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Women Deliver: Global Conference Set For London on October 18-20 World Leaders Meet to Curb Needless Deaths During Pregnancy and Childbirth

September 2007 – A landmark global conference in London this October aims to halt the needless deaths of 10 million women and girls who die in each generation during pregnancy and childbirth, and four million newborn babies who die every year. These tragic deaths are a major contributor to poverty around the world, and can be easily prevented with low-cost investments.

At the [Women Deliver](http://www.womendeliver.org) conference, some 1,500 participants will look at new and proven ways to save these lives. In addition to seeking strategies to change the ways health information and services are provided and funded, the conference will tackle the barriers to other goals including poverty reduction, women's human rights, and economic development.

Delegates from more than 75 countries will include more than 100 cabinet ministers, heads of United Nations and other multilateral agencies, senior government officials, health professionals, researchers, economists, and reproductive health advocates. See www.womendeliver.org for details.

“Every minute of every day a woman dies needlessly during pregnancy and childbirth,” said conference Honorary Co-Chair [Mary Robinson](http://www.womendeliver.org), President of Realizing Rights and former President of Ireland. “That’s ten million women in every generation. Most of these deaths are in the developing world, and most are preventable.”

Huge disparities exist between rich and poor countries and between the rich and poor in all countries. Because of differences in factors affecting lifetime risk, one in six women will die from pregnancy-related causes in Sierra Leone, one in 2,500 in the United States and one in 29,800 in Sweden, according to UN statistics from 2000. An updated country scorecard will be released just before the opening of the *Women Deliver* conference in October.

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Invest in women – it pays



Invest in Women: It Pays!

Deliberations at *Women Deliver* will outline new ways that investing in women will make pregnancy safer and enable women to reach their full potential.

“The birth of a child should be a happy moment in a mother’s life – not her last moment,” said Jill Sheffield, President of Family Care International, the conference organizing partner. “The *Women Deliver* conference is about safe deliveries and healthy babies and about women delivering for other women on related strategies on human rights, girls’ education, financial resources, access to reproductive health, political will and gender equality,” Sheffield added.

Serious investment in women’s health and rights enables women to deliver – not just the next generation, but also everything development communities work to achieve: economic progress, rising rates of literacy and productivity, better health, and well-being for families, communities and nations.

[Thoraya Ahmed Obaid](#), Executive Director of [UNFPA](#), the United Nations Population Fund and a speaker at *Women Deliver*, said the conference “will call attention to a tragedy that is not often registered, and will push all concerned to take unified action.”

Other participants include:

- Co-chair Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations;
- Dr. [Margaret Chan](#), Director-General of the [World Health Organization](#);
- Dr. [Peter Piot](#), Executive Director of [UNAIDS](#);
- [Assane Diop](#), Executive Director of the [International Labour Organization](#); and
- Nafis Sadik, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General for HIV/AIDS.

Timing is everything: The year 2007 is critical for advancing the health and rights of women. *Women Deliver* marks the 20th anniversary of the launch of the global Safe Motherhood Initiative. It also comes at the midpoint between the year 2000, when the 192 countries of the United Nations adopted eight Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), and the 2015 target date for their achievement.

One of the eight goals, improving maternal health, is often called the heart of the MDGs, because if it fails, the others will too. Maternal health is linked to — and in fact underpins — all the other MDGs, particularly those aimed at improving newborn and child health, reducing the toll of HIV and AIDS, ensuring universal access to education, and promoting gender equality. Meanwhile, maternal and newborn health still receives inadequate attention and funding.

“With increased political will and adequate financial investment, most women and newborns can survive so that their families, communities and nations can thrive,” said Sheffield.

The agenda: Five plenary sessions and nearly 100 concurrent workshops at the conference will focus on five critical areas of investment in women and girls:

- Improving women’s and newborn health;
- Advancing human rights;
- Expanding financial resources;
- Building political will; and
- Promoting women in the world.

The organizers: The conference core planning group includes UNFPA (The UN Population Fund); UNICEF (The UN Children's Fund); the World Bank; the World Health Organization (WHO); the UK's Department for International Development (DFID); the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD); the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida); Family Care International; the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Save the Children; and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. The organizing committee includes more than 40 non-governmental organizations.

Covering *Women Deliver*: To receive regular Enews releases on the *Women Deliver* conference, including announcements on keynote speakers, findings and resource commitments, fact sheets, the release of reports and research, etc. go to: [Enews registration](#)

Advance media registration for *Women Deliver* is now available at <http://womendeliver.org/media/apply.htm>

See recent *Newsweek* article "[What Kills One Woman Every Minute of Every Day?](#)"

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