



THE PARTNERSHIP For Maternal, Newborn & Child Health

Joint Statement

Health Professional Groups Key to Reaching MDGs 4 & 5

This joint statement is prepared jointly by the health care professional groups¹ in support of the new Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health.

It reflects the commitment of health care professionals to work together at global, regional, national, and local levels, respecting the autonomous nature of individual professions while recognizing the importance of collaboration in reducing child mortality by two-thirds (MDG 4) and maternal mortality by three-quarters (MDG 5) by 2015.

This statement is intended to support health professional groups at the international level in their efforts to guide and encourage their national societies/member associations to work with other key stakeholders in advocating, educating and informing health policy at the country level, as well as in providing culturally appropriate, evidence-based skilled care as needed.

Executive Summary

Every country worldwide has committed to The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A key strategy for achieving the key indicators for MDGs 4 & 5 on child and maternal health is the use of a multisectoral approach. Governments, multilateral and bilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), health professional groups, academic institutions and communities are being challenged to work together to improve the major determinants of health, including social and economic status, human rights, the environment (including fetal), and health and illness services and systems. Working together in partnership warrants trust, respect, knowledge, effective communication and a willingness to collaborate at country and community levels so that all women and children have a chance to attain the best possible level of health and well-being in all parts of the world.

Access to skilled care before, during, and after birth is crucial to saving the lives of mothers and newborns. Countries that have been actively striving towards skilled care have seen their maternal and newborn mortality rates drop². To achieve the coverage that is required, midwives, nurses and physicians with midwifery skills must be available at every level of health care.

The *Lancet* series on child survival (2003), the *Lancet* series on newborn health (2005), the *2005 World Health Report*, and UNICEF's *The State of the World's Children 2005* have each highlighted the continuing tragedy of 11 million preventable deaths of children under the age of five each year, even though suitable and proven interventions exist to prevent between 60 and 70 percent of these deaths³. Educated, supported and motivated child health workers at country level are key to the survival of the world's children. Likewise, the *Lancet* series on maternal

survival (2006), highlights the continuing tragedy of maternal deaths and disability and the interventions known to save women's lives.³

Health professionals and health workers need strong, integrated health systems at both national and local levels to support the delivery of universal care and services. Proven, affordable interventions, provided within an integrated network of care, from community to referral centers, can prevent millions of needless deaths and disabilities.

Throughout the cycle of life, individuals and communities rely on health professionals to not only save lives, but to maintain and promote well being. In the context of maternal, newborn and child health, these professionals range from midwives, nurses and doctors at the community level to referral-level specialists, such as obstetricians, pediatricians, neonatologists, obstetric/neonatal/pediatric nurses, anesthesiologists and pharmacists.

Health professional associations and societies have vital roles to play in ensuring that health professionals are well-prepared for their important roles in achieving MDGs 4 & 5. Strong professional organizations provide leadership. They set the standards of education, practice and professional competency assessment, and can work together with governments and other stakeholders in setting and implementing health policies to improve the health of women, newborns, children and adolescents. However, the ability of professional associations to make such contributions depend on individual organizational and institutional capacities at country level. This is especially true in those resource-poor settings, where the vast majority of maternal, newborn and child deaths and morbidity occur.

Position Statement

We, the international health professional associations, commit ourselves to the vision and goals of The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, & Child Health. In this, we recognize the importance of human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights of women and men, and especially the rights of women and children, in order to ensure a "continuum of care" approach, from birth, childhood, and adolescence through the child-bearing years.

Health professionals working together at the national and community levels can make a significant contribution towards the achievement of MDGs 4 & 5. We, the undersigned, believe that strengthening national and local commitment to improving access and quality of care is an essential component of promoting safe motherhood, newborn health and child survival. We believe this is best achieved by fostering partnerships among health professional associations and their individual members.

Action

The international professional associations commit to the following actions globally, and will encourage and support their national counterparts in implementing actions appropriate to national and local settings.

At Community & National Levels

- Promote effective communication, respect, and collaboration among professionals, recognizing that each professional group has unique expertise to contribute and that together we are more effective than any one group alone;
-

- Strengthen existing health professional organizations and promote collaborative efforts to achieve a common vision for maternal, newborn and child health, with appropriate consideration socio-cultural and religious beliefs;
- Support linkages with other stakeholders in maternal and child health at the national level, including various categories of health workers, indigenous NGOs, and civil society groups;
- Promote convergence of different stakeholders in support of a coordinated strategy and monitoring mechanism for maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health;
- Advocate for increased coverage of essential interventions for newborns, children, adolescents, women and mothers.

At the Global Level

- Coordinate maternal, newborn, and child health agendas of international professional organizations via journals, annual meetings, special committees and reports;
- Coordinate global and regional meetings of health professional organizations to facilitate the development of collaboration and partnership competency and activity ;
- Assess national and international progress and public debate through a coordinated approach by professional associations.

Means for Action

International health professional organizations can play a significant role by providing leadership and support to their national counterparts in Advocacy, Country- Level Support, Promotion of Effective Interventions and Capacity Building.

Advocacy

- For the highest attainable standard of health for every mother, newborn and child in keeping with MDGs 4 & 5
- For universal access to quality health care
- For availability of essential drugs and equipment
- For strengthening health systems
- For bridging the gap between communities and the health system
- For environmental health
- For maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) care in humanitarian emergencies
- For adequate funding and support for maternal and child health programs at national and community levels
- For the use of MNCH as a platform for the further development of a functioning health system.

