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World Breastfeeding Week 2014

World Breastfeeding Week commemorates the Innocenti Declaration signed in August 1990 by government policymakers, WHO, UNICEF and other organisations to protect, promote and support breast feeding.

This year the event focused on the link between the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and breast feeding. During 1–7 August this year, breast feeding advocates in over 175 countries worldwide celebrated the theme 'BREASTFEEDING: A Winning Goal – for Life!' highlighting that achieving the Millennium Development Goals (especially MDGs 4 and 5) requires more early, exclusive and continued breast feeding. Breast feeding needs to be protected, promoted and supported by ALL, wrote the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action in their press release.

A statement from WHO's South-East Asia Region (SEARO) asserted 'Promoting optimal breast feeding represents a key step to help us achieve the Millennium Development Goals of reducing childhood mortality and improving maternal health. In the Member States of SEARO, an estimated 51% of newborns are exclusively breastfed, with some countries' rates as high as 85% but others struggling behind with only 15%. These numbers tell us that while we have made progress, there is still much room for improvement'.

The SEARO statement included a feature from the Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital in Delhi, India, which has been certified as a Baby-Friendly Hospital since 1993, and has developed an Infant & Young Child Feeding Counselling Centre, designed to support mothers who are having difficulty breast feeding or simply need more information. For pregnant women, they offer antenatal training to promote the benefits of breast feeding early on and endorse exclusive breast feeding within an hour of birth.

The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) promotes breast feeding, through its member associations, with its

position statements, and via education and professional development measures.

ICM ensures that, within any document relating to the provision of care to women and their newborns, there will be an element relating to the role of midwives in protecting, supporting and promoting breast feeding.

ICM urges its 116 member associations in 102 countries to

- work with national and international organisations to promote and support breast feeding,
- ensure midwifery education programmes contain adequate provisions for students to gain competency in supporting breast feeding women,
- encourage their midwife members to accept their unique and vital role in the promotion of breast feeding at all levels of the communities within which they live,
- proactively seek government legislation that promotes breast feeding.

World Breastfeeding Week is a time to engage in conversations all over the world about the importance of breast feeding. Many countries have organised events and conversation is also taking place on Social Media with #WBW2014.

The ICM position statement on breast feeding confirms that it is: '... an unequalled way of providing ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants. It is also an integral part of the reproductive process with important implications for the health of mothers. Breast milk provides all the energy and nutrients that the infant needs for the first months of life. Exclusive breast feeding for six months followed by breast feeding and supplementary food thereafter is the optimal way of feeding infants. To enable mothers to establish and sustain exclusive breast feeding, important actions are initiation of breast feeding within the first hour of life and support of breast feeding on demand.

'Breast milk promotes sensory and cognitive development, protects the infant

against infectious and chronic diseases, [and] contributes to the health and well being of mothers, by helping to space births and reducing the risk of ovarian and breast cancer. It is a secure way of feeding and is safe for the environment'.

ICM supports the recommendation of the World Health Organization for exclusive breast feeding for six months. Further, the Confederation supports the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular Article 24 in its aspirations for the health of children.

<http://www.internationalmidwives.org/news/?nid=167>
<http://www.worldbreastfeedingweek.org/>

Millennium Development Goals Report 2014

Launched in July 2014, in New York, the latest interim report on the MDGs from the UN Secretary-General stated that:

'Millions of people's lives have improved due to concerted global, regional, national and local efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which serve as the foundation for the next global development agenda, according to the report launched by the Secretary-General on 7 July 2014'.

With many MDG targets already met on reducing poverty, increasing access to improved drinking water sources, improving the lives of slum dwellers and achieving gender parity in primary school, the report says many more targets are within reach by their 2015 target date. If trends continue, the world will surpass MDG targets on malaria, tuberculosis and access to HIV treatment, and the hunger target looks within reach. Other targets, such as access to technologies, reduction of average tariffs, debt relief, and growing political participation by women, show great progress.

The report is based on comprehensive official statistics and provides the most up-to-date summary of all Goals and their targets at global and regional levels, with

additional national statistics available online. Results show that concentrated efforts to achieve MDG targets by national governments, the international community, civil society and the private sector are working to lift people out of extreme poverty and improve their futures.

'The Millennium Development Goals were a pledge to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity, and free the world from extreme poverty,' Mr. Ban said. 'The MDGs, with eight goals and a set of measurable time-bound targets, established a blueprint for tackling the most pressing development challenges of our time.'

According to the report, big MDG gains continue. Over the past 20 years, the likelihood of a child dying before age five has been nearly cut in half, which means about 17,000 children are saved every day. Globally, the maternal mortality ratio dropped by 45% between 1990 and 2013. Antiretroviral therapy for HIV-infected people has saved 6.6 million lives since 1995, and expanding its coverage could save many more.

