NEWS

GTR planning meeting in Panama

On November 30 and December 1, 2010, UNFPA’s Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean hosted the GTR’s annual meeting at their headquarters in Panama City. It was attended by 18 participants from the following organizations: PAHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, USAID, ECLAC, FCI, Population Council, ICM, FLASOG, and IAPG, the latter as an observer. Participants took stock of progress in 2010 and defined the goals for 2011.

GTR priorities and 2011 work plan

GTR members agreed to continue working along three priority action lines: a) advocacy, b) knowledge management and c) internal communication. Within these, the GTR selected inequality as the unifying theme for all initiatives. Below is a brief synopsis of the priorities for 2011:

a) Advocacy

I. Articulate and promote follow-up strategies to the Regional Conference of Women Leaders (more details below), including dissemination of the Declaration and the conference report, particularly at the national level.

II. Develop and disseminate a series of technical concept notes to sensitize national and local authorities on key topics such as cultural pertinence, adolescence, vulnerable groups and gender equity.

b) Knowledge management

I. Regional meeting: Organize a meeting to leverage commitments for the reduction of maternal mortality to be held in Latin America and the Caribbean during 2012. PopCouncil and FCI would develop an initial proposal during the first quarter of 2011.

II. Joint recommendation on maternal mortality estimates and use of census data to highlight the importance of strengthening vital registries at country level (certificates of live birth, mortality and hospital records) and national capacities for data collection.

In addition, below is a list of some of the other opportunities identified to implement the
GTR's action lines and advocate for maternal health:

- Reproductive Health Commodity Security Initiative, through collaboration with its UNFPA-led interagency consortium.

- Safe Motherhood Initiative in Latin America and the Caribbean. The GTR will help to promote the national activities carried out as part of this PAHO-led initiative, including the symposia planned for 2010.

- Regional meeting of research and best practices in maternal health coordinated by the Mexico Office of the Population Council in 2012.

- XX Latin American Congress of Gynecology and Obstetrics organized by FLASOG on September 5-7, 2011, in Managua, Nicaragua. A special session will be organized by the GTR.

- Regional Parliamentary Conference to be held during the first half of 2012, and organized by IAPG.

- 10th World Congress of Perinatal Medicine, to be held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, from November 8 to 11, 2011.

- Differentiated UNICEF strategy to reduce maternal mortality.

- The United Nations' Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health provides opportunities for global advocacy, in part through an increased involvement of the GTR as member of PMNCH (see note below).

**c) Internal communication**

The GTR will continue to strengthen the mechanisms of communication and information dissemination within and outside the group. We plan to develop a new website and explore other methods to facilitate the exchange of information, such as a mailing list or a Facebook page.

**Election of the Secretariat and Executive Committee 2011-2012 and Membership**

FCI was elected as the new Secretariat for the period 2011-2012. The Executive Committee will remain the same: UNFPA, IDB, PAHO, USAID and FCI, with the addition of UNICEF.

Many organizations have expressed an interest in joining the GTR. However, members identified the need to draft terms of reference for the structure and administration of the GTR before proceeding to expand membership. The Executive Committee will consider an initial proposal at its next meeting.

**Regional Conference of Women Leaders 2010**

The GTR organized the conference “Maternal Mortality: Break the Silence, Unite Our Voices,” in Lima, Peru, from May 27-28, 2010. The goal of the conference was to
gather prominent and influential leaders that could promote political, social, economic and cultural initiatives to reduce maternal mortality in their countries. There were 71 participants from 13 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The leaders came from a diversity of backgrounds in spheres such as politics, business, civil society organizations, arts, communications and media.

The Conference, structured around three core principles: universal access to health services, social causes of maternal mortality and gender inequality, and resource mobilization for the financial sustainability of the MDGs, resulted in the launch of a Declaration of commitment and key messages and the development of a mechanism to follow up at the national, regional and global levels. The results were presented at “Women Deliver,” in June 2010.

The Declaration “Maternal Mortality: Break the Silence, Unite Our Voices” underscores both the need for greater financial investment in LAC, as well as unequivocal support for adolescent pregnancy prevention initiatives in the region. The rate of teen pregnancy in LAC is only second to Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, it has been shown to be a decisive factor in the perpetuation of the poverty cycle and a determinant of women’s and children’s health.

