

Primary Health Care, Including Health System Strengthening
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I am speaking for the IPA, an international organization of Pediatricians and their National and Regional Pediatric Associations from the world over.

We pediatricians are concerned that although progress has been made in newborn and child survival, much more accelerated progress is needed if we are to reach the MDG's which address the survival, health, and development of newborns and children throughout the world, as well as the crucial need for the health and survival of their mothers.

As many as ten million newborns and children still die of preventable or readily treatable diseases each year. The five major causes of their deaths are failure of newborn survival, diarrheal disease, pneumonia, malaria, and HIV-AIDS. The majority of deaths from these conditions can be prevented by cost effective interventions inherent to basic primary health care. These interventions include attended births, immediate breast feeding of newborns, oral rehydration therapy, zinc supplementation, early recognition and antibiotic treatment of pneumonia, insecticide treated bed nets, and anti-malarial treatment of childhood fevers. HIV AIDS, now the leading cause of child death in a number of African countries, adds another dimension of needs: continuum of maternal newborn and child health care, integration of vertical care programs for HIV with MNCH care programs, and maternal newborn and child health system strengthening to meet the needs of the world's most vulnerable citizens.

Implementation of these cost effective and evidence based measures would prevent a significant percentage of preventable child deaths, address maternal mortality as well, and hasten our progress towards achievement of the MDG's. Furthermore, improving the health of the world's mothers and children would contribute to both national and global development and stability.

It is time to move ahead with the promise of Alma Ata and to invest in sound primary care for all the world's mothers and children, and indeed for all its peoples. There is no more important task at hand for the world health community. We of the International Pediatric Association are committed to working with WHO and other partners to do our part in achieving this important goal.

We thank you for your attention, and congratulate WHO for its leadership in bringing the crucial issue of universal primary health care to the attention of the world health community.

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