



**The Partners' Forum  
Dar es Salaam, the United Republic of Tanzania  
17-20 April 2007**

**Background note**

**Brief on the issues**

The world is witnessing an ever-increasing divide in maternal, newborn and child health. Every year, 10.6 million children under the age of five die of causes that are mostly preventable and manageable. Half a million women die during pregnancy or birth, and another 10 million suffer from related complications. Around 99 per cent of all deaths occur in the developing world, all due to a lack of decent maternal, newborn and child health services. In sub-Saharan Africa, one in 16 women dies in pregnancy or childbirth. This risk is 175 times higher than that in developed countries.

During the past two decades, progress to reduce mortality has been inexcusably stagnant in many low-income countries. Coverage rates for known and effective newborn and child survival interventions are largely insufficient. At the same time, reduction of maternal and newborn mortality has remained essentially unchanged in most vulnerable countries. In some, the rates are back on the rise due to increasing levels of HIV/AIDS and malaria.

**The Partnership sets to act, convening assembly for the first time**

Global action to reverse the state of maternal, newborn and child health in poor countries has gained momentum with the establishment in 2005 of The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health. By April 2007, The Partnership consists of more than 120 member organizations working towards reducing mortality and achieving Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5.

From April 17-20, 2007, The Partnership is convening its first-ever assembly of all members in Dar es Salaam, hosted by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania. The Forum provides a historic opportunity to set out immediate global priorities in maternal, newborn and child health and will promote the need for greater political and financial commitments by donors and developing countries.



The Partners' Forum will be attended by more than 150 leading health experts, advocates and high-level delegates, who will be joined by Ambassador Gertrude Mongella, President of the Pan-African Parliament and Dr Francisco Songane, Director of The Partnership, as well as ministerial delegations from up to 15 member countries.

### **Partners focus on the human face behind the challenges**

The Partners' Forum will also host the launch of an innovative film "*Play Your Part*" developed by five health workers documenting their real experiences fighting maternal, newborn and child deaths at the frontline. The film, initiated by the White Ribbon Alliance of Tanzania, an NGO dedicated to promoting safe motherhood and maternal and child health, was developed with financial support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The film presents how health workers, together with their patients--mothers and children-- sustain the lifeline, delivering health interventions at the most critical moment of human life--birth and the period following it. "*Play Your Part*" also features a title track by a Tanzanian popular singer Stara Thomas who will perform the music at the opening ceremony of the Partners' Forum.

### **More about the Partnership**

The Partnership joins together the maternal, newborn and child health communities, enabling unified and effective approaches that promise greater progress in reducing mortality. It was established in 2005, merging three existing global partnerships for Safe Motherhood, the Healthy Newborn and for the Child Survival. As of April 2007, The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health has become a broad constituency of more than 120 members representing partner countries, UN and multilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations, health professional associations, bilateral donors and foundations, and academic and research institutions. The Partnership's secretariat is based at the World Health Organization in Geneva. Please visit our website [www.who.int/pmnch](http://www.who.int/pmnch) for full information.