31 October 2012

UGANDA COMMITMENT TO THE “BORN TOO SOON” CAMPAIGN

Preterm birth is the leading cause of neonatal mortality and is now the number two cause of child mortality globally. Each year, it is directly responsible for 1.1 million neonatal deaths, and many of the preterm babies who survive face a lifetime disability. As many countries push towards achieving MDG 4, progress in reducing preterm mortality remains neglected both in terms of awareness and action.

The BORN TOO SOON is a global action report on preterm birth as a joint effort of over fifty (50) organizations in support of EVERY WOMAN EVERY CHILD campaign. It is a renewed promise – CALL TO CHILD SURVIVAL. It shows cases of how multi-stakeholder approach can use the evidence-based solutions to ensure survival, health and wellbeing of preterm babies. To capitalize on the global commitment and movement, Uganda has taken up a position as one of the champions to promote and create awareness around the second biggest cause of death among children aged below five years.

According to data available, in Uganda, 14 out of 100 babies are born preterm and complications of prematurity account for 38% of neonatal deaths.

In Uganda, 52% of all deliveries occur in health facilities. However only 33% of all babies delivered access postnatal care services within 2 days as recommended. It is therefore imperative to apply techniques to save the preterm babies as a move towards realization of MDG 4 in time.

As a nation, we commit to increasing the pace of scale up of high impact interventions to reduce deaths due to prematurity, especially by:-

- Prevention of preterm births e.g. through early, prompt treatment of febrile illnesses, antenatal care visits and antenatal care packages (IPT), effective childbirth care;
- Management of preterm labour e.g. antenatal corticosteroids, antibiotics for PROM;
- Care of the preterm baby via essential newborn care, neonatal resuscitation, kangaroo mother care, and management of preterm babies with complications.
**Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC)** and **antenatal corticosteroids** have been identified as being uniquely capable of driving significant preterm mortality reduction in a cost-effective manner, and thus are considered priority interventions.

The Ministry of Health will work with Partners to develop and implement plans to reduce preterm deaths. For that Uganda has selected *Save the Children* as the facilitating Partner to link and channel support from the global “BORN TOO SOON” team.

On Saturday, 17th November 2012, Uganda and its Partners will join the rest of the world to launch and commemorate the **World Prematurity Day**. The commemoration of this day presents a critical opportunity for action to reinforce existing and new commitments from a range of influential stakeholders, including committing high-level support of the Government. These commitments of goodwill will be used to achieve broad buy-in across all sectors, and provide a platform to engage partners for specific activities.

Leading to the World Prematurity Day, a number of activities have been scheduled which include:-

a. A working group composed of individuals with varying organizational affiliations and expertise, led by the Ministry of Health. This has been set up to spearhead the process to the national launch of the World Prematurity Day.

b. Mapping Partner involvement, activities and sensitization on newborn survival, especially interventions targeting premature babies.

c. Communicating through different channels, and messaging to raise awareness on the “BORN TOO SOON” problem, significance and mitigation factors, including how one can be part of this important campaign.

On behalf of Ministry of Health therefore, I take this opportunity to call on all Stakeholders to give their due support in this noble cause for the “BORN TOO SOON” survivals.

**For God and My Country**

Hon. Dr. Ondoa D. J. Christine

**MINISTER OF HEALTH**