

Oral Statement presented to the 43rd session of the Commission on Population and Development on the theme: "Health, Morbidity, Mortality, and Development" by non governmental organizations in consultation with ECOSOC: World Population Fund, Ipas, Population Action International, International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region, International Women's Health Coalition, Catholics for Choice, Family Care International, the Center for Reproductive Rights and Human Rights Watch.

Every year, more than half a million women die and an untold number suffer temporary or long-term disabilities from preventable pregnancy-related causes and complications during childbirth. The majority of maternal deaths worldwide are due to hemorrhage, infections, unsafe abortion, eclampsia, and obstructed labor.

Most of these deaths can be prevented by the provision of high-quality reproductive health services, including Maternity care- antenatal care, skilled attendance at delivery, emergency obstetric services, and post-natal care. These services must be provided as one element of the comprehensive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) package needed to curb maternal mortality. Investments in comprehensive sexuality education, access to contraception, safe abortion, and diagnosis and treatment of STIs, including HIV enable girls and women to determine the timing and spacing of their pregnancy, to decide whether to carry a pregnancy to term, and to experience pregnancy and childbirth safely.

Saving women's lives also requires a functioning health system to deliver the package of sexual and reproductive health services described above. Single, targeted interventions are necessary, but not sufficient, to reduce deaths and injuries related to pregnancy and childbirth. Health system investments in women's sexual and reproductive health services provide a strong foundation for health services for all. In order to meet the goals of the ICPD PoA, the roadmap for achieving the MDGs, including MDG 5 on improving maternal health, investments must be made in women's health, youth, and human rights organizations to advocate for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and to hold governments accountable for providing them.

Similarly, building community support and demand for comprehensive sexuality education can provide the basis for high-quality, acceptable, affordable reproductive health care. These programs can help women and young people prevent unplanned pregnancies, safely terminate unwanted pregnancies, recognize when pregnancy complications become life-threatening, and utilize skilled birth attendants and essential obstetric services.

Women and young children are most in need of care where health systems are weak, and should be prioritized in efforts to strengthen health systems. All primary health care and family planning facilities should be staffed and equipped to offer an integrated package of sexual and reproductive health services that meets clients' evolving needs.

Finally, protecting and promoting the human rights of women and girls, including their sexual and reproductive rights, are crucial for improving women's health and saving women's lives, as is recognizing the connections between procedural human rights obligations and maternal health is a crucial aspect of meeting these goals. This involves effectively monitoring and improving maternal health programs, providing women with a mechanism for addressing their grievances, and guaranteeing equal access and treatment for all women, including access to safe abortion.