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March of Dimes: Global report on birth defects - The hidden toll of dying and disabled children, *White Plains, New York 2006*

Global action for child survival and improved health is an ongoing challenge. The UN Millennium Goal 4 targets the reduction of child mortality but progress to achieve this goal has slowed, especially in developing countries. A clarion call was the WHO's report in 2005 "Make Every Mother and Child Count", which should include the millions of children born each year with severe birth defects and their families. Most of these children are born and die in middle- and low income countries, most of which do not yet have the capability to prevent or care for children with birth defects.

The WAO therefore welcomes the March of Dimes Global Report on Birth Defects, which for the first time highlights the extent of the toll of birth defects and the considerable contribution it makes to infant and child mortality and disability. The Report's positive approach to the issues of care for and prevention of birth defects in developing countries and for underserved communities departs from the limited stance taken too often on the subject. It offers tools, insight and the encouragement needed for developing medical genetic services in middle- and low-income countries. We hope the Report will stimulate international funding and policy organisations to join in the efforts to improve the plight of children with birth defects.

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