



International News - June 2015

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International Day of the Midwife

This year the International Day of the Midwife (IDM), celebrated on 5 May, was more important than ever before: as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) come to an end in September, this was the last chance to shine a spotlight on midwifery before the world enters a new era.

The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) called on all midwives in the world and its Member Associations to come together this year on IDM to highlight the importance of having midwives involved in the development of the new era. This is why the theme 'Midwives: for a better tomorrow' was chosen.

This slogan clearly states that midwives have to be involved in the work to achieve the new set of goals – the Sustainable Development Goals – and create a brighter future for mothers, babies, and families. The overarching theme 'The World Needs Midwives Now More Than Ever' will accompany the subtheme of the year 2015.

On the day, midwives worldwide also took part in the 'Virtual International Day of the Midwife', a 24-hour online conference on 5 May 2015.

A new resource pack had been provided to all Midwives Associations to help plan their own IDM event, downloadable from the website and distributed to all ICM Member Associations.

The pack contained ideas, tools and information: to support MAs' memorable events, provide a set of messages and images for use, plus suggestions of how to leverage the media and highlight local activities.

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An ICM/ White Ribbon Alliance project 'Dreams for Birth' was also announced. This will enable midwives from all over the world to express their hopes and aspirations for how childbirth should and can be, via short statements and selfies. A weblink for more detail and how to contribute is at <http://www.internationalmidwives.org/news/?nid=252>

Finally, on the International Day of the Midwife, ICM joined forces with the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of Sweden in Uganda and the Swedish Association of Midwives to honour a very special midwife for her excellence in midwifery and her leadership in saving lives in Uganda. The award goes to Rose Aciro for her hard work and relentless determination that have helped to reduce maternal and infant mortality at Lira Hospital in Uganda.

Rose is an experienced midwife and has been working at Lira Regional Referral Hospital since receiving her diploma in midwifery in 2010, and more recently a diploma in health administration. Rose is an inspiring role model for lifelong learning and her story showcases the enormous benefits of investing in midwifery. Rose is passionate about sharing her knowledge and experience with a new generation of midwives for the benefit of mothers, children and families in Lira and beyond. The award recognises her outstanding contribution to the community that she serves.

<http://www.internationalmidwives>

Targets and strategies for ending preventable maternal mortality: a consensus

United Nations agencies, donors, country stakeholders and other development partners met in Bangkok, Thailand in April 2014 for a 'Consultation on targets and strategies for ending preventable maternal mortality (EPMM)'.

The aims were to forge consensus on maternal mortality reduction targets for inclusion in the post-2015 development agenda, as well as to identify maternal health strategies that will assist countries to achieve those targets.

The discussions were the culmination of earlier technical consultations that employed specific analytical methods to define feasible maternal mortality targets.

The World Health Organization's Human Reproduction Programme (HRP) had published earlier this year its 'Strategies toward ending preventable maternal mortality'.

This document asserted 'Ending preventable maternal mortality (EPMM) remains an unfinished agenda and one of the world's most critical challenges. Maternal health, well-being and survival must remain a central goal and investment priority in the post-2015 framework for sustainable development.

'A grand convergence' is within reach, where through concerted efforts we can reduce the highest levels of maternal deaths worldwide to rates now observed in the best-performing middle-income countries.

'EPMM targets and strategies are grounded in a human rights approach to maternal and newborn health, and focus on eliminating significant inequities that lead to disparities in access and quality as well as outcomes of care within and between countries.

'Attention to maternal mortality must be accompanied by improvements along the continuum of care, including commitments to sexual and reproductive health, family planning, and newborn and child survival. High-functioning maternal health programmes must address the changing environment described in the 'obstetric transition', in which the primary causes of maternal death shift toward indirect causes as fertility and maternal mortality ratios decline. Essential to understanding the immediate and underlying causes of maternal deaths and developing evidence-informed, context-specific programme interventions to avert future deaths, is the ability to count every maternal and newborn death.

