



## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the Countdown to 2015?**

The Countdown to 2015 is a collaboration among individuals and institutions, established in 2005, that aims to summarize and highlight the best and most recent information on country-level progress in achieving coverage of key interventions, and thereby documenting accomplishments and revitalizing efforts by countries towards the achievement of the health-related Millennium Development Goals 1, 4 and 5, with particular attention to the continuum of care for reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health.

### **Why is the Countdown to 2015 important?**

- The Countdown to 2015 extends and reinforces the efforts of all agencies and institutions by providing a mechanism to hold countries and their partners accountable for achieving real results at the population-level;
- The Countdown to 2015 will continue to expand until 2015, providing a mechanism for learning how effective interventions and approaches can be scaled up in different country contexts.

### **What principles underlie the work of the Countdown to 2015?**

- A focus on country-level action to increase coverage of key maternal, newborn and child health interventions in 68 selected countries covering 97% of the global burden of maternal and child deaths.
- A commitment to use evidence-based information for better policy-making and investment approaches in the coverage of interventions for maternal, newborn and child health in poor countries.
- Building on and reinforcing existing monitoring efforts.
- Complementing the mission and aims of other organizations and initiatives--yet remaining as a supra-institutional entity--tightly focused on evaluating, monitoring and improving intervention coverage.

## **What are the objectives of the Countdown to 2015?**

- To summarize, synthesize and disseminate the most credible and recent information on country-level progress in achieving high, sustained and equitable coverage of effective interventions in reducing mortality among mothers, newborns and children less than five years of age; and
- To utilize coverage results to engage key decision- and policy-makers at the national and international levels to stimulate discussion and action and overcome barriers to progress.

## **What has the Countdown to 2015 accomplished to date?**

- Establishment of an International consensus on a set of indicators to be used in tracking coverage for interventions with proven effectiveness in reducing maternal, newborn and child mortality and improve maternal health.
- Country-by-country reports on coverage levels for 2005 in the 60 countries with the highest rates or numbers of deaths among children less than five years of age.
- A major international conference in December 2005 (London, UK) bringing together researchers, program managers, donors and advocates from country, regional and international levels to review progress towards the MDGs and develop coordinated strategies to improve coverage of effective interventions.
- Production of a report and publication in The Lancet reporting on 2005 coverage levels.
- Stimulation of work in key areas associated with intervention coverage in poor countries, including financial flows, human resources, equity and political commitment.
- Spin-off activities including the first country-level Countdown to 2015 in Senegal (December 2006); a policy change by UNICEF to support Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys at three- rather than five-year intervals; and a coalescence of monitoring efforts to focus on the Countdown to 2015 coverage indicators by the United Nations Global Initiatives including the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, the Health Metrics Network, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization and the Global Campaign for the health-related MDGs (including the International Health Partnership, Deliver Now for Women and Children, the Catalytic Initiative and Providing for Health).
- Countdown 2008 Report
- 2008 country profiles for 68 Countdown priority countries
- Second Countdown to 2015 Conference, Cape Town, South Africa (17-19 April 2008) - in conjunction with the 118th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.
- Liaison with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and joint advocacy work promoting Parliamentarians to take action towards maternal, newborn and child health.

## **Why did we organize the Second Countdown to 2015 Conference in Cape Town, South Africa?**

- The decision to organize the Second Countdown to 2015 Conference in Cape Town, South Africa was based on the fact that countries in sub-Saharan Africa have the highest burden of maternal, newborn and child mortality. While there is evidence that some countries have been successful in accelerating progress in reducing maternal, newborn and child mortality and morbidity, the situation in many countries is stagnating or even reversing. Hosting a conference on the African continent facilitated the participation of many country delegations from Africa.
- In addition, the Countdown to 2015 Conference took place in conjunction with the 118th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), organized in Cape Town, South Africa on 13-18 April 2008. The IPU Assembly gathered more than 1,000 Parliamentarians from all countries and this represented a great opportunity for the Countdown to 2015 to sensitize decision- and policy-makers to MNCH issues.