

## Quality health care key to averting unnecessary deaths in childbirth, says Ban



Mother and child

8 October 2009 – Investing in quality health care in poor countries can make a dramatic difference to the survival rates of the estimated 500,000 women worldwide who die each year while giving birth, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in an address this evening spotlighting the need to support the work of the United Nations Population Fund (**UNFPA**).

“Pregnancy and childbirth are inherently dangerous,” Mr. Ban told the Americans for UNFPA Gala for the Health and Dignity of Women, held in New York. “Even a woman with access to the best possible services has no guarantee of an easy delivery, free of complications. But she and her baby are much, much more likely to survive.”

Mr. Ban underscored his point by noting that less than one in 17,000 women in Sweden dies in childbirth, while in Sierra Leone, the number rises to one in eight.

Statistics from 2005 indicate that more than 500,000 women die each year from complications as a result of childbirth, with almost all of these deaths occurring in developing countries.

The quality of care and the placing of maternal health as a priority can mean the difference between life and death for women delivering a baby, said Mr. Ban, praising the audience for standing up for a woman’s right to reproductive health care and for backing their calls with funding.

“You are all champions of women,” he said. “You have supported UNFPA in good times and in bad. The resources you raise save lives. Your moral and political backing is just as valuable.”

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