NEW YORK, 13 September 2012 – Countries across the world are making rapid progress in reducing child deaths, demonstrating that it is possible to radically reduce child mortality over the span of two decades, a UNICEF report says today.

The 2012 Progress Report on Committing to Child Survival: A Promise Renewed examines trends in child mortality estimates since 1990, and shows that major reductions have been made in under-five mortality rates in all regions and diverse countries. This has translated into a sharp drop in the estimated number of under-five deaths worldwide. Data released today by UNICEF and the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation show that the number of children under the age of five dying globally fell from nearly 12 million in 1990 to an estimated 6.9 million in 2011.

The report underscores that neither a country’s regional affiliation nor economic status need be a barrier to reducing child deaths. Low-income countries such as Bangladesh, Liberia and Rwanda, middle-income countries such as Brazil, Mongolia and Turkey, and high-income countries such as Oman and Portugal, have all made dramatic gains, lowering their under-five mortality rates by more than two-thirds between 1990 and 2011.

“The global decline in under-five mortality is a significant success that is a testament to the work and dedication of many, including governments, donors, agencies and families,” said Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director. “But there is also unfinished business: Millions of children under five are still dying each year from largely preventable causes for which there are proven, affordable interventions.”

“These lives could be saved with vaccines, adequate nutrition and basic medical and maternal care. The world has the technology and know-how to do so. The challenge is to make these available to every child.”

The report combines mortality estimates with insights into the top killers of children under five and the high-impact strategies that are needed to accelerate progress. Under-five deaths are increasingly concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, which together accounted for more than 80 per cent of all under-five deaths in 2011. On average, one in every nine children in sub-Saharan Africa dies before reaching the age of five.

More than half the pneumonia and diarrhoea deaths – which together account for almost 30 per cent of under-five deaths worldwide – occur in just four countries: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Nigeria and Pakistan. Infectious diseases are characteristically diseases of inequity, disproportionately affecting poor and vulnerable populations who lack access to basic treatment and prevention interventions. These deaths are largely preventable.

Under the banner of A Promise Renewed, a movement for child survival is growing to re-energize, refocus and build on two decades of significant progress. The opportunity for further sharp reductions in preventable child deaths has never been greater. Since June, more than half the world’s governments have signed up and renewed their commitment to child survival. Among five priority actions, partners pledge to accelerate progress by focusing on areas where the challenge for child survival is the greatest.
Greater efforts are particularly required in populous countries with high mortality. In addition to medical and nutritional factors, improvements in other areas – notably education, access to clean water and adequate sanitation, adequate food, child protection and women’s empowerment – will also improve prospects for child survival and development.

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**About UNICEF**

UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world’s largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

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