

Sexual and Reproductive Health Key to Achieving Millennium Development Goals

*UN Report Reveals Effectiveness of Ramping Up Sexual & Reproductive Health
Service Delivery, Calls for Global Action*

Washington, DC—Addressing sexual and reproductive health is key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, reveals a new report today released by the UN Millennium Project at the Global Health Council's 33rd Annual International Conference on Global Health.

Public Choices, Private Decisions: Sexual and Reproductive Health and the Millennium Development Goals confirms that combating HIV/AIDS, promoting gender equality, improving maternal and child health, and fighting poverty are all greatly helped by improving the delivery of sexual and reproductive health services in developing nations.

"The report underscores the importance of investing in better sexual and reproductive health as an integral part of achieving the Millennium Development Goals and must be integrated in national development strategies to reduce poverty and promote human development," said Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs, Director of the UN Millennium Project and Special Advisor to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the Millennium Development Goals.

Among the report's key findings:

- Millions of women lack access to family planning services they need and want. The unmet need for contraception is especially acute among adolescents in the developing world, averaging two to four times that of the general population.
- Women in Sub-Saharan Africa have a 1 in 16 lifetime risk of dying from complications of pregnancy and childbirth. This compares with 1 in every 2,800 in highly-developed countries.
- Providing safe, effective, voluntary family planning services prevents death and disability, spurs development, and fights poverty.
- Family planning and obstetric care could radically reduce maternal deaths and injuries.
- Involving men in sexual and reproductive health as clients, partners and agents of social change is crucial to promoting healthier lives for women and girls, gender equality and men's health.
- The financial resources needed to meet the developing world's sexual and reproductive health needs amount to US\$36 billion per year by 2015.

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“This report demonstrates why the world’s leaders recognized universal access to reproductive health as a development strategy and points to neglected opportunities for progress,” said Stan Bernstein, lead author of the report.

“Access to reproductive health services saves women’s lives, which in turn makes children, families and whole societies more secure,” said Dr. Nils Daulaire, president of the Global Health Council. “This report reminds us how fundamentally important reproductive health is to fully integrated health care.”

The report outlines a number of recommendations to integrate sexual and reproductive health into development strategies, including:

- incorporating sexual and reproductive health in both national poverty reduction strategies and strengthened health systems;
- integrating, monitoring and evaluating sexual and reproductive health within health systems;
- allocating enough funds for commodities, supplies and logistics while strengthening health systems; and
- meeting the needs of special populations, particularly young people, the poor and victims of humanitarian crisis.

The UN Millennium Project calls for a massive scale up and expansion of family planning, maternal health, and HIV/AIDS prevention efforts throughout the developing world by mobilizing political will, institutional capacity and technical and financial resources.

For more information visit: http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/srh_main.htm

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The UN Millennium Project was commissioned by the UN Secretary-General to develop a concrete action plan for the world to reverse the grinding poverty, hunger and disease affecting billions of people. Headed by Professor Jeffrey Sachs, the UN Millennium Project is an independent advisory body and presented its final recommendations, “Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals” to the Secretary-General in January 2005. The UN Millennium Project has been asked to continue operating in an advisory capacity through the end of 2006.

The Global Health Council is the world’s largest membership alliance dedicated to saving lives by improving health throughout the world. The Council serves and represents thousands of public health professionals from more than 100 countries on six continents and convenes the Annual International Conference on Global Health. www.globalhealth.org