With the targets for the MDGs set to conclude at the end of 2015, UN Member States are in the midst of considering a broader set of goals to follow that are likely to be agreed to by world leaders in September 2015. The report says continued progress towards the MDGs in the remaining year is essential for what comes next. 'Member States are now fully engaged in discussions to define Sustainable Development Goals, which will serve as the core of a universal post-2015 development agenda,' Mr. Ban said. 'Our efforts to achieve the MDGs are a critical building block towards establishing a stable foundation for our development efforts beyond 2015.'

However, some MDG targets related to largely preventable problems with available solutions, such as reducing child and maternal mortality and increasing access to sanitation, are slipping away from achievement by 2015, despite major progress. The report calls on all stakeholders to focus and intensify efforts on the areas where advances have been too slow or have not reached all.

Accelerated action using known solutions needed to help women and children

Worldwide, almost 300,000 women died in 2013 from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. Maternal death is mostly preventable, however. Most pregnant women in developing regions see a skilled health provider at least once, but only half get the recommended four antenatal check-ups.

Preventable conditions, such as diarrhoea and pneumonia, are the main killers for children under age five. In 2012, an estimated 25% of children under age five were stunted – having inadequate height for their age. While this is a significant decline from 40% in 1990, 162 million young children still suffer from preventable chronic under-nutrition.

Better data would help deliver better results

Despite considerable advancements in recent years, the report says reliable statistics for monitoring development remain inadequate in many countries, but better statistical reporting on the MDGs has led to real results. For example, the number of Member States submitting progress reports on HIV/AIDS increased from 102 in 2004 to 186 in 2012. This helped galvanise global efforts. Funding for HIV programmes more than tripled compared to 2004, and 9.5 million people living with HIV were accessing antiretroviral treatment in 2012. The Millennium Development Goals Report, an annual assessment of global and regional progress towards the Goals, reflects the most comprehensive, up-to-date data compiled by over 28 UN and international agencies and is produced by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

A complete set of the data used to prepare the report is available at mdgs.un.org

<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/publications/mdg-report-2014.html>

ICM reports on Twinning Workshop

Participants in a new Twinning project are: The Zambian Midwives Association with the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) and the Zimbabwe Confederation of Midwives and the Botswana Midwives. A selected group of members travelled to the town of Siavonga in Zambia to participate in the initiation workshop, facilitated by ICM.

Twining is defined as a two-way mutually beneficial exchange between two Midwives Associations. It is a formal and substantive collaboration between two organisations. The overall aim is to promote sharing of ideas, skills and learning from each other through exchange of information, and technology transfer. The Twinning approach provides opportunities for peer support and peer mentoring. More information can be found in the newly developed Twinning Manual.

It was important that the workshop provided a good basis to forming a mutually beneficial relationship. Among first steps, the

participants shared their expectations and fears in regards to the Twinning project. Among the fears were: to disappoint the other association, misunderstanding due to cultural differences, challenges in communication in regards to technical difficulties. Expectations were: to learn successfully from other midwives' associations and therefore strengthen the own organisation.

The next part of the workshop was dedicated to voicing perceptions of each other. The Zambians shared that they were surprised to see Americans in baseball caps and shorts during formal meetings. The Americans on the other hand had trouble understanding the working style of the Zambians as they were hard to locate and the task sharing was not obvious to them. The participants from Botswana perceive the Zimbabweans as very creative in regards to creating problems and persistent in solving them. Zimbabweans find people from Botswana have a unique way of expressing themselves.

The participants presented on their own associations. Some of them were established 60 years ago, some only recently became an organisation of their own. Lots could be learned from the struggles each association has had to come to the point where they are now.

The second day started with an exercise where participants had to draw several items such as a dog, a policeman and a midwife. This activity helped participants to understand how diverse the profession of the midwife is, which also means that midwives associations are diverse with different structures, visions, missions and challenges. The participants then proceeded to map out their organisations' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and discussed the results afterwards.

<http://www.internationalmidwives.org/news/?nid=169>

No woman, no adolescent, no child left behind: the PMNCH Johannesburg pledge

Dr Carole Presern, Executive Director of the Partnership for Maternity, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), wrote in a recent blog:

'Last week, about 1200 of us from 60 or more countries gathered for the Partners' Forum, hosted by the Government of South Africa, PMNCH, Countdown to 2015, A Promise Renewed and the independent Expert Review Group.

This was the first time in nearly four years that the seven PMNCH constituency groups have met together, since our last Partners' Forum in New Delhi in 2010. Then, we were 400 members and the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health

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