Global drive to improve maternal and child health launched at Clinton Global Initiative, United Nations and in New York City streets

"Orphaned" cause of women and children gains champions

26 September 2007, New York – In an historic effort to cut maternal and child deaths, a global coalition of governments and organizations will launch a major advocacy drive today entitled Deliver Now for Women + Children. The launch will take place at public rallies in the city centre and the Bronx. Women leaders of the United Nations will also hold a special discussion Saving 77 Million by 2015: Advancing the Health of Women and Children.

Deliver Now for Women + Children is a core component of a broader Global Campaign for the Health Millennium Development Goals being announced today by the Prime Minister of Norway and other national leaders at the Clinton Global Initiative Annual Meeting in New York.

The unprecedented mobilization responds to alerts raised by the UN confirming the world is lagging far behind in reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for reducing maternal and child deaths by 2015. More than 10 million women and children die each year mostly from preventable causes, while investment in basic maternal and child health remains insufficient. At least an additional US$9 billion a year are needed to meet the basic health care needs of women and children. As of 2004, only US$2 billion--less than a quarter of what is needed-- was made available by major donors to support such services in developing countries.

"Today is a day of hope for women and children. The cause of women's and children's health has remained "orphaned" for too long. Now it is finally emerging from the shadows and gaining the champions it has always deserved," said Dr Francisco Songane, Director of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health, hosted by WHO in Geneva. "We are hopeful this will result in action to ensure health services are available for all with prompt access and without discrimination," he added.

New York public rallies for Deliver Now for Women + Children are taking place in Manhattan and the Bronx. Supermodel and WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Liya Kebede, Grammy-nominated singer Chaka Khan, and actress/talk show host Ricky Lake are participating in these awareness-raising events.

At the United Nations, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro, WHO Director-General Margaret Chan, UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Obaid and UNICEF Executive Director Ann Veneman are demonstrating their commitment to improve maternal health and reduce child mortality during a high level discussion attended by delegates to the 62nd General Assembly.

Seventy five countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America account for almost 95% of all maternal and newborn deaths worldwide. India and Tanzania are the first countries where Deliver Now for Women + Children country-specific programmes will be launched. These campaigns will build political commitment for improved health services, raise media awareness, support action by community groups. India accounts for 25% of the world's child deaths and 20% of its maternal deaths. In Tanzania, 50% of women have no access to skilled care during childbirth due to a critical shortage of qualified health workers and health facilities.
The Deliver Now for Women + Children initiative will work closely with other organizations advocating for maternal and child health, and will be coordinated by the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health.

Note to editors / journalists

To learn more about Deliver Now for Women + Children, visit: http://www.who.int/pmnch/activities/delivernow/.
For additional information on progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, visit: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/mdg2007.pdf

About the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health
At the mid-point to 2015, progress towards Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5 on reducing maternal and child mortality is far off track. The Partnership is an alliance of over 180 organizations--UN agencies, governments and civil society organizations--committed to achieving MDGs 4 and 5 and ensuring all women, newborns and children survive and thrive. For more information please visit www.pmnch.org.

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