



THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S SPECIAL ENVOY
FOR FINANCING THE HEALTH MILLENNIUM
DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND FOR MALARIA



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Business Leaders Call on Companies to Increase Participation in Improving Health in India

Investment Cases Urge Businesses to Focus on Seven Key Areas to Save the Lives of Women and Children

MUMBAI (13 November 2013) - On the eve of Children's Day in India, business and health leaders today called on companies to accelerate efforts to save children's and mothers' lives in India.

If the business community stepped up its efforts and targeted key health areas, it could help India achieve global targets for reducing maternal, newborn and child deaths in India and save millions of lives, business leaders said.

"In India, a large number of maternal, neonatal and infant deaths that occur are from preventable causes and can be averted by timely interventions, not just by government but civil society and the corporate sector too," said Nita Ambani, Chairperson of the Reliance Foundation, who delivered an opening keynote address. "This will require forging smart, strong and sustainable partnerships with each other and demolishing sectoral barriers to act as one for the national agenda."

The call-to-action for accelerated private sector engagement took place today at the Trident Hotel in Mumbai at a [business forum](#) on health called "Reaching the Health Millennium Development Goals: The Critical Role of India's Private Sector."

"India has a big challenge to improve health and nutrition overall and especially maternal and child health," said Vinita Bali, CEO and Managing Director of Britannia.

“We believe business has a significant role to play in driving positive outcomes in these areas and must step up to this challenge.”

Actress Priyanka Chopra, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, applauded the call for increased private sector action. “This discussion on child and maternal health is crucial, and I congratulate the organizers of this event,” Chopra said. “As part of the entertainment industry, I believe we can use our voices individually and collectively to empower and equip communities, mothers and adolescent girls with knowledge and information about child and maternal health and enable them to demand important services.”

The event featured remarks from more than 30 business, health and government speakers, including Ambani, Bali and Chopra and business executives from numerous companies, such as Tata, Hindustan Unilever, Bharat Biotech, Apollo Hospitals, Zuentus, MSD, McCann Health, Novartis, Johnson & Johnson and Lowe Lintas. Speakers included leaders from government, UNICEF, the World Bank, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the American India Foundation.

The event sought to mobilize business to reduce mother and child deaths and improve India’s sanitation and hygiene challenges.

India struggles with the highest number of newborn, child and maternal deaths in the world and is not on track to meet global targets called Millennium Development Goals, which aim to reduce the maternal death ratio by three-quarters and the death rate of children under age 5 by two-thirds by the end of 2015. Globally, one in every five children who dies before reaching her fifth birthday is an Indian child, and one in every five women who dies of pregnancy-related causes is an Indian woman.

Also at the event, conference organizers released investment cases, calling on companies to focus their newly required corporate social responsibility spending on seven critical health areas.

The country’s new corporate social responsibility (CSR) legislation requires large companies to spend at least 2 percent of their profits every year on CSR.

The investment cases suggest that the health Millennium Development Goals can be reached and the lives of millions of children and mothers saved if the business community focused its CSR funds and investments on those seven areas.

The seven areas are: newborns; pneumonia and diarrhea, which are leading causes of child deaths in India; mother and child nutrition because malnutrition is the leading underlying cause of child deaths in India; women’s empowerment and reproductive and maternal health; water, sanitation and hygiene; and frontline health workers. The cases cite specific products, services and awareness campaigns that companies should support.

“India’s new CSR policy coincides with the urgent deadline that we’re facing to achieve the health targets pursued by India and the world,” said Leith Greenslade, Vice Chair of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Financing the Health Millennium Development Goals. “If India’s business community focused its CSR spending, investments and efforts on the seven areas highlighted today, India could move quickly toward significantly reducing maternal and child deaths and achieving the goals.”

“Success is possible but will depend on the private sector taking a greater role and focusing its efforts where they will have the greatest impact and save the most lives,” said Dr. Krishna Ella, Chairman and Managing Director of Bharat Biotech International Limited, which develops and manufactures vaccines and medicines. “Diarrheal diseases have excellent proven solutions available for prevention and cure and deploying them will save the lives of several hundred thousand children each year.”

Please see the investment cases and event speakers and topics [here](#).

The event was organized by [GBCHHealth](#), a coalition of 200 companies fighting global health problems, and the MDG Health Alliance in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry, Reliance Foundation, American India Foundation, International Center for Research on Women, Johnson & Johnson, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Financing the Health Millennium Development Goals and for Malaria, and the United Nations Foundation.

The forum was in support of the UN Secretary-General’s [Every Woman, Every Child](#) movement, an unprecedented global mobilization to advance the health of women and children.

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