DEPARTMENT OF MATERNAL, NEWBORN, CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH (MCA)

HIGHLIGHTS 2012-2013



Progress Report



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Foreword

his report presents highlights of the work accomplished by the WHO Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (MCA) in 2012 and 2013. The scope and mandate of the work of the Department are broad. Through research, MCA generates new evidence to shape norms, standards and guidelines that serve to guide countries in adopting the most effective, evidence-based policies and strategies. It supports building capacity for moving towards universal access to high-quality, integrated health services, and supports the measurement of progress. Much of this work has been carried in collaboration between WHO headquarters, regional and country offices, with other departments of WHO and with partners.

The environment in which MCA works is dynamic, and progress is evident in all population groups. The global maternal mortality ratio fell by 47% between 1990 and 2010, and the under-five mortality rate decreased by 47% between 1990 and 2012. However, this progress is not sufficient, and achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5 is still not ensured. In 2012, 6.6 million children died before their fifth birthday. Of these, nearly three million were newborns in their first month of life. 287 000 women died due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth, and the annual 2.6 million stillbirths remain silent tragedies. The health of adolescents has attracted increased attention. First, there are many of them – often more than 20% of the population, with the proportion highest in low and middle-income countries. Second, there is a growing recognition that the health problems and health-related behaviours that arise during adolescence have important implications for adult health, and for public health in general.

Multiple global efforts are under way to accelerate progress towards reducing maternal and child mortality and improving survival. The UN Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, launched in 2010, is an unprecedented endeavour to save the lives of 16 million women and children by 2015. More recently, a number of initiatives have been initiated with aims of accelerating progress towards MDGs 4 and 5, and of ending preventable maternal and child mortality within one generation. The Child Survival Call to Action: A Promise Renewed sets out targets for reducing child mortality to 20 child deaths or less per 1000 live births by 2035. In support of this target, the integrated Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea provides directions for ending preventable child deaths due to these two diseases. Similarly, "Every Newborn: an action plan to end preventable deaths" is in development to increase attention to this age group. Finally, the Family Planning Summit in 2012 set an ambitious goal to provide an additional 120 million women, in the world's poorest countries, with access to voluntary family planning by 2020.

While acknowledging the importance of these global initiatives as drivers for sustained action and commitment to improving maternal and child health, we are convinced that the most critical factor remains the extent to which they lead to action in countries. This is the mainstay of the work of the WHO Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health.



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