

Report:

**Women Deliver Conference
June 7 – 9, 2010 Washington, DC**

The Women Deliver 2010 Conference was held in Washington, DC in June and attended by Jane Schaller representing IPA and Zulfiqar Bhutta, a speaker, and also representing the Countdown to 2015 process.

This was the second Women Deliver Conference, the first having been held in 2007 in London. These conferences were started to address the issue of achieving MDG 5: maternal survival and health (although newborn survival is also mentioned as part of the equation). The IPA has been working closely with our sister organizations FIGO (International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics) and ICM (The International Confederation of Midwives), and we have advocated to get children also added to this equation so in some places this conference is noted as addressing issues of Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health. However, as you can see on the [Women Deliver Conference website](#) the primary thrust of this process has been on women's health.

This was the best organized, most impressive large meeting that I have ever attended. There were said to be about 3,400 attendees but the enthusiasm and staying power of the delegates made the meetings seem much larger to me. All major international organizations were represented, as well as literally hundreds of large and small civil society organizations from countries all over the world. The program was excellent, with very good plenary speakers, a number of informative panels, knowledgeable celebrities who lent their weight to the proceedings and a plethora of parallel sessions which unfortunately could not all be attended. The focus was primarily on women's health and women's right including reproductive rights, and was not limited to survival but also was appropriately weighted towards survival and health. There were some sessions on newborns and few sessions on children, this meeting was primarily about women and mothers. Hopefully interested IPA members will take time to consult the extensive website of this meeting.

There were a number of highlights, perhaps most notably the 2010 Countdown sessions and reports. Attached you will find a summary of the statistics of the 2010 Countdown to 2015 report. The Good news for Child Health is that nineteen of sixty eight Countdown Countries are now on track to reach MDG 4, the bad news of course is that forty nine countries are still not on track and nearly nine million children each year die before their fifth birthdays. At least two thirds of them from preventative causes with pneumonia and diarrhea being the largest killers and under nutrition a contributory factor in at least one third of the deaths.

The data concerning progress towards achieving MDG 5 – maternal health, is not entirely clear, but the most recent study indicates some improvement. However in most Countdown countries progress is not considered sufficient to reach MDG 5, and an unacceptable number of women still die in pregnancy and at child birth. The maternal presentations made a strong point that for each woman that dies at least twenty others suffer injuries and lasting disability. It is felt that nearly all maternal deaths are preventable. There were a number of parallel sessions on the Countdown process and the programs of these sessions are also attached. An issue of the Lancet highlighted

the 2010 Countdown reports and pertinent articles; this can be found in Lancet volume 375, number 9730, pages 1939 – 2050, June 5 – 11, 2010 (attached).

Also notable on this program was the introduction of the United Nations Secretary General, Ban-Ki Moon's Joint Action Plan for women's and children's health. This Joint Action Plan will be presented at the United Nations General Assembly to be held in New York in September 2010. The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (PMNCH) and its Board members have played a key role in making the initial draft of the joint action plan, and the UN Secretary General himself introduced this and discussed it in the opening ceremony of the Women Deliver Conference.

Also of interest to PMNCH members was a meeting of the Executive Committee of PMNCH with its new Chair of the Board of Directors, Professor Julio Frenk of the Harvard School of Public Health (formerly the Minister of Health of Mexico). This meeting was primarily an introductory and general discussion meeting, and was attended by Jane Schaller for IPA.

Another notable feature of the Women Deliver process and the international emphasis on women's survival and health is the broad support of a widespread grassroots civil society organization called the White Ribbon Alliance which exists in countries all over the world and includes women (and some men) who are deeply engaged in issues of women's health and survival. This grassroots movement has added considerable strength and voice to the international movement for women's health. IPA should consider how we might engage civil society more widely in our quest for newborn, child, and adolescent survival and health. Possibilities might include linking up with the White Ribbon Alliance (which now does mention in name "child health" in addition to "maternal and newborn health") or organizing a grassroots civil society movement of our own based around newborn, child and adolescent health.

Bottom line of this conference: It was an excellent meeting, of interest from beginning to end, the audience was receptive and enthusiastic and seemed to stay through the entire meeting. There were many opportunities for networking among the various civil society and international organizations present. The overall enthusiasm of participants was remarkable. IPA is proud that Zulfiqar Bhutta played an important role in the organization and program of this conference primarily representing the Countdown to 2015 of which he is co-Chair.

Action points for IPA:

- Continue to maintain and promote pediatric focus on newborn, child, and adolescent health on a global basis, including as part of the UN Secretary General's joint action plan.
- Continue to work across the Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health spectrum along with our colleagues in FIGO, ICM, and ICN.
- Make clear the interest in and activities of pediatricians in newborn and adolescent health as well as child health (which is many minds is still limited to children from age 1 to 5).
- Arrange to enable as many IPA members as possible to represent IPA in the upcoming Countdown meetings, and make IPA a formal member of the

- Countdown to 2015 process (this is a bit puzzling, as the IPA logo has been used on the Countdown ever since the Countdown began some years ago).
- Continue to work closely with PMNCH and GAVI, both of which are developing important civil society constituencies.
 - Learn from the excitement and content of this important meeting and try to match it in the future with our international Congresses (which are excellent) but somehow have not had the air of electric excitement about them which this particular meeting did.
 - IPA must emphasize that for everyone of the approximately nine million children who dies a preventable death in the developing world, there are probably at least one hundred other children who suffer permanent damage or disability from under-nutrition, environmental poisonings, or chronic illnesses which could have been prevented or treated. IPA does not stand only for child health, but also for children who are healthy, and who can develop to reach their human potentials. .
 - One matter that did puzzle me: how was this meeting funded? It was not clear but there must have been generous donors who paid a good bit for all of the arrangements and speakers and so forth.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Schaller, IPA Executive Director