Saving the lives of mothers and children

The regional initiative on saving the lives of mothers and children was launched by WHO, the United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF jointly with Member States in a meeting held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in January 2013. The initiative aimed at accelerating progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 on reduction of child and maternal mortality and concluded with development of the Dubai Declaration.

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- developing and implementing maternal and child health acceleration plans;
- taking measurable steps to strengthen their health systems-related elements;
- establishing sustainable financing mechanisms and mobilizing domestic and international resources through traditional and innovative approaches; and
- improving coordination and accountability between all partners.

Acceleration plans were developed in the nine countries with the highest burden of maternal and child deaths and by the end of 2015, much progress had been made towards achieving MDGs 4 and 5 in the Region. Between 1990 and 2015 maternal mortality ratio decreased by 54% and under-5 mortality by 48%. Eight countries achieved MDG 4 and three achieved MDG 5. Of the nine countries with a high burden of maternal and child deaths, two countries achieved MDG 4.

The high levels of maternal, newborn and child mortality at regional level are mainly due to weakened health systems. There are insufficient numbers of well trained human resources, essential medicines and commodities are often lacking or inadequate, referral systems do not function well and the quality of care for mothers and children at the referral hospitals is inadequate. Strengthening of health information systems continues to be a critical factor in

improving maternal and child health and initiatives have been launched to strengthen this surveillance, and surveillance tools for perinatal death are being tested at country level.

Reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health will continue to be a regional and national health priority in the post-2015 development agenda. WHO will focus on building capacity in countries to end preventable deaths among women, children and adolescents. Implementation of the United Nations global strategy on women's, children's and adolescents' health and the SDGs will require integrated and multisectoral approaches backed by well-defined targets and sustainable financing mechanisms.

To accelerate maternal and child health plans, intercountry meetings and country missions have been jointly held with UNFPA and UNICEF to identify priority interventions targeting the main causes of preventable deaths.

Related links

United Nations global strategy on women's, children's and adolescents' health

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