For the Conference, the GTR launched the website “www.conferenciademujereslideres.com, which showcases news and information, as well as key advocacy documents and a complete Conference report. The Declaration can be downloaded from this site.

In 2011, the GTR has vowed to promote national actions to end maternal mortality as a follow up to the commitments of the Conference.

Regional Lunch During the Second "Women Deliver" Conference

The second "Women Deliver" Conference took place in Washington between June 7 and 9, 2010. In this impressive event, attended by 3400 people from 146 countries, GTR organized a lunch on June 8, with over 100 guests. The lunch constituted one of the few opportunities to address the regional context specific to LAC within this global conference. The objective was to raise awareness about the activities of the GTR and to create new and revitalize existing ties and alliances. Various speakers explained the mission and the work carried out in the region since the group's foundation in 1998. Presentations also covered new initiatives carried out by member agencies, such as USAID and UNFPA.

Overall, the presentations underscored the pressing need to address the strong inequities—economic, social, educational and gender—that affect the region, as an essential condition to promote maternal health. Likewise, presenters highlighted the need for unequivocal political will and a solid intersectorial work to promote women's and adolescent's rights. It is of outmost necessity to integrate the work of bilateral and international cooperation organisms within national frameworks.

The Safe Motherhood Initiative

On September 27, 2010, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) gathered in
Washington a committee of experts to discuss the slow progress made towards achieving the MDG goal of reducing maternal mortality by 75% by 2015. As a result, in the context of the 50th meeting of PAHO's Directing Council, GTR, PAHO and partner organizations launched the Safe Motherhood Initiative, which brings together health ministers from Latin America and the Caribbean in order to "promote and protect the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health of women, mothers and newborns," according to Director Mirta Roses.

In spite of the progress made over the past twenty years, with a maternal mortality reduction of approximately 41%, LAC is still far from meeting the 75% reduction to meet MDG5 by 2015. However, experts believe the goal is still achievable. The Safe Motherhood Initiative, which has the support of the GTR, proposes a simultaneous action on several fronts to ensure: 1) the availability of effective and comprehensive reproductive health services; 2) increased social protection for mothers and children, especially for adolescents and marginalized women; 3) improved quality of care before, during and after delivery by training providers, reducing the number of unsafe abortions, adding contraceptives and emergency contraception to the essential drugs list; and 4) promoting male participation and entire communities in an effort that, by its nature, must be collective.

More information click here.

**NOTEWORTHY**

**Opportunity to provide input to the United Nations report on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights**

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is seeking input from governments and other stakeholders, including civil society, into a key upcoming analytical compilation by the OHCHR on good and effective practices in adopting a human rights-based approach to eliminating maternal mortality and morbidity.

The contribution should not exceed 3000 words and should be sent to United Nations Office at Geneva, CH-1211 Geneva 10, fax +41 22 917 90 08, e-mail: registry@ohchr.org before 1 April 2011. For more information contact Melinda Ching Simon mchingsimon@ohchr.org email or telephone: +41 22 928 91 40.

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**Launch of the Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health**

Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon launched the Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health at last year’s MDGs Summit. Governments, corporations, and civil society donors committed over US $40 billion over the next five years to improve maternal and infant health. The Global Strategy constitutes a road map that the entire world can use to save the lives of millions of women, newborns and children. Download the document here.

**Global Parliamentarians Summit**
Parliamentarians from G8/G20 countries met in Ottawa, Canada on June 10 and 11 to attend the VI Annual Parliamentarians Summit on “Balancing the Scales of Women’s Lives in the Countdown to 2015.” In the resulting Declaration, governments of donor countries are urged to commit to the international goal of contributing 0.7 percent of the GNI to development assistance and to dedicate a significant part of such funds to maternal and reproductive health, including family planning, and the implementation mechanisms that ensure transparency of the processes. The entire text can be found here.

**Parliamentarians speak up**

As part of its MDG 5 campaign, IAPG launched a video in the context of the annual summit in which, through a series of interviews, parliamentarians explain why it is so important to work towards achieving MDG 5 and maternal mortality reduction.

[Watch the video.]

**Two projects to improve obstetric care in Mexico**

Researchers at the National Institute of Public Health in collaboration with other institutional partners are working to identify and develop effective strategies to improve obstetric care in Mexico and therefore contribute to the reduction of maternal mortality.

