



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

NOTE FOR THE PRESS

WEBSITE

www.who.int

1211 GENEVA 27 SWITZERLAND - TELEPHONE: (41) 22.791.21.11 - FAX: (41) 22.791.31.11 - E-MAIL: inf@who.int

Note for the media N°22
29 October 2004

"MAKE EVERY MOTHER AND CHILD COUNT" WHO ANNOUNCES THEME OF WORLD HEALTH DAY 2005

Geneva - Highlighting an invisible health crisis, the World Health Organization (WHO) is making maternal and child health the focus of World Health Day on 7 April 2005. The WHO is also launching the World health report - also dedicated to maternal and child health - on World Health Day for the first time ever.

In developing countries, pregnancy and childbirth is one of the leading causes of death for women of reproductive age, and one child in 12 does not reach his or her fifth birthday. Yet, the fate of these women and children is too often overlooked or ignored. The slogan for World Health Day 2005 "*Make Every Mother and Child Count*" reflects the reality that today, governments and the international community need to make the health of women and children a higher priority.

"The real tragedy," notes Dr LEE Jong-wook, WHO Director-General, "is that millions of women and children are dying needlessly, and we are failing to act. We do not need to discover a cure for childbirth complications, or for a little girl with pneumonia, we simply need to apply the knowledge we already have to saving lives."

Dr Lee points out that the health of mothers and children is also key to solving wider economic, social and developmental challenges. "Mothers and children are the foundation of families, communities and societies. When a mother or child dies, that foundation crumbles. If we want to improve the health of future generations, we must start with the health of mothers and children today".

In establishing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) four years ago, the international community committed itself to reducing maternal deaths by three quarters, and reducing child mortality by two thirds by the year 2015.

"We are a long way from reaching these goals," said Joy Phumaphi, Assistant Director-General of Family and Community Health at WHO. "However, the fact that some developing countries have made dramatic improvements in reducing maternal mortality and that children are half as likely to die before age five today as they were 40 years ago, shows that change is possible and that the MDGs are within reach."

"World Health Day 2005 is a unique opportunity not just to highlight the magnitude of the problem, but to bring all stakeholders together to apply the solutions that work," she added.

The World Health Day 2005 website, launched today at www.who.int/world-health-day, includes a toolkit for organizers of World Health Day activities and the World Health Day slogan and design.

WHO PRESS OFFICE

Note for the media N°22
Page 2

For more information on World Health Day, please contact:

Chris Powell, Communications Adviser, Family and Community Health Cluster; Tel: +41 22 791 2888, Mobile: +41 79 217 3425; email: powellc@who.int

Rebecca Harding, Communications Officer, World Health Day; Tel: + 41 22 791 3229, Mobile: +41 79 509 0651; email: hardingr@who.int

Follow the story of six women, as they report the progress of their pregnancies and childbirth leading up to World Health Day 2005 at: http://www.who.int/features/2004/great_expectations/en/

For more information on the World health report 2005, please contact:

Thomson Prentice, Managing Editor, World Health Report. Tel: +41 22 791 4224, Mobile +41 79 244 6030; email: prenticet@who.int