



## **WHITE RIBBON ALLIANCE FOR SAFE MOTHERHOOD**

**PRESS RELEASE:** launch 29 June 2009

**REPORT EMBARGOED until 00:01 30 June 2009**

### **14.3 Million Midwives, Nurses and Doctors Demand Action on Maternal Deaths at July G8 Summit**

In an unprecedented move today, millions of midwives, nurses and doctors across the world delivered a message to G8 leaders to take urgent action to prevent women dying needlessly in pregnancy and childbirth.

With more than half a million maternal deaths every year, health workers have joined forces to ask world leaders to put the issue of maternal mortality at the top of the agenda at next month's G8 Summit.

Later this week there will be coordinated action in Rome, Berlin, Paris, Tokyo and Washington, where midwives, nurses, doctors and celebrity supporters of the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood will present a global petition to Heads of State. This unprecedented mass action is designed to put maximum pressure on G8 leaders in the run up to their next Summit in Italy.

The petition representing 14.3 million midwives, nurses and doctors asks G8 leaders to deliver the extra \$10 billion per year to provide the health workers and health systems needed to meet the Millennium Development Goal which commits to cutting maternal mortality by 75% by 2015.

Today in London Bill Nighy, celebrity supporter of the White Ribbon Alliance will visit Downing Street with midwives and doctors to present the petition to the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown MP.

Speaking today, Bill said: "Since last year's G8 summit there has been no real progress. It's a scandal that in many countries at least half of all women give birth alone or with no skilled midwife, nurse or doctor to help. As a result, every single minute of every single day a woman dies needlessly in pregnancy and childbirth."

Gwen Chitundu; a midwife from Zambia has worked in Botswana and Somalia. Today she said: "Families in the developing world say goodbye to mothers and sisters as they go into labour knowing that all too often, a pregnant woman has one foot in the grave. But this can change. We have the knowledge and the skills to deliver – we just need the political will and resources to support us. We want the G8 leaders to make history, on behalf of women everywhere."

Brigid McConville speaking on behalf of the WRA in the UK: "Women are the keystones of every community, and the key to all development. We must have urgent and sustained investment in health workers to end this terrible and unnecessary waste of life."

Despite the target set to cut maternal deaths, mortality rates are now even higher than in 2000 with as many as one in six mothers in parts of Africa dying from complications arising in pregnancy or childbirth.

###

#### Notes to Editors

White Ribbon Alliance is a global movement spanning 140 countries with members from all walks of life raising awareness of this neglected issue and pressing for urgent change. WRA works with

governments around the world to make women's survival in childbirth a priority.  
<http://www.whiteribbonalliance.org/>

For further information, please contact:

UK

Rachel Dufton on [Rachel.Dufton@RCN.ORG.UK](mailto:Rachel.Dufton@RCN.ORG.UK) / 07739 874 401

Sue Jacobs: [sue.jacob@rcm.org.uk](mailto:sue.jacob@rcm.org.uk) / 0207 312 3467

Brigid McConville: [bmconville@whiteribbonalliance.org](mailto:bmconville@whiteribbonalliance.org) / 0207 922 7797

Ruth Allan: [ruth.allan@mmcampaign.com](mailto:ruth.allan@mmcampaign.com) / 0797 008 3166

Jo Cox: [jo.cox@mmcampaign.com](mailto:jo.cox@mmcampaign.com) / 07710317236

US

Deb Clark: [dclark@whiteribbonalliance.org](mailto:dclark@whiteribbonalliance.org) / 202-679-2399