

NEWS RELEASE

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Responding to the Economic Crisis in the Pacific – Investing in Women is a Smart Choice

Wellington, 10th July 2009: On the eve of the 20th World Population Day, Family Planning International is joining the global call for ongoing and increased investment in women, 52 per cent of the world's population, during the global economic crisis and beyond.

Women already make up 70 per cent of the world's poor. And in the Pacific, levels of poverty are set to increase, impacting most on women, the sick, the young, older people and people with no access to land.

"We must continue to invest in women. It is a smart and timely investment in hard economic times and pays off on all levels", says Jackie Edmond, Family Planning Chief Executive.

Women tend to be hit hard by economic recession. If they are employed, their jobs are often temporary and insecure. In tough times, these are generally the first jobs to go. Women with children generally spend their earnings on making sure their children are well fed, clothed and educated, so when these women lose their jobs, their children lose out too. And when the food budget is stretched, many women will go without to make sure their children are eating.

Cuts in government spending often hit health and education first. This is potentially bad news for women. As government social services are reduced, women's responsibilities are often increased, such as for caring for the sick and out-of-school children.

To cope with the crisis, governments are looking at activities to stimulate productivity. Currently, every year the world loses \$15 billion in lost productivity because women die in childbirth, yet it would only cost \$6 billion to prevent these deaths.

Investing in health is an investment in greater productivity and is highly cost effective. For example, for every dollar spent on family planning, up to \$35 dollars are saved in social services and other costs.

Evidence shows that the ability of couples to plan their families also has a positive impact on the children they do have, including their health and education. Women benefit too. For example, they reduce the risk of complications or dying in pregnancy, and they have more time to potentially contribute to the formal productive economy.

As we begin to fully comprehend the full impact of the global economic crisis, Family Planning International is calling on governments to take action to protect and promote women's rights and to invest in activities that support women's productivity.

"Family planning and reproductive health are cost-effective investments that will help countries weather this storm and pave the way for a brighter future", says Jackie Edmond.

Background

11 July 2009 is the 20th annual World Population Day and this year's theme is 'Investing in Women and Girls'. Further information, including official UN statements and factsheets, can be found at <http://www.unfpa.org/wpd/2009/en/>.

Family Planning International (www.fpi.org.nz) is the international unit of Family Planning New Zealand and works to motivate awareness and action so that all people can enjoy sexual and reproductive rights. The unit has a particular focus on the Pacific region.

Spokespeople and images are available on request

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