

PRESS RELEASE

G8 ACTION URGED TO AVERT SIX MILLION MOTHER AND CHILD DEATHS EVERY YEAR

19 April 2008, Cape Town -- The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health today called on G8 leaders to fulfil their previous commitments to global health and commit to new, long-term financing for essential interventions that could avert the deaths of over 6 million mothers, newborn and children every year.

The statement calls for an additional US\$10.2 billion annually, the estimated cost to ensure universal coverage of basic services needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5 on reducing child and maternal mortality by 2015.

"The world is expecting G8 leaders to show the way in confronting this health crisis faced by millions of mothers and children who do not have access to essential care" said Jeffrey Mecaskey, a representative of the global Save the Children Alliance. "The Countdown report gives us all the information we need. We can achieve MDGs 4 and 5, it's simply a question of making the right political choices."

The global call for funding is being issued at a conference being held in Cape Town, South Africa to discuss the implications of the 2008 report *Countdown to 2015: Tracking Progress in Maternal, Newborn & Child Survival*, in advance of the G8 Summit to be hosted by the Government of Japan in July of this year.

"Nigeria and other African nations are making genuine political commitments to reduce maternal and child mortality but we face substantial challenges and many competing priorities" said the Honorable Saudatu Sani, a Parliamentarian from the Federal Republic of Nigeria participating in the Countdown conference. "I therefore call on G8 leaders to match our commitment by increasing donor support to ensure African women and children receive health care. This mutual engagement is critical to reach the MDGs."

The Partnership statement addresses not just G8 nations but all donor governments as well as business leaders. While donor funding for maternal, newborn and child health has increased significantly in the past few years, from US\$2.1 billion in 2003 to almost US\$3.5 billion in 2006, it remains far below the total funding needs of the 68 countries identified as accounting for 97% of maternal and child deaths worldwide.

According to the most recent data, donor aid for health averaged US\$7 per child and US\$12 per live birth in the 68 Countdown countries. This is far less than the US\$45 per person expenditure which is the minimum needed for governments to ensure access to basic health services. Long term donor assistance is therefore critical to close the gap. The statement also calls for a "reallocation of national resources to benefit women and children, especially in countries with significant economic prospects where resources can be mobilized."

"Japan has shown critical leadership in the past to improve health and human security in the world's poorer countries" noted Ann Starrs, President of Family Care International. "The *Countdown to 2015* findings announced in Cape Town provide a clear blueprint for action. What we need now are political leadership and investment in services which save lives. G8 leaders must show the way at their 2008 Hokkaido Summit, but this is a long term undertaking requiring long term high level commitment from both North and South."

The 2000 Okinawa G8 Summit launched the Okinawa Infectious Diseases Initiative that led to the establishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, which has since committed over US\$10 billion in 136 countries to help fight these diseases.

Note for editors: The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health brings together more than 240 member organizations from around the world working towards Millennium Development Goals 4 & 5 on child survival and maternal health. For more information, visit: <http://www.who.int/pmnch>

Countdown to 2015 for Maternal, Newborn & Child Survival is collaboration among individuals and institutions to track coverage for health interventions needed to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 & 5. For more information, visit <http://www.countdown2015mnch.org>

Financial data on donor assistance is drawn from an article in The Lancet special issue on Countdown to 2015, Volume 371, April 12-18 2008: *Countdown to 2015: assessment of donor assistance to maternal, newborn and child health between 2003 and 2006* G Greco and others

Contact information:

In Cape Town:

Tunga Namjilsuren

Partnership for Maternal, Newborn&Child Health Meropa Communications

Hosted by WHO

Mobile: +41 79 477 26 78

Email: namjilsurent@who.int

In Cape Town:

Maria Djordjevic

Mobile: +27 82 334 6192

Email: mariad@meropa.co.za

In Cape Town:

Ruth Landy

Partnership for Maternal, Newborn&Child Health Bartley Robbs Consultants

Mobile: +41 79 441 22 83

Email: landyr@who.int

In London:

Cathy Bartley

Mobile: +44 208 694 9138

Email: cathy.bartley@bartley-robbs.co.uk