who are no longer with us have not died in vain.

Miles is president and CEO of Save the Children. Wilson has represented Florida's 24th Congressional District since 2011. She sits on the Education and the Workforce and the Science, Space and Technology commissions.

