



Religious Leaders Engagement for Maternal and Child Health in Ethiopia

Joint Statement

5 February 2015

We Inter Religious Council of Ethiopia have agreed on 5 February 2015 to commit to supporting efforts aimed at improving maternal and child health and to reach Millennium Development Goal 5, which aims to reduce maternal mortality. In collaboration at all levels, we religious leaders have committed to focus our efforts to understand the major causes of maternal and child deaths in areas where we live and work and to support the health system to accelerate progress in new born, child and maternal health.

In September 2013, Ethiopia announced it had achieved Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 4 reducing child mortality by two-thirds by 2015 - a full year ahead of schedule. In terms of maternal health the story as shown by the Government of Ethiopia statistics needs more focus and commitment. The MDG target of reducing the maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters within the period from 1990 – 2015 has not been met, although the Ministry of Health believes it is achievable.

To accelerate progress, we need targeted and effective implementation of high impact interventions, including strong support from the faith leadership throughout the country in changing key behaviours that have a significant impact on maternal and child health. Dramatic reductions in maternal and child deaths can be achieved through concerted action in five critical areas, outlined in the Global Roadmap:

1. Geography: Increase efforts in the areas where the most deaths occur, prioritizing budgets and committing to action plans to end preventable child deaths.
2. High Burden Populations: Focus country health systems on scaling-up access for underserved populations, to include rural and low income groups.
3. High Impact Solutions: Focus on the primary causes of maternal and child death.
4. Gender Equality: Invest beyond health programs to include educating girls and boys; empowering women and men; eliminating the practice of child marriage and ensuring inclusive economic growth.
5. Mutual Accountability and Financing: Unify around a shared goal and common metrics.

We, the Religious leaders in Ethiopia, are committed to develop and implement a plan to support efforts that integrate on-going work to accelerate progress and end preventable deaths among women and children in Ethiopia.