UN Sets New Sustainable Development Goals

At a United Nations meeting in New York last week, the global community adopted sustainable development goals - specifically 17 goals and 169 target.

Ironically, only one goal focuses on health - Goal 3 which aims to "ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all ages." Related targets to this goal include reducing global mortality ratio to <70 per 100 000 live births (from 210 per 100 000 live births in 2013), to reduce neonatal mortality to 12 per 1000 live births as compared to 20 in 2013, reducing under 5 mortality to 25 per 1000 live births as compared to 46 in 2013 and reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one third. The targets are to be reached by 2030.

Additional targets include the achievement of universal health coverage which will include financial risk protection, access to good quality healthcare, and drugs and vaccines that are safe, effective, and affordable.

An evaluation of UN's millennium development health related goals indicates that all of them were not met. Maternal mortality only fell by 40 percent as compared to a target of 75 percent; child mortality fell by 53 percent, missing its target of 67 percent.

On a positive note, targets to stop and reverse the global HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria epidemics have been met, as have targets on access to better sanitation.

Margaret Chan, director general of the World Health Organization, said that countries must look at their own culture and context to determine which of the new targets to focus on. "The MDGs [millennium development goals] were very focused and unleashed a lot of energy, commitment, and resource . . .Every country on this planet must now find their own solutions and address their own health needs," she said.

Source: BMJ

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