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Monitoring Emergency Obstetric Handbook Launched

Monitoring Emergency Obstetric Care, a handbook, was launched in a colorful ceremony held at Sheraton Addis Hotel on 29 June 2009. On the occasion the panelists disclosed that this practical tool gives invaluable direction to those working in the field of maternal mortality who are dedicated to achieving Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5 which aims at reducing the maternal mortality ratio by 75% between the years 1990 and 2015.

In a press briefing during the launching of the handbook, it was underscored that maternal mortality can be significantly reduced by improving the availability, accessibility, quality and use of services for the treatment of complications that may arise during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. These lifesaving services are collectively known as Emergency Obstetric Care (EmOC), and their success is documented.

“Despite our collective knowledge, the maternal mortality ratio – the ratio of the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births – remains unacceptably high in many countries around the world. Based in actual practice, *Monitoring emergency obstetric care: A handbook* serves to translate our increased knowledge and accumulated experience into accessible tools for all health care providers” the panelists reiterated in one voice.

At the launching ceremony it was stated that this handbook is acclaimed for detailing the newly revised EmOC indicators first developed by Columbia University in 1991 and published by UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO in 1997 as Guidelines for monitoring the availability and use of obstetric services. Since that time, these indicators – used to identify needs, monitor implementation and measure progress in the field of maternal mortality – have been applied by

ministries of health, international agencies and programme managers in more than 50 countries around the world.

The Handbook is a collaborative effort of the Averting Maternal Death and Disability Program (AMDD), in the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The launch of the Handbook coincided with the landmark Human Resources for Maternal Survival: Task-shifting to Non-Physician Clinicians Conference, held in Addis Ababa from 29 June through 02 July. More than a dozen Ministers of Health and representatives from 30 African nations have attended the launch.

This occasion has further brought together Clinicians, and Maternal Health experts from countries across the continent to attend to the brief presentation of the hand book and discuss the development and deployment of mid-level health professionals to deliver elements of EmOC in an effort to save the lives of women and children.

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The launching this newly revised publication was celebrated with gala dinner at Sheraton Ethiopia in the presence of Government Officials, Dignitaries, Clinicians, Maternal Health experts, and Media among others.





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AMDD, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO Hold Conference on Human Resources for Maternal Survival with African Ministers

Ministers of Health, senior government officials, health programme managers, clinicians and heads of health training institutes, from 36 African countries, deliberated on Human Resources for Maternal Survival: Task-shifting to Non-Physician Clinicians here in Addis Ababa at the UN conference center from 29 June to 02 July 2009.

The four-day conference focused on seeking strategies for developing and deploying non-physician clinicians (NPCs) as an important means of reducing maternal death and disability in Africa. Currently, many African countries face huge shortages in healthcare personnel, due mostly to brain drain. "There are fewer than five doctors for every 100,000 people in the continent; and each year, 20,000 health professionals abandon their posts in rural areas in pursuit of more lucrative jobs in urban areas or abroad," it was pointed out at the conference.

Opening the conference, Ethiopia's Minister of Health, Dr. Tedros Adhanom, emphasized the need to dramatically expand and strengthen Africa's health workforce so as to improve the survival and health of mothers and children. "Go beyond reaffirming our collective resolve to act on the crisis and craft and refine more informed policies and strategies that would improve the health of mothers and their chances of survival during pregnancy and childbirth" Dr. Tedros urged participants.

Also speaking during the occasion, Dr. Werner Haug, Director of the Technical Division in UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, stressed the need to keep the promise of ensuring universal access to reproductive health by 2015 as is enshrined in the MDG.

"The challenge is to produce health professionals with the right skills and in sufficient numbers to provide family planning services in every community and basic and comprehensive emergency obstetric and newborn care in every district," Dr. Haug stated. "This is an issue of equity, social justice and human rights."

In a keynote address to the conference, Prof. Lynn Friedman, Director of the Averting Maternal Death and Disability programme (AMDD) of the Mailman School of Health in Columbia University, described maternal health problems as a fundamental human rights issue. "We need to see health problems and health systems through the eyes and the experience of the people who suffer those problems and who make up the systems."

The conference on Human Resources for Maternal Survival: Task-shifting to Non-Physician Clinicians is a collaborative effort of the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, AMDD, UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO.

