

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
23 September 2010

### **BREAKTHROUGH ALLIANCE WILL SAVE THOUSANDS OF MOTHERS' LIVES**

Today's announcement of a global *Alliance for Reproductive, Maternal and Newborn Health* at the UN MDG Summit in New York is welcomed by a group of key sexual and reproductive health NGOs as a breakthrough for saving women's lives around the world.

Previous United Nations gatherings and summits have not explicitly committed to reproductive health because many countries and governments have difficulties tackling the sensitive issue of sexual and reproductive health.

"It's wonderful to see the world's leaders coming together to put women and children's lives before politics and to recognise that to improve maternal health you must improve reproductive health. You cannot save women's lives without family planning." said Mary Mertin-Ryan, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA).

The importance of Australia's decision to co-found the *Alliance for Reproductive, Maternal and Newborn Health* is recognised by the key sexual and reproductive health NGO groups who congratulate Australia's commitment to provide 100 million women with family planning by 2015.

"Many in Australia could not imagine having six, 10 or 13 children when they only wanted two or four. To provide women with family planning is to give them the same rights that we enjoy here in Australia – family planning is a very simple solution to save over 260,000 mother's lives every year." said Naomi Knight, Chief Executive Officer, Sexual Health and Family Planning Australia (SHFPA).

In addition to the announcement of the Alliance, Australia's latest commitment of \$140 million over five years to Africa is a positive expansion of the Australian aid program.

"Africa is a region where maternal death statistics remain very concerning and where the increase of women being infected with HIV/AIDS demonstrates that lack of access to reproductive health impacts more than just maternal health - it impacts all elements of community health." said Ms Mertin-Ryan.

"We are also pleased to see the new government reconfirming the pledges of \$85 million to reproductive and maternal health in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific made at the Pacific Islands Forum in August this year. Too many times, the Pacific is lost in the discussion of the broader Asia-Pacific region.

"It is important to ensure that progress on reproductive and maternal health does not bypass our neighbours, some of the worst affected on measures of maternal and reproductive health in the world.

"We look forward to working with the new Alliance and AusAID to progress women's access to reproductive health in the Pacific and to work towards eliminating the preventable deaths of women and children. When can we start?" said Liz Sime, Regional Director, Marie Stopes International Australia.

Australia's commitment of \$1.6 billion in aid over five years forms part of the \$US40 billion needed to save the lives of 15 million children under the age of 5, and prevent almost three quarters of a million maternal deaths between 2011-2015 as announced by the UN Secretary-General at the UN MDG Summit in New York.

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**For all media enquiries please call Claire Maloney on 0431 279 785**

#### **Interview Opportunities:**

**Mary Mertin-Ryan**, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA)

**Liz Sime**, Regional Director, Marie Stopes International Australia (MSIA)

**Naomi Knight**, Chief Executive Officer, Sexual Health and Family Planning Australia (SHFPA)

**About Australian Reproductive Health Alliance:** ARHA works closely with parliamentarians, NGOs, media and civil society to garner political and public support for addressing sexual, reproductive and maternal health and rights issues. We advocate to parliamentarians and government for policy and legislative change to enhance sexual, reproductive and maternal health and rights of women in Australia and our Asia-Pacific region. ARHA serves as Secretariat to the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development, a group of federal and state/territory parliamentarians committed to population, development and reproductive health issues. The partnership between ARHA and the PGPD is uniquely effective in Australia for achieving change in the sector. ARHA encourages increased support in Australia's overseas aid program for the principles of the ICPD and the MDGs. For more information go to [www.arha.org.au](http://www.arha.org.au)  
<http://www.shfpa.org.au/>

**About Marie Stopes International Australia:** The Marie Stopes International Global Partnership provides life-saving sexual and reproductive healthcare support and services to nearly 7 million people in over 40 countries around the world. In Australia, Marie Stopes provides support to developing communities in the Asia-Pacific and with Australian Indigenous communities. Marie Stopes also offers a range of services and advice through our licensed and accredited centres around Australia. Surplus funds from our Australian centres are donated to help these programs grow. For more information, visit [www.mariestopes.org.au](http://www.mariestopes.org.au) or call Toll Free 1800 003 707

**About Sexual Health and Family Planning Australia:** SH&FPA is the national voice of sexual health and family planning organisations (Member Organisations, MOs) around the country and represents these organisations on sexual and reproductive health issues at national and international levels. Projects are shared between member organisations, with a national secretariat currently located in Sydney with Family Planning NSW. SH&FPA maintains a dynamic international program in South East Asia and the Pacific. The major strategies of the program are focused on enhancing the management and delivery of sexual and reproductive health care and education delivered by or with local organisations in a sustainable setting. AusAID funds most of this work. For as long as 80 years SH&FPA Member Organisations in each State and Territory have looked after the sexual and reproductive health needs of a large number of Australians. SH&FPA Member Organisations provide a wide range of sexual and reproductive health services that focus on prevention, early intervention, diagnosis and treatment, and community and professional education. For more information go to [www.shfpa.org.au](http://www.shfpa.org.au)