The recent United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) report indicates that globally the number of children under five years of age fell from 12 million in 1999 to 6.9 million in 2011. The global rate of decline has accelerated in recent years: from 1.8 per annum during 1990-2000 to 3.2% during 2000-2001. Despite this change, the world is unlikely to achieve the MDG 4 target: “reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under five mortality rate.”

While the proportion of births attended by skilled health care workers has increased globally, fewer than 50% of births are attended in most African countries. Despite a significant reduction in the number of maternal deaths, from an estimated 543,000 in 1990 to 287,000 in 2010, the rate of decline is just over half that which is needed to achieve the MDG 5 target: “reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality rate.”

On the other hand, the world has witnessed a revolution in the increased uptake of information and communication technologies (ICT) with access to wireless broadband networks and services in developing countries, with improved access to health care services. This has provided new avenues to provide vital health information and promote women and children’s health. There is no doubt that ICT-enabled solutions have improved better informed-decisions, whether by women themselves or health-care professionals. Advances in eHealth applications are providing pregnant women, mothers and young children with better health care services and advice.

As part of the ongoing commitment to eHealth, WHO and the ITU have also jointly published a report on eHealth and innovation in women and children’s health. This report compiles information from 64 of the 75 Commissions on Information and Accountability for Women’s and Children’s Health (CoIA) in countries which together have 98% of the world’s maternal and infant mortality. These countries have responded to a detailed survey about the many ways in which the use of ICTs, and in particular eHealth, help reduce that global burden. The report highlights what has been achieved and identifies barriers to progress. It will help governments and development partners identify where further investment is required. For the first time, it provides a systematic overview of where each country’s strengths and weaknesses are in implementing ICTs for women and children’s health, through a collection of Country Insights.

This report shows how, on a daily basis, eHealth innovations are improving access to care and assisting women to take control of their own health. It is encouraging to see that mobile phone service providers are becoming more active in supporting initiatives in mHealth and mLearning as well as development in general and to addressing the needs of women in particular.

Gender-related perspectives on issues such as phone ownership, access, privacy, and content have been reviewed, and the argument made that ICTs and broadband, as key enablers of development, can play a central role by furnishing new tools and solutions to address core gender gaps.

**Coumba Diawara Toure**
Co-Founder of Zero Mothers Die
Switzerland
cdtoure@gmail.com