Country- Level Support

- Identifying the most urgent, needs-based changes required of the health system at country-level
- Facilitating relationships between country-level professional groups and country-level Ministries of Health, UN agencies, NGOs and donors
- Supporting the development of evidence-based interventions that can be implemented or scaled-up
- Supporting the development and implementation of legislation that supports and enables the provision of skilled care by health professionals
- Promoting linkages with academic institutions to undertake research, education and monitoring through existing networks

- Assisting in developing models for providing sustainable service delivery within both the public and private sectors

Promotion of Effective Interventions

- Identifying knowledge gaps and the means to address them
- Assist with standard setting/maintenance standards within the country context
- Identifying proven effective interventions and making them known to country-level professional groups and their members

Capacity Building at Country Level

- Identifying needed competencies for all levels of maternal and child health care workers
- Recognizing and supporting an appropriate scope of practice for each cadre of health workers to promote best-use of each group's expertise
- Influencing regulation and legislation to allow for competency-based practice by all types of health professionals along the continuum of care
- Assisting with the training of professionals, upgrading of skills and provision of competency-based education as defined by the specific professional group (e.g., midwives for midwives, nurses for nurses, physicians for physicians)
- Assisting with setting standards and teaching of various levels of health workers that exist at country level
- Supporting the commitment to the ethical recruitment and retention of health care professionals
- Increasing capacity of professional organizations to meet the health challenges of women, newborns and children
- Increasing the visibility of health issues affecting women, newborns and children
- Assisting local agencies to have a stronger voice in women's, newborn and child health by providing support from a global level, lending credence to causes at the national level, especially where there are no established professional organizations

In recognition of being an important part of the solution to achieve MDGs 4 & 5, the following key international health professional groups pledge to work together through their country-level societies and members, while being respectful of each other's expertise, towards the common vision of The Partnership to improve maternal, newborn and child health for all.

International Confederation of Midwives

International Council of Nurses

International Federation of Gynecology & Obstetrics

International Pediatric Association

International Pharmaceutical Federation

Council of International Neonatal Nurses

The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) is a confederation of 85 midwifery associations from 75 countries. Founded in 1919, ICM's mission is to advance worldwide the aims and aspiration of midwives in the attainment of improved outcomes for women in their childbearing years, their newborn, and their families wherever they reside. ICM has collaborated with FIGO and WHO on joint statements on Skilled Care and Prevention of Postpartum Hemorrhage, and with ICN on Birth Registration. The office is in The Hague; www.internationalmidwives.org; email: info@internationalmidwives.org

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a federation of 127 national nurses' associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses for nurses, ICN is the international voice of nursing and works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally. ICN has collaborated with WHO on a number of joint statements, and with ICM on Birth Registration and endorsed the FIGO, WHO and ICM joint statement on Skilled Attendants. The office is in Geneva: www.icn.ch; email: icn@icn.ch

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) is the only worldwide organization that groups obstetricians and gynecologists. The mission of FIGO is to promote the well-being of women and to raise the standard of practice in obstetrics and gynecology. Founded in 1954, FIGO now represents 110 member societies in more than 100 countries and territories. FIGO has collaborated with ICM and WHO on joint statements on Skilled Attendants and Prevention of Postpartum Hemorrhage. The office is in London; www.figo.org; email: figo@figo.org

The International Pediatric Association (IPA) includes the National Pediatric Societies of 139 countries and the Regional Pediatric Societies of Africa, Asia, Latin America, The Mediterranean/Middle East, Central Asia, Europe and North America. The IPA was founded in 1910 and is governed by its officers and Executive and Standing Committee. The IPA has a number of active program areas and collaborates actively with WHO, UNICEF, GAVI, and the Stop TB Partnership. Offices are located in Geneva and Boston; www.ipa-world.org; email: adminoffice@ipa-world.org

The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) is the global federation of national organizations of pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists dedicated to improving the access to and value of appropriate medicine use worldwide, and contributing to changes in science, practice and health policies worldwide. Through its member organizations, FIP connects, represents and serves more than one million professionals around the world. www.fip.org

The Council of International Neonatal Nurses (COINN) represents global unity for neonatal nursing. COINN speaks with one strong voice to facilitate the growth of neonatal nursing and improve healthcare outcomes for our patients and families worldwide. The role of the Council is as advocate; policy maker; quality evaluator; collaborator with health care, corporate and lay groups; educator of health professionals, legislators and lay public; and leader in global neonatal nursing. The office is in based in Edmond, Oklahoma, USA; www.coinnurses.org; e-mail: info@coinnurses.org.

References

¹ International Federation of Gynecology & Obstetrics (FIGO), International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), International Council of Nurses (ICN), Council of International Neonatal Nurses (COINN), International Pediatric Association (IPA)

² World Health Organization (2005). The World Health Report 2005: Make every mother and child count. Geneva: WHO. Child Health and Maternal Health Task Force (2005). Who's got the power? Transforming health systems for women and children. London: Earthscan. Millennium Project (2005). Investing in development: A practical plan to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. A report to the UN Secretary General. London: Earthscan.

³ Bhutta et al (2005). Community-based interventions for improving perinatal and neonatal health outcomes in developing countries: A review of evidence. *Pediatrics* 115:2, 519-617. Lawn, JE, Cousens, S, Zupan, J: Lancet Neonatal Survival Steering Team (2005). 4 million neonatal deaths: When? Where? Why? *Lancet* 365 (9462): 891-900.

⁴ Lancet Maternal Survival Series Steering Group (2006). Healthy motherhood: an urgent call to action. *Lancet*.