

"India plans to achieve improved results on MDG4"

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The Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A) coalition in collaboration with Save the Children and White Ribbon Alliance of India organized a day-long National CSO Consultation on 'Post 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescent Health'. The event was held at Delhi on February 25, 2015.

Presenting at the consultation, the joint secretary for ministry of health and family welfare, Dr Rakesh Kumar mentioned, "India has made considerable progress on MDGs 4 & 5 with the introduction of NRHM and NUHM. 10 Indian states have already achieved the MDG 4 targets. However, we recognize that neonatal mortality, pneumonia and diarrhea continue to be leading causes of Under-5 deaths in India, attributing to about 80 percent of the overall under-5 mortality. With interventions such as continuum of care, reaching the unreached, improving quality of care, introduction of 3 new pediatric vaccines in the Universal Immunization Program, Project Indradhanush, Corticosteroids injections, roll out of the Integrated Action Plan for Pneumonia and Diarrhoea prevention across 4 key States of UP, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, India plans to achieve improved results on MDG4. India has seen a 61 percent decline in Under-5 mortality rate since 1990, higher than the global average."

The event saw representation from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, United Nations (UN), World Health Organisation, CHETNA, Pathfinder, World Vision and The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health, Center for Catalyzing Change.

Commenting on the importance and need for this National Consultation, Ms Shireen Vakil Miller, head of Policy, Save the Children said, "India has made dramatic progress in bringing the under-5 mortality from 114 in 1990 to 50 per 1000 live births in 2012, showing a commendable decline of 58 percent. Yet, India also represents some of the greatest challenges like inequity in seeing this revolution through. India has persistently high rates of newborn mortality and accounts for 27 percent of all newborn deaths globally, with 78,5000 newborn deaths a year. This consultation is an attempt to incorporate learnings from MDGs so that the post-2015 development goals are more comprehensive and with equity as the bedrock."

Describing the role of civil society organizations in participation, inclusion and transparency in driving the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, Dr Flavia Bustreo, assistant director-general, Family, Women's and Children's Health, World Health Organization, said, "Civil society represents citizen voices, provide platforms for information sharing with community and for advocacy. Civil Society Organizations play a critical role in budget tracking and advocating adequate spending to achieve improved child and women health indicators."

"It is imperative that civil society engages in the setting up of the post 2015 agenda since progress can be accelerated through citizen engagement at every level of the health system and by ensuring responsiveness to deliver on commitments," reiterated Dr Aparajita Gogoi, the National Coordinator of WRAI.

The Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health launched in September 2010 by the UN Secretary-General, has contributed to significant progress worldwide for women's and children's survival and health. The Every Woman Every Child movement that grew out of the Global Strategy mobilized actors from all sectors to work towards shared goals. Strong progress has been made toward the vision to end all preventable maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent deaths within a generation but there is still unfinished business and new challenges that need to be addressed as we transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals agenda.

In November 2014, Every Women Every Child stakeholders unanimously agreed on the need to update the Global Strategy as a roadmap for taking forward the unfinished MDG agenda and women's, children's and adolescent health related Sustainable Development Goals. An updated Global Strategy will build on new evidence, including the need to focus on critical population groups such as newborns, adolescents and those living in fragile and conflict settings, build the resilience of health systems, improve the quality of health services and equity in their coverage, and work with health-enhancing sectors on issues such as women's empowerment, education, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene. It will align with the targets and indicators developed for the Sustainable Development Goals framework and outline opportunities for means of implementation, including innovative financing.

This National Consultation aims to ensure India focused inputs into the Global Strategy based on perspectives from the civil society organizations. The recommendations gathered as a result of today's discussions will be presented at the International Consultation being organised later this week by the Government of India and Every Woman Every Child initiative.