



**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

9 October 2013

**Sixtieth Session
Muscat, Oman, 27-30 October 2013**

TECHNICAL EVENT

**INDEPENDENT EXPERT REVIEW GROUP OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY
COMMISSION- LAUNCH OF SECOND REPORT
ON MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH**

Objectives of the session

The session aims to:

- advocate for maternal and child health in the Region, particularly among the high burden countries;
- link the report's recommendations to the regional initiative on "Saving the lives of mothers and children", the Dubai Declaration and the maternal and child health acceleration plans which focus on "strengthening equity and dignity through health".

Background and discussion points

The UN Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, Every Woman Every Child, was launched in September, 2010 to accelerate progress towards MDGs 4 (child survival) and 5 (maternal and reproductive health). A critical part of this strategy was the creation of an accountability mechanism to ensure that commitments to women's and children's health were being delivered on time and with impact. The UN Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health reported in 2011. One of the Commission's 10 recommendations was the creation of an independent Expert Review Group (iERG) to report regularly to the UN Secretary-General on the results and resources related to the Global Strategy, and on progress in implementing the Commission's recommendations.

The iERG issued its second report – *Every woman every child: strengthening equity and dignity through health* – in September 2013 in New York. This is the second of the four annual reviews that the iERG will complete in the run up to and including the Millennium Development Goal target date of 2015. This second report summarizes progress towards MDGs 4 and 5, the delivery of commitments made to the UN Secretary-General's Global Strategy, and the Commission's recommendations. It also takes two new subjects – country accountability and adolescents – and reviews status in both areas. The iERG puts forth six new recommendations, in addition to those made last year, and reviews how the recommendations made in 2012 have been received and responded to by partners.

In their second report the iERG recommends that "Ministers of Health, together with partners, must demonstrably prioritize and evaluate country-led, inclusive, transparent, and participatory national oversight mechanisms to advance women's and children's health". The Group warns that activity, which is demonstrable, is not the same as measurable progress for women and children; that equity is still being neglected; and that quality of care continues to be ignored. Quality needs to be an indispensable part of accountability frameworks for

women's and children's health: there is an urgent need to expand the sources of evidence we draw on to measure and document quality of care for women and children. The iERG highlights that for accountability to be strengthened there must be stronger joint annual health sector reviews in countries, greater engagement with civil society, enhanced parliamentary oversight, and more use of country Countdowns.

iERG 2013 recommendations

1. **Strengthen country accountability:** Ministers of Health, together with partners, must demonstrably prioritize and evaluate country-led, inclusive, transparent, and participatory national oversight mechanisms to advance women's and children's health.
2. **Demand global accountability for women and children:** Advocate for and win an independent accountability mechanism to monitor, review, and continuously improve actions towards delivering the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.
3. **Take adolescents seriously:** Include an adolescent indicator in all monitoring mechanisms for women's and children's health, and meaningfully involve young people on all policymaking bodies affecting women and children.
4. **Prioritize quality to reinforce the value of a human-rights-based approach to women's and children's health:** Make the quality of care the route to equity and dignity for women and children.
5. **Make health professionals count:** Deliver an expanded and skilled health workforce, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, which serves women and children with measurable impact.
6. **Launch a new movement for better data:** Make universal and effective Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems a post-2015 development target.

Expected outcomes

- Increased commitment of ministers of health in the Region to prioritize implementation of the maternal and child health plan to accelerate progress towards MDGs 4 and 5.
- Strengthened accountability in countries with regard to maternal and child health and adolescent health.