

## 2018 World Prematurity Day report - UNICEF NYHQ

UNICEF New York headquarters celebrated world prematurity day on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2018 with focus on the theme “*Working together: Partnering with families in the care of small and sick newborns*” to create global awareness of the epidemiological burden, challenges and gaps for small and sick newborn care in health facilities and to highlight UNICEF’s response to scaleup proven interventions to ensure each small and the sick newborn survives and thrives. World Prematurity Day is a key moment to focus global attention on the leading cause of child deaths under age 5 – complications from preterm birth. In 2017, globally 2.5 million newborns died from preventable causes – approximately 7,000 every day before completing the first month of their life. To meet global goals to end all preventable newborn and child deaths by 2030 requires a major push and focused attention on preterm birth prevention, diagnosis, management and cost-effective solutions.

An information session led by UNICEF parent of preterm child, Maxine was hosted and attended by over 40 participants from Health, Nutrition, Data and Analytics, WASH and Early Child Development Sections. Maxine’s proud parents shared their experience and Maxine’s survival story which would be impossible without access to quality care. Tweets regarding the event were also posted on Yammer for increased awareness.

Highlights of the session included:

### **Opening remark by Dr Luwei Pearson –**

Dr. Luwei Pearson, Principal Adviser, Health Section, welcomed the participants and highlighted the fact that prematurity is the single largest cause of all under-five deaths. World Prematurity Day is a good opportunity to revive our commitments and spread awareness about the challenges faced by the babies born too soon. She highlighted that the global theme for 2018 World prematurity day is “Family Centred Care”. Thus, the agenda reflects story of a family and emphasizes the role of parents in care of the small babies.

### **The epidemiology and burden of Prematurity –**

Dr. Nabila Zaka, Senior Adviser, Maternal, Newborn and Adolescent Health in her presentation gave an overview of SDG targets that relate to newborn health, followed by some infographics on newborn mortality rate – causes, period of occurrence and survival rates based on country income level. In her presentation, she stressed the need for focused attention on vulnerable pre-term and small newborns which is critical to achieve SDG target 3.2.

To achieve newborn mortality rate of 12 per 1,000 live births requires effective high coverage of antenatal care, essential childbirth care, essential newborn care, postnatal care and inpatient care for small and sick newborns in all settings, including the most hard-to-reach places, such as humanitarian situations where the burden is highest. In line with the world prematurity day theme for 2018, she flagged the need to Harness the power of parents and families in providing family centered care.

#### SO 4: Harness the Power of Parents, Families and Communities

- INNOVATE**  Consider & test implementation of telemedicine and digital tools to support parents  
Involve patient/parent representatives in the design of new products, programs, and research proposals.
- INFORM**  Develop tools to measure support, educate & engage families- especially men- to understand the needs, risks and danger signs of pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal periods  
Engage affected parents and families to monitor inpatient newborn care services as well as long term developmental care for those with more specific needs.
- IMPLEMENT**  Design, promote & build family centric principles for small and sick newborns  
Design & Implement advocacy, outreach & awareness campaigns in partnership with parent/community coalitions & health providers
- INVEST**  Establish policies, laws, regulations & partnerships between key stakeholders in the system, i.e. families & the private sector  
Engage the private sector in multi media campaigns to promote newborn care & advocate social change

### Highlights of UNICEF's work -

Dr. Tedbabe Hailegebriel, Health Specialist Maternal, Newborn and Adolescent Health presented on UNICEF's efforts to scaleup Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC), a proven cost-effective intervention for reducing deaths in low birth weight and premature newborns. UNICEF's global and country efforts as highlighted in her presentation include development of global KMC facilitators guide and resource mobilization package to aid proposal development.



Over 170 health care providers from 28 countries were trained on KMC in 2018 and several in-country trainings were conducted. For example, in Pakistan, 1,015 health workers (doctors, nurses and midwives) have been trained on KMC. Ongoing technical support is being provided to countries to develop national KMC guidelines as well as inclusion of KMC indicators into national Health Information Systems.

### A journey with a hero Premie Maxine - Parents' experience

UNICEF staff members, Christopher and Vina Borje shared their personal experience when their daughter Maxine was born prematurely at 27 weeks. Maxine's emotional survival story brought tears to many eyes. Due to risk of infection from caesarian section, Vina could not hold the baby for few days. Thankfully her husband was there to support throughout the journey which makes a lot of difference – family centered care! Maxine was in the intensive care unit for 8 weeks.

We were determined to do whatever it takes on our part, Vina recalled, so we took turns for performing KMC. We saw the improvements and can say from experience that KMC works.

Chris and Vina can proudly share Maxine's story today because they had access to quality care.



### **World Prematurity Day Video –**

Amazing story of Hantimir, born prematurely in Kyrgyzstan now 4-year old and healthy was shown on video. The baby survived thanks to the training and equipment provided by UNICEF to Bishkek maternity hospital. Hantimir’s story is told by his mother Aidana. The video can be accessed [here](#).

### **Remarks by Prof. Stefan Swartling Peterson –**

Prof. Stefan Peterson, Director Health Programme UNICEF applauded the efforts of the MNAH unit to organize the event and highlight synergies with D&A, Nutrition, WASH and ECD sectors. He also noticed great progress of Every Newborn Action Plan work since its launch in 2014, thanks to the hard work of a few committed people.

He recounted his experience of the recent mission to Ghana and expressed his appreciation for the excellent work done on quality of care and improving access to small and sick newborn care.

He had noticed better intrapartum care, KMC, emphasis on hand hygiene and breastfeeding. Thus, there are significant improvements in outcomes of reducing maternal and newborn deaths. Dr. Stefan quoted remarks of the Hospital Director in Bonga Municipality of Upper East Region in Ghana. The Director had said, “Previously when a woman was admitted with a premature labour, I was anxious thinking that we cannot help to save the baby but now with functional KMC and sick newborn care, the whole hospital is alert as we know what to do and have all the resources to save these lives, which leaves no place for complacency.”

### **Discussions and closing – Facilitated by Dr. Willibald Zeck**

Dr. Willibald Zeck Head of MNAH unit facilitated the plenary discussion at the end and provided opportunity for all the participants to raise questions and comments. Colleagues appreciated the personal experience shared by parents.

Dr. Stefan Peterson said, “the irony of public health is that you seldom see the results of your work and everything remains in text books and journal articles but with the parents’ story, it has been so real. We can and we must do more for these smallest babies.”



Participants posed for pictures after the event



We act for Premies!



Go purple for every Preemie