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New Voices Launch U.S. Campaign for Global Maternal Health

White Ribbon Alliance and CARE Launch *Mothers Day Every Day*:
A Campaign for Healthy Moms and Newborns

Washington, D.C. -- The well-being of women is central to a nation's health and prosperity. Today, the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood (WRA) and CARE, two organizations at the forefront of global women's health issues, joined a distinguished group of advocates to unveil *Mothers Day Every Day* (MDED), a campaign calling for greater U.S. leadership to accelerate progress toward safe and healthy pregnancy and childbirth globally.

While there are growing signs of progress in the fight to save the lives of thousands of mothers and newborns in developing nations, the need for greater access to life-saving interventions remains immense. Every minute a woman dies in pregnancy. And childbirth and maternal mortality remain the leading killers of young women worldwide taking more than 500,000 women's lives each year.

"U.S. support has been critical to addressing some of the world's most challenging global health issues, such as HIV and AIDS," said Donna Shalala, Chair of the MDED Advisory Committee. "Our support has increased access to life-saving HIV prevention and treatment for millions in poor countries. Now, it's time to demonstrate the same level of commitment to providing more women in those nations with access to quality life-saving healthcare before, during and after childbirth. Ninety-nine percent of maternal deaths occur in developing countries, and without U.S. leadership on this issue, the progress needed to save women's lives will not come fast enough."

A diverse group of advisors including Arianna Huffington, CARE maternal health advocate Christy Turlington Burns, Ambassador Mark Dybul, former U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator under the Bush Administration and political strategist Mary Matalin are among the leaders who have joined the campaign pledging to use their voices to champion the cause. The *Mothers Day Every Day* campaign builds on the momentum generated in the House and Senate when both passed resolutions last year calling for a stronger U.S. commitment to reducing maternal mortality at home and abroad.

"We know how to make pregnancy and child birth safe for all women. What we lack is the political will to make sure every mother has access to quality maternal healthcare," said Dr. Helene Gayle, president and CEO of CARE. "The maternal health programs that CARE and WRA support in some of the world's poorest nations are crucial, but to stop the epidemic of maternal mortality we need U.S. leadership."



The Campaign for Healthy Moms and Newborns

www.MothersDayEveryDay.org

Each year an estimated US \$15.5 billion in potential productivity is lost when mothers and newborns die, according to USAID. “At a time when harsh economic realities are being felt around the world, empowering women – beginning with a healthy pregnancy and safe childbirth – is the key to greater overall health, self-sufficiency and global economic growth,” said Theresa Shaver, WRA president and executive director. “With America’s help, so many more mothers can be alive and healthy to nurture not just their own families, but entire communities.”

At the global level, maternal mortality decreased by less than 1 percent per year between 1990 and 2005. Progress, while slow, does seem to relate in large part to whether skilled health workers are present at delivery, according to the first annual report of the Global Campaign for the Health Millennium Development Goals. In 2006, nearly 61 percent of births in the developing world were attended by skilled health workers, up from less than half in 1990. Coverage, however, remains low in Southern Asia (40 percent) and sub-Saharan Africa (47 percent) – the two regions with the greatest number of maternal deaths. Overall, Millennium Development Goal 5, which focuses on reducing maternal mortality by three quarters by 2015, has made the least amount of progress of any of the MDGs.

WRA and CARE both work globally to increase women’s access to skilled care during pregnancy and childbirth through national level policy efforts to outreach at the household level.

About the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood (WRA):

The White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood is an international coalition of individuals and organizations working to increase public awareness and build political support to make pregnancy and childbirth safe for all women and newborns around the world. With members in 112 countries, WRA advocates for changes to ensure every woman’s access to quality health care before, during and after childbirth. WRA works to sustain life and hope for all women and honors those who have not survived pregnancy or childbirth. For more information, please go to **www.whiteribbonalliance.org**.

About CARE:

Founded in 1945, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. Working side by side with poor people in more than 65 countries, CARE helps empower communities to address the greatest threats to their survival. Women are at the heart of CARE’s efforts to improve health, education and economic development because experience shows that a woman’s achievements yield dramatic benefits for her entire family. CARE is also committed to providing lifesaving assistance during times of crisis, and helping rebuild safer, stronger communities afterward. We advocate for policies that defend the dignity of all people and promote the eradication of poverty. Get involved at **www.care.org**.