

AMREF Cautiously Welcomes New G8 Funding for Maternal and Child Health in Africa

Toronto, CANADA Saturday, June 26, 2010 – Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced today that G8 member countries will commit CDN 5 billion dollars towards maternal and child health over the next five years of which Canada will contribute \$1.1 billion of *new* funds. This support is welcomed by the African Medical & Research Foundation (AMREF), a leading health development organization working in sub-Saharan Africa for over 50 years. However this is well below expectations and in order to achieve real progress, previous commitments must be delivered and the total spend must be appropriately directed.

Canada and G8 partner countries need to direct these funds to basic, frontline health services in sub-Saharan Africa in order to significantly improve the survival of women and children. AMREF's experience demonstrates that a community-based approach is the most successful strategy for reducing deaths of mothers and children and is essential to achieving all health Millennium Development Goals. Further, African governments need to be supported and held accountable for their part in the delivery of health interventions in the communities.

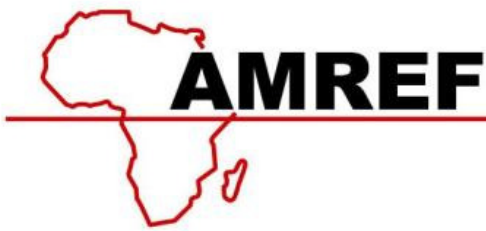
"We know that having access to frontline health facilities in Africa that are adequately staffed with trained health workers result in dramatic and immediate improvements in the health of mothers and children," according to Dr. John Nduba, AMREF's Director of Reproductive and Child Health. "Only healthy communities can begin to address issues of poverty and economic development."

Specifically, AMREF recommends integrating NGOs and ministries of health in the design and delivery of primary health care services. To be effective, strategies must include the following:

- Address the crisis in shortages of health workers with training and support for the right mix of community health workers (midwives, nurses, health extension workers) who are paid a living wage and integrated into the formal national health systems
- Invest and maintain basic health facilities (health centres, dispensaries and clinics) with essential medical and pharmaceutical supplies
- Remove all direct and indirect user fees for women and children
- Ensure communities are full participants in the management of their health services

AMREF's extensive and lengthy work in health development demonstrates that to achieve successful outcomes, health services must be organized and developed around communities as key participants. This must include the training of community members to act as bridges and facilitators with the formal health service. This approach results in acceptance and strong community engagement in better health for all.

"We must remember that Africa has 13 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of the global disease burden but only 1.3 percent of the world's health workforce," said Dr. Nduba,



“AMREF’s experience in strengthening health development in Africa demonstrates that increasing investments in maternal and child health can achieve dramatic results.”

About AMREF

Founded in 1957, the African Medical & Research Foundation (AMREF) is the world’s leading African health development organization. With headquarters, history and feet on the ground in Africa, AMREF ensures good health for the most marginalized people in Africa. With their active involvement, AMREF develops and implements innovative solutions to critical health challenges facing the continent.

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