

## Countdown to 2015 tracks, stimulates, and supports country progress on maternal, newborn, and child survival.

It calls on governments and development partners to be accountable, identifies knowledge gaps, and proposes new actions to reach Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5, to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health. Countdown produces periodic reports and country profiles on key aspects of reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, achieving global impact with its focus on accountability and use of available data to hold stakeholders to account for global and national action. Countdown to 2015

- Presents data on coverage levels and trends for interventions proven to improve reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, as well as on critical determinants of coverage: health systems functionality, health policies, and financing
- Examines equity in coverage across different population groups within and across Countdown countries
- Uses these data to hold countries and their international partners accountable for progress in reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health
- Supports country-level Countdown products and processes to promote evidence-based accountability

Countdown includes academics, governments, international agencies, professional associations, donors and nongovernmental organizations, with *The Lancet* as a key partner.

[www.countdown2015mnch.org](http://www.countdown2015mnch.org)



## Countdown to 2015

Maternal, Newborn & Child Survival

### Countdown's history

Countdown to 2015 was established in 2003 as a multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional collaboration, in response to a growing recognition that achieving the health-related MDGs would demand radical changes in scale and scope. Initially focused on child survival, Countdown expanded its mandate in 2007 to encompass the full reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health (RMNCH) continuum of care, and coverage indicators for maternal and reproductive health were added to the list of interventions that it tracks. The countries included in Countdown's data collection and analysis have increased from 60 in its first report to a total of 75 countries today: together, these countries account for more than 95% of all of the world's maternal and child deaths.



Leela Khanal, Courtesy of Photoshare

A central element of Countdown reports (published in 2005, 2008, 2010, and 2012) is a country profile for each Countdown country. These profiles present in one place key health and mortality statistics, coverage levels and trends for essential RMNCH interventions, and policy, health system, financial, and equity indicators.

Countdown's achievements have included:

- Driving consensus around priority interventions and key RMNCH indicators
- Performing pioneering analyses of equity in coverage, adoption of supportive policies, health system functionality, and financial flows
- Promoting and enabling accountability for fulfillment of commitments to the UN Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health
- Partnering with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to mobilize and engage parliamentarians in taking action and demanding accountability for progress on RMNCH
- Enabling the development of country-level Countdown reports, conferences, and other similar efforts, beginning in Senegal in 2006 and Zambia in 2008

## Countdown moving forward

In keeping with the global Accountability Agenda set out by the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health, Countdown is committed to producing annual reporting and analysis of country-specific information on the Commission's core indicators. Countdown will continue to report regularly on its full range of coverage, equity, health systems, health policy, and financing indicators, and will expand its focus on cross-cutting research and analysis of indicators of quality of care.

Countdown is also increasing its efforts to support and encourage countries to conduct their own "country-level Countdowns," based on the creation of subnational profiles (for regions, provinces or districts) which can be used to strengthen and stimulate political commitment and strategic planning. By engaging in a Countdown process, governments, parliamentarians, academics, civil society, media, and other stakeholders can better understand and develop solutions for the challenges their countries face in achieving high, equitable coverage of effective RMNCH interventions. While each national process is developed around its unique set of health conditions, policies, and objectives, all country Countdowns will:

- Align with and link to existing national RMNCH planning processes
- Be organized and led by in-country partners that include academics, NGOs, professional associations, parliamentarians, and the private sector, as well as the Ministry of Health, donors, and UN agencies
- Focus on tracking coverage of essential, proven health interventions at the national and subnational levels
- Measure equity of coverage by gender, household wealth, ethnic group, maternal education, and geographic factors

- Engage national scientists and academics in identifying critical indicators, compiling and assessing data, and objectively analyzing the results
- Contribute to building the country's capacity to evaluate ongoing programs and initiatives
- Produce profiles and reports to provide an ongoing "report card" on progress and remaining gaps
- Culminate in a conference or other event to exchange ideas, develop consensus on objectives and action plans, attract media and public attention to women's and children's health, and foster accountability





## Countdown's structure

Countdown's management structure is supra-institutional and designed to enable transparent and effective decision-making and efficient implementation of its work-plan. It includes the following groups:

The **Countdown Consultative Group** brings together more than 70 individuals and institutions from academia, governments, international agencies, health-care professional associations, donors, and nongovernmental organizations. Membership in the Consultative group is open to interested individuals and institutions with time to commit to Countdown activities.

The **Countdown Coordinating Committee**, with approximately 20 members, includes representation from all the Countdown sub-groups; it is led by two co-chairs (currently UNICEF and Aga Khan University/Pakistan), who are responsible for overall decision making and for providing strategic input and guidance to the Countdown workplan. The **Leadership Sub-Group (LSG)**, responsible to the Coordinating Committee, has executive responsibility for all Countdown activities.

The **Scientific Review Group (SRG)**, whose members include representatives from each of the Technical Working Groups and the Profile Development Group, reviews all Countdown reports, profiles, articles, web materials, and other products in order to ensure their technical accuracy and scientific rigor.

The **Profile Development Group** is responsible for development of country profiles, ensuring that information presented is technically accurate and contains the most recent available data. Its work is conducted by the Statistics & Monitoring Section of UNICEF, working in close collaboration with each of the Technical Working Groups and with DevInfo.

**Technical Working Groups (TWGs):** Countdown has four technical working groups, focusing on Coverage, Equity, Health Systems and Policies, and Financing. Each TWG develops and conducts analyses and write-ups for the Countdown report, profiles, and articles for publication; participates with other TWGs in cross-cutting research activities; and supports and facilitates country-level engagement. The TWGs are populated by technical experts representative of the continuum of care, and are open to interested individuals with technical expertise and time available to commit to the work. Each technical working group is led by two elected co-chairs, at least one of whom is from an academic institution.



The **Communication and Events Group** works to promote policy-makers' use of Countdown data and analysis. It supports the development and dissemination of Countdown messages and products; it also organizes Countdown's conferences and coordinates Countdown's participation in key global, regional, and national events that offer advocacy opportunities.

The **Country-level Working Group** supports countries in utilizing Countdown data, methodological approaches, reports, and conferences as a means of catalyzing national progress and ensuring accountability. It works to ensure the availability and utilization of Countdown tools and resources to assist governments, development partners, and advocates at the country level in stimulating progress on the health-related MDGs and ensuring that all stakeholders are held accountable for fulfillment of their commitments.

The **Countdown Secretariat**, which provides administrative and managerial support, is hosted by the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH).



UNICEF/NYHQ2009-0600/Noorani

### **Learn more:**

For more information on Countdown to 2015, please visit [www.countdown2015mnch.org](http://www.countdown2015mnch.org) or contact Countdown at [info@countdown2015mnch.org](mailto:info@countdown2015mnch.org).