

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Sex and the Global Economic Crisis – International Expert Visits New Zealand**

*Wellington, 7 April 2009:* The case for additional investment in sexual and reproductive health and rights is compelling in the current climate of global economic crisis, according to Dr Sharon Camp, President and Chief Executive Officer of the United States-based Guttmacher Institute.

Dr Sharon Camp is in New Zealand briefing organisations including Family