

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION
FOR HOME ECONOMICS

Press Release

WORLD POPULATION DAY 2007

Bonn, 11th June 2007

“Men as Partners in Maternal Health”

World Population Day was established by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme in 1989. The United Nations Population Fund Agency (UNFPA) and its national partners have been marking World Population Day with a variety of worldwide activities and events focusing on the importance of population and development issues. This year the theme was chosen to observe the 20th Anniversary of the Safe Motherhood Initiative.

The International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) is an International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO), having consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC, FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF) and with the Council of Europe. The IFHE underlines the relevance of the theme of World Population Day 2007:

“Men as Partners in Maternal Health”

Message of the World Population Day 2007 is that men are partners and agents for change, supporting human rights and safe motherhood.

More than half a million women die each year of pregnancy-related causes, 99 per cent of them in developing countries.

The main strategies of UNFPA for reducing maternal death are:

- All women have access to contraception to avoid unwanted pregnancies and to help them plan their families
- All pregnant women have access to skilled care at the time of birth
- All those with complications have timely access to quality emergency obstetric care.

Men need to be involved to achieve this aims. In a lot of countries often men have the decision making power in their main role as fathers, husbands, community leaders, religious leaders and political leaders.

These decisions influence the well-being and prospects of the whole family. The care and support of an informed husband improves pregnancy and childbirth outcomes and can mean the difference between life and death in cases of complications, when women need immediate medical care.

When encouraged and provided with opportunities, many men will seek out reproductive healthcare.

As an International Federation the IFHE supports the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals. They does not only call for an universal access to reproductive health and a 75 per cent reduction in maternal mortality between 1990 and 2015 but also for gender equality and empowerment of women, reducing child mortality and combat of HIV/AIDS – all these themes correspond with maternal health.

The IFHE and its members engage for the implementation of the strategy of UNFPA for reducing maternal health.

An important impact of making motherhood safer is the prevention from HIV/AIDS. Because of their important social role the behaviour of men is central in preventing the further spread of HIV/AIDS. Very important is their decision if boys, girls and women get access to education, what means knowledge about the infection with HIV and the mitigation of the impacts caused by AIDS. Education also helps to overcome the conditions that facilitate the spread of HIV, including poverty, ill health, violence and abuse, particularly against girls and women.

Home Economists all over the world challenge and work for the improvement of prevention from HIV/AIDS to protect women´s health and power. A main strategy is the engagement for access to education for men and women, especially in the childhood and adolescent years.

A corresponding aim of IFHE is to improve the quality of life for everyone - for individuals, families and households. Safer motherhood does not only improve life of the birth giving mothers but also of her family, children and husband.

To improve quality of life and especially maternal health the war against poverty need to be won, improved healthcare systems need to be established, the access to reproductive health need to be given and gender equality need to be enhanced. The condition of all these goals is that men and women have to watch each other as partners, so IFHE like to assent to the introducing statement of Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, UNFPA Executive Director, to World Population Day 2007:

“We see men and women as partners in a relationship built on mutual respect, trust and commitment. Partnering with men promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health an equal opportunity”.