Parliamentarians Take Action for Maternal and Newborn Health

The Hague, The Netherlands,
26-28 November 2008
Objectives of the meeting

Identify key priorities and parliamentary actions to achieve

Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5 on maternal health and MDG 4 on newborn health
Highlights of situation

1. Action is urgent: every year more than half a million women die, many of them adolescents, due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth; every year 3 million newborn die.

2. No country is exempt - we are all concerned

3. Action has to be targeted

4. Achieving MDGs 5 and 4 is possible, if the will is there
Roadmap for MDG5
Pillars for MDG5

- Political Commitment
- Legislation
- Financial Resourcing
- Health System
- Education
- Cultural Practices
- Partnership
Pillar 1: Political Commitment

Conditions for Success

• Accurate data
• Good governance, including transparency
• Media awareness
• International pressure
• Awareness in Political Parties
Pillar 1: Political Commitment

Parliamentary action

- Speak out in parliament and publicly for MDG 5;
- Champion MDG 5 and identify other parliamentary champions who will lead the way;
- Build cross party coalitions;
- Adopt a motion in parliament on MDG 5;
- Question government publicly about its commitment to MDG5 and call Ministers to account on their commitments;
Pillar 1: Political Commitment

Parliamentary action

- Hold briefings and hearings in parliament to convince and engage MPs and political leaders;
- Organize public events to sensitize the wider public and strengthen national commitment;
- Liaise regularly with constituents to educate them on MDG5 and seek training to do that effectively;
- Organize field visits to facilities and projects in order to monitor the situation and evaluate initiatives.
Pillar 2: Legislation
Conditions for Success

• Support for safe motherhood
• Shared language
• Partner support and coordination
Pillar 2: Legislation

Parliamentary action

• Identify one or several parliamentary committees to take the lead on legislating or reviewing legislation to facilitate maternal health

• Hold hearings with government, civil society, private sector and other actors to identify legislative gaps, challenges and solutions

• Initiate a review of existing laws to address gender discrimination and eliminate legal obstacles that limit women's access to health care services
Pillar 2: Legislation

Parliamentary action

• Work with Court of Audits to monitor the implementation of legislation
• Adopt legislation facilitating and supporting the work of midwives
• Ensure that legislation passed is complementary with other existing legal instruments and that MDG5 concerns are mainstreamed adequately
Pillar 3: Financial Resourcing

Conditions for Success

- Health Budgeting
- Gender Budgeting
- Micro-finance
- Insurance System
- Free Services
- Taxation support
Pillar 3: Financial Resourcing

Parliamentary action

- Liaise/work with the budget/finance committee to pay particular focus on Health and MDG5
- Ask questions to Government during the budget debate and make MDG5 a budgetary priority
- Hold hearings with women and health associations on needs and priorities prior to the budget debate
- Ask that responsible ministers regularly report to parliament on use of funds on MDG5 so as to monitor work done
Pillar 3: Financial Resourcing

Parliamentary action

• Ensure that national budgets are gender-sensitive; sensitize and inform MPs on gender sensitive parliaments and train parliamentary staff

• Ensure that the national budget process makes use of sex-disaggregated data

• Ensure that budgets adequately reflect the needs of indigenous people

• Organize a raising awareness/media/event on MDG5 to put pressure during the budget debate
Pillar 4: Health System

Conditions for Success

- Human Resources
- Quality Care
- Reproductive Health Rights
- Information and Data
- Training
- Availability of Services
- Budget Allocation
Pillar 4 : Health System
Parliamentary action

• Use parliamentary oversight mechanisms (oral and written questions to government, enquiries, hearings, parliamentary committee work) to ensure accountability and meet health objective set;

• During the budget process, pay particular attention to health allocations, ask questions and monitor allocated amounts and their effective use; use health statistics to question level of allocations made
Pillar 4: Health System

Parliamentary action

• Support sufficient funding to build independent national statistics institutes; liaise with UN and other sources to access data

• Ensure that health concerns are cross-cutting in parliamentary work and that parliamentary committees work in complementarity

• Review legislation; start a debate in parliament on gender discrimination, especially harmful traditional practices
Pillar 5 : Education
Conditions for Success

• National Strategic Plan
• Budget allocation for Education
• Training Teachers and Midwives
• Mass media
Pillar 5: Education
Parliamentary action

• Use parliamentary oversight mechanisms to regularly monitor and evaluate government work on education; Focus in particular on women and girls’ education
• Support the granting of bursaries to girls
• Request sex-disaggregated data to closely monitor the situation of girls;
• During the budget process, pay particular attention to education budgetary allocations, ask questions and monitor allocated amounts and their effective use;
Pillar 5 : Education

Parliamentary action

- Organize events with the media to educate the public on maternal health issues
- Engage with communities
- Ensure that human rights and gender equality are part of the school curricula
- Ensure that new members of parliament are educated and briefed on MDG5; develop mentoring to pass on the knowledge
Pillar 6 : Cultural Practices
Conditions for Success

• Media support
• Linking culture, human rights and legislation
• Challenging harmful cultural practices
• Financing grassroots initiatives
Pillar 6: Cultural Practices

Parliamentary action

- **Raise awareness in your constituencies and hold debates on harmful traditional practices**
- **Speak out publicly against them; set the example**
- **Debate harmful practices in parliament, within the framework of human rights standards and initiate legislation, if needed**
- **Promote use of community advisors**
Pillar 7: Partnership
Conditions for Success

• Common objectives
• Mutual respect
• Identify needs
• Inclusive approach and Cross-level co-operation
• Information Sharing
Pillar 7: Partnership

Parliamentary action

• Build cross party coalitions
• Hold regular meetings with various partners (breakfast meetings with Ministries; regular sessions with civil society organization etc)
• Engage men parliamentarians on MDG5
• Reach out to communities, grassroots organizations and local partners
• Invest in Parliament’s technical capacity to bridge the digital divide and facilitate communication
Roadmap

• The Roadmap is designed as a framework to assist us in taking action back home

• We need to keep it alive, build on it and continue to share our experiences and help each other out to achieve change
Evolving Roadmap for MDG5

MDG5 Goal

- Cultural Practices
- Education
- Health System
- Financial Resourcing
- Legislation

- Political commitment
- Partnership
- Media Support

- Rights Legislation
- Cultural Realities

- Strategic Plan
- Budget
- Training

- Human Resources
- Quality Care
- Reproductive Rights

- Gender Budget
- Insurance

- Health Budget

- Safe Motherhood
- Shared Language
- Partner Support

- Health

- Support

- Accurate data
- Transparency
- Media Awareness

- Common Objectives
- Mutual Respect
- Identify Needs

- Action

- Success Story

- Condition

- Success Story

- World Health Organization

- Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal
Contact details for further information

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