

### **35 child survival centers for Senegal:**

#### **Reduce maternal, neonatal, infant and child mortality through the implementation of a package of high-impact interventions**

**Issue:** In Senegal, efforts to improve maternal, newborn and child health have begun to see encouraging results. Between 1992 and 2005 maternal mortality decreased by 20 percent, yet remains at more than 400 deaths per 100,000 live births. Despite improvements, neonatal mortality remains disturbingly high. In Senegal 33 out of 1000 children will die within the first 28 days of life. Nearly one in five infants is born with a low birth weight. Infections, hypothermia and prematurity are also leading causes of neonatal deaths.

The Child Survival Centre play a central role in the community, raising awareness of simple health and hygiene practices and interventions, which significantly reduce the number of infants and children dying from preventable diseases. The centres educate on a wide variety of common issues, including the importance of proper nutrition, vaccinations, HIV and AIDS, exclusive breastfeeding and the use of insecticide treated bed nets to prevent malaria amongst focus on the key.

The Child Survival Centres make high impact interventions addressing issues such as the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV and AIDS, malnutrition, vaccinations and malaria prevention. The centres form a central role in raising community awareness on the importance of proper nutrition, vaccinations, exclusive breastfeeding and the use of insecticide treated bed nets. By training community health workers at the district, regional and national level, these lifesaving messages reach more of the communities most in need, improving thousands of children's chances of survival.

As a tool to engage with the local community, many of whom have no previous experience of health care and health intervention, the Child Survival Centres implement the kangaroo method. As part of a package of UNICEF supported high impact health services, the Kangaroo method is a low cost technique for keeping low birth weight babies healthy, warm and growing. The method is tremendously important for premature babies who need the warmth from skin-to-skin contact and energy from exclusive breastfeeding. Validated by the World Health Organization, the kangaroo method, also called the skin-to-skin method, has positive results in terms of breastfeeding, maternal affection, respiratory and cardiac stimulation.

UNICEF Senegal, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Faculty of Pediatrics at the University of Dakar introduced a pilot kangaroo unit at Roi Baudouin, a district hospital in the outskirts of Dakar. At the unit, family members receive guidance from health professionals on how to care for their low birth weight baby. Mothers can stay all day long with their baby wrapped to their bare chest so that their newborn stays warm and the mother's heartbeat keeps the baby breathing regularly. As a result of the pilot's success, UNICEF Senegal expands and opens kangaroo units across the country.

By engaging with pregnant women and those with new born babies at this crucial stage, the centres can then conduct follow up and provide continuing care not only for the mother and her newborn, but also for their wider family. This means that lifesaving health messages can reach the whole of the local community.

### **Specific Objectives:**

- ✓ Open and equip Child Survival Centres in regions where infant and child mortality rates are high: Tambacounda, Kolda, Matam, Sédhiou, Thies and Dakar
- ✓ Advocate nationally for the expansion of the kangaroo method
- ✓ Increase capacity to care for low birth weight babies and conduct child growth surveillance
- ✓ Train community health workers at a district, regional and national level to provide care both within the centre and to the local community
- ✓ Communicate important, high impact health messages that can significantly improve the life chances of children living in the communities benefitting from this project.

### **Impact / Expected Results:**

The creation of kangaroo units is a key component of Senegal's strategy to improve child survival and development. The project will assist by:

- ✓ Reducing neonatal mortality rates
- ✓ Provide proper treatment and care for low birth weight babies
- ✓ Promoting important health messages, including exclusive breastfeeding, vaccination services, proper use of insecticide treated bed nets and good hygiene practices

### **Key components of the program:**

- ✓ Training provided to 175 health workers who will be based in the Child Survival Centres and 350 community based health workers.
- ✓ A comprehensive campaign to promote behavioral change on basic health and sanitation issues, including breastfeeding, HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment, proper nutrition and the use of malaria nets. This includes purchasing a television and DVD player for every centre, so that key health messages can be displayed while patients wait to be treated – a proven highly effective communication channel.
- ✓ Outreach activities (prenatal consultations, PTMCT, vaccinations, hygiene, distribution of bed nets, etc.)
- ✓ Equipment for Child Survival Centre: Electronic thermometers, weight scale, tables, benches, cabinet, television, video, beds and DVD player, bed nets and consumables for health centers
- ✓ 35 motorcycles for vaccinations and outreach activities
- ✓ Equipment for health centres to support child survival integrated activities: Purchase of 35 fridges for vaccine storage. Fridges will be provided to health centers equipped with generators
- ✓ Field monitoring and Technical assistance