

Nine countries join UN-supported network to halve maternal, newborn deaths in clinics

14 February 2017 – A health network is being created, with support of United Nations agencies, in nine countries – Bangladesh, Cote d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda – whose Governments have pledged to halve maternal and newborn deaths in health facilities by 2022.

The new Network for Improving Quality of Care for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, will help countries to improve the quality of care mothers and babies receive in their health facilities and respect the patients’ rights, according to a press release.

“Every mother and infant deserves to receive the highest quality of care when they access health facilities in their communities,” said Dr. Anthony Costello, director of the Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health at the UN World Health Organization (WHO).

With support from the WHO, UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and partners, the Quality of Care Network will use a web-based system to build a community of health practitioners, which will develop a strategy to improve quality of care, brainstorm ideas and collect information and experiences.

The Network will also use the UN agency’s eight new *Standards for improving quality of maternal and newborn care in health facilities* to improve the provision and quality of health care. These include, for example, having competent and motivated health professionals, maintaining access to clean water and equipment, and ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of patients.

“Births in health facilities have increased in the past decade,” said Dr. Costello. “Attention is now shifting from access to care to improving the quality of care so that countries can achieve the Sustainable Development Goals targets to end preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths by 2030.”

Each year, some 303,000 women around the world die during pregnancy and childbirth, and some 2.7 million babies die during the first month.