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MAKE EVERY MOTHER AND CHILD COUNT

—Stop the deaths of hundreds of thousands of mothers —

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Today, on World Health Day, the Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA) in conjunction with the World Health Organisation (WHO) calls on Australians and the Australian government to alleviate the 'invisible' health crisis that results in the deaths of over 500,000 women a year world wide due to pregnancy related complications.

Ms Christina Richards, CEO Australian Reproductive Health Alliance, said, "Serious action must be taken by the Australian Government in funding reproductive health programs in our region.

"Women in Timor Leste and PNG, for example, have one of the highest maternal mortality rates anywhere in the world.

"Seventy percent of all these maternal deaths are caused by five easily preventable factors: bleeding, infection, high blood pressure, obstructed labor and unsafe abortion.

"These mothers die silently with very little notice—it doesn't cost a lot to save them. A birthing kit for example costs about ten cents.

"Also close to home, in the Tsunami affected regions, 50,000 of the 150,000 pregnant women within the first three months after the disaster went into labor without adequate health facilities.

"We don't know yet how many died giving birth, but we know the numbers will be high.

The Australian Government has so far failed to provide 63% of the funds it committed at the Cairo conference on Population and Development in 1994 to improve women's reproductive health.

"ARHA calls on not only the Australian government but all governments and aid agencies in our region to commit funds and resources to reducing these appalling but preventable deaths," Ms Richards added.

For more information please call: Julia Dean, Media Officer 02 6282 8922 or 0400 480 205 or Christina Richards, CEO ARHA, 02 6282 8922

The Australian Reproductive Health Alliance has NGO Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.