



World Population Day 2009

Investing in the health and education of women as the global economic crisis deepens

COLOMBO, 10 July 2009 – World Population Day on 11 July stresses the importance of investing in the health and education of women as the global financial and economic crisis threatens to push 200 million people back into poverty. UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, calls to make health and education of women a political and developmental priority.

The theme of this year's World Population Day, "Responding to the economic crisis: why investing in women is a smart choice", provides a chance to focus on the importance of investing in women and girls. The global economic crisis threatens to reverse hard won-gains in education and health. As women represent the majority of the world's poor they will face increased health risks especially if they are pregnant.

In her World Population Day message, Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director of UNFPA, said "today, complications of pregnancy and childbirth are leading killers of women in the developing world. And maternal mortality represents the largest health inequity in the world. This health gap will only deepen unless we increase social investments, maintain health gains and expand efforts to save more women's lives".

"Investing in reproductive health, in particular, will help women and girls avoid unwanted or early pregnancy, unsafe abortions as well as pregnancy related disabilities. This would mean that women stay healthier, are more productive and have more opportunities for education, training and employment, which in turn benefits entire families, communities and nations", the Executive Director added further.

Sri Lanka has made remarkable progress in achieving universal access to primary education and healthcare. With a literacy rate of 89.2 per cent, life expectancy at 77 years for women and maternal mortality ratio of 44.3 per 100,000 live births, Sri Lanka shows that with the right investments women's well being can be improved even prior to achieving high levels of economic development. The current crisis is an opportunity to improve the quality of these systems and make them more cost-efficient.

UNFPA has been working Sri Lanka for almost four decades to strengthen the quality of maternal and newborn care and remains committed to support the government in its efforts to strengthen the healthcare system, advance women's empowerment and gender equality particularly in under-served areas.