In the transition from the MDGs to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), attention to reduction of maternal mortality and morbidity must be accompanied by improvements along the continuum of care for women and children. In particular linkages with the Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP) under the broad umbrella of the Global Strategy for women's, children's, and adolescent health are crucial. The Global Strategy for women's and children's health which is an update of the UN Secretary-General's Global Strategy 2010–2015 will help to mobilise global, regional, national and community-level commitment for sexual and reproductive health, maternal, newborn and child survival.

The consensus statement agreed in Bangkok stated:

'Maternal health stakeholders strongly support the continued need for a specific global target for maternal mortality reduction in the post-2015 development framework, with the ultimate goal of ending all preventable maternal deaths. The proposed national targets are ambitious yet feasible given the evidence of progress achieved over the past 20 years.

Global targets to increase equity in maternal mortality between countries are:

- By 2030, all countries should reduce their maternal mortality ratio (MMR) by at least two thirds of their 2010 baseline level. The average global target is an MMR of less than 70/100,000 live births by 2030.
- The supplementary national target is that no country should have an MMR greater than 140/100,000 live births (a number twice the global target) by 2030.

Country target-setting:

The 2030 MMR target of less than 70 applies at the global level but not necessarily for individual countries. Two sets of national targets are recommended:

- For countries with MMR less than 420 in 2010 (i.e. the majority of countries worldwide): Reduce the MMR by at least two-thirds from the 2010 baseline by 2030.
- For all countries with baseline MMR greater than 420 in 2010, the rate of decline should be steeper, and in 2030, no country should have an MMR over 140.

To support countries to closely monitor progress towards their individual national targets for 2030, and understand the effectiveness of their chosen mortality reduction strategies, a major interim milestone is proposed to be measured in 2020.

The ultimate goal: Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality

Guiding principles for achieving this goal:

- Empowering women, girls and communities.
- Protecting and supporting the mother-baby dyad.

- Ensuring country ownership, leadership, and supportive legal, regulatory and financial frameworks.
- Applying a human rights framework to ensure that high quality reproductive, maternal and newborn health care are available, accessible and acceptable to all who need them.

Cross-cutting actions for achieving this goal include:

- Improving metrics, measurement systems and data quality to ensure that all maternal and newborn deaths are counted.
- Allocating adequate resources and effective health care financing.

The five strategic objectives that contribute to achieving this goal are:

1. Addressing inequities in access to and quality of reproductive, maternal, and newborn health care services.
2. Ensuring universal health coverage for comprehensive reproductive, maternal and newborn health care.
3. Addressing all causes of maternal mortality, reproductive and maternal morbidities, and related disabilities.
4. Strengthening health systems to respond to the needs and priorities of women and girls.
5. Ensuring accountability in order to improve quality of care and equity.

Signatories to the consensus statement include: ICM, FIGO, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, Family Care International and the White Ribbon Alliance.

http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/maternal_perinatal/epmm/en/

Women's and children's health at the 132nd Inter-parliamentary Union Assembly

'Parliaments must 'raise up' women's and children's health to top of the political agenda' said Amina Mohammed, UN Assistant Secretary-General and special advisor on post-2015 development planning, speaking on behalf of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during the inaugural ceremony of the Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly.

She highlighted the pivotal role that parliaments must play in both shaping the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in ensuring their translation into meaningful action at country level.

'Parliaments serve as a bridge between citizens and their governments,' she said, 'they can – and must – lead the way, galvanising action and fostering accountability and implementation.' Ms Mohammed also stressed that people must be at the centre of the SDGs, and urged parliamentarians to continue their efforts to improve the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents.

This year's IPU assembly paid particular attention to the important role that parliaments must continue to play to improve women's and children's health, building on a resolution passed on this topic by the 2012 IPU Assembly in Kampala titled *Access to health as a basic right: The role of parliaments in addressing key challenges to securing the health of women and children*. Parliamentarians are reviewing progress since the resolution and since the 2010 launch of the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health in view of the development of an updated Global Strategy later this year and the definition of the post-2015 agenda.

Speaking on behalf of WHO in the General Debate on the SDGs, Dr. Marleen Temmerman, Director of the Department of

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