



## HIGHLIGHTS OF AFRICA AMR REGIONAL MEETING

### Background

Over 100 senior policy makers, including several Ministers attended the multistakeholder Africa Regional Preparatory meeting on the theme of “*Women and Health*” held in Dakar, Senegal on 12-13 January 2010. It provided an opportunity to:

- ❖ Examine the inter-relationship between gender equality and women’s health status
- ❖ Assess progress in achieving the health - and gender-related MDGs in the Africa region
- ❖ Exchange lessons learned and identify examples of good practice and challenges

### Thematic Focus

The African continent is making progress towards the MDGs but progress is uneven and its benefits are not being shared equally. Gender inequality continues to give rise to inequities between men and women in terms of health status and healthcare access. Gender-based discrimination prevents women and girls from accessing knowledge that could help them prevent illness; obtaining the funds necessary to pay for care; and/or negotiating their own health concerns within their families. The meeting brought together renowned experts to explore comprehensive approaches that can at the same time promote gender equality and women’s health.

### Key messages/recommendations

#### Maternal health

- ❖ Provide a continuum of maternal care: Improved antenatal care, timely lifesaving emergency obstetric care and adequate post partum care;
- ❖ Invest in improved family planning services, promotion of contraception usage and efforts to reduce adolescent birth rates;

- ❖ Strengthen the role of midwives and fully tap their potential as trusted providers of maternal health services as well as family planning services within communities.

#### HIV/AIDS

- ❖ Integrate HIV services with health services to strengthen synergies between the AIDS response and the achievement of other MDGs;
- ❖ Empower women to negotiate safer sex and to resist sexual violence and coercion, including transactional sex and early or forced marriage;
- ❖ Invest in health literacy campaigns, including through the use of ICT, to actively engage young people in seeking safe health behavior and strong social identities;
- ❖ Engage boys and men in changing gender stereotypes, addressing violence against women, and achieving gender equality.

#### Women’s empowerment and health

- ❖ Break down economic, social and cultural barriers to ensure access to appropriate care for the vulnerable, hard to reach, marginalized and excluded;
- ❖ Empower women in all sphere of life to enable them to make decisions regarding their own health;
- ❖ Make progress on property rights, gender responsive legal protection, access to formal finance, increased political participation, change in social attitudes all of which are necessary components of improving women’s health status;
- ❖ Promote sustainable health funding, including by moving from user charges to pooled funding, to ensure equitable access for women and man to affordable and appropriate quality health services throughout their life-cycle.