The project “Incorporating Professional Midwives and Obstetric Nurses in Rural Areas in Oaxaca and Guerrero,” trains professional midwives and obstetric nurses through simulations, for their placement in public clinics in two Mexican states. The results demonstrate that with adequate training alternative providers can reduce maternal mortality in locations where there is a dearth of health care providers.

Project [PRONTO2 International](#) is an effective, sustainable, low technology and accurate training designed for multidisciplinary health teams, which are taught in hospital environments through simulation methods to improve maternal and newborn results in places with limited resources.

For more information, please contact Dolores González at dgonzale@insp.mx.

**PUBLICATIONS**


The *Countdown* report offers added value since it builds a clear consensus, based on empirical evidence about priority interventions and core health indicators for maternal, newborn and child health through a mechanism that makes countries and their allies accountable for results. [Download report.]

*Countdown to 2015 decade report (2000-2010): taking stock of maternal, newborn and child survival*

This Lancet article analyzes the progress made toward priority interventions to reach
the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in regards to maternal health and child mortality between 1990-2010. The article focuses on 26 key interventions in 68 priority countries for the Countdown Initiative. The study shows evidence that a fast progress is possible and that clearly defined and strategically focused interventions are effective in reducing socioeconomic or gender inequities. Download article.

**Maternal Mortality for 131 Countries, 1980-2008: A Systematic Analysis of Progress Towards Millennium Development Goal 5**

The article analyzes the tendencies and statistical values of maternal mortality, essential tools to plan and analyze with criterion the progress toward MDG 5 of reducing by 75% the maternal mortality rate between 1990 and 2015. For that goal, 181 countries are under study since 1980 through 2008, demonstrating that, although substantial progress has been obtained, only 23 countries will possibly achieve it, while others, such as Egypt, China, Ecuador or Bolivia, have been achieving an accelerated progress. Read article.


This interagency report presents the global, regional, and country estimates of maternal mortality in 2008 and assesses trends in maternal mortality levels since 1990. These new estimates show that in spite of notable progress, the annual rate of decline is less than half of what is needed to achieve MDG 5. Read report.

Guttmacher Institute, Research in Health and Demographics (INSAD) and the Mexican School publish two reports that shed light on the issue of sexual and reproductive health in young Mexican women and the barriers that interfere with improvement of maternal health in Mexico. Based on national studies, the articles "Addressing Adolescent Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Needs in Mexico: Challenges and Opportunities" and "Barriers to Safe Motherhood in Mexico" (both also available in Spanish) offer new evidence to plan better programs and interventions to serve Mexican women and youth.

"**Human Rights-based Approaches to Maternal Mortality Reduction Efforts**" (IIMMHR, 2010)

What exactly does a human rights approach to maternal mortality reduction efforts involve? What's the value-added? By drawing on lessons learned from their field projects in India, Kenya, and Peru, this briefing paper seeks to help advocates answer these questions.


This document describes the key effective interventions organized in packages across the continuum of care through pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum, newborn care and care of the child. The packages are defined for community and/or facility levels in developing countries and provide guidance on the essential
components needed to assure adequacy and quality of care.

In “Health of Indigenous Women: Interventions to Reduce Maternal Mortality” (IADB, 2010), the Inter-American Development Bank seeks that regional experts provide higher quality maternal health services and cultural relevance.


A fact-finding report describing the barriers to access health care services faced by women living with HIV in Chile, with testimonies from 27 HIV-positive women. Available here.

EVENTS

XX Latin American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists 2011
Organizer: FLASOG
Place: Managua, Nicaragua
Date: September 5-9, 2011

Meeting of FLASOG’s Maternal Health Committee highlighting GTR’s activities
Place: Managua, Nicaragua
Date: September 4, 2011
Click here for more information

IV Research Meeting on Unwanted Pregnancy and Induced Abortion: A Public Health Challenge in Latin America and the Caribbean
Organizer: Population Council
Place: Mexico City
Date: October 18-20, 2011
For more information, contact Marieke VanDijk at mvandijk@popcouncil.org
10th Global Conference on Perinatal Medicine

Place: Punta del Este, Uruguay

Date: November 8-11, 2011

Click here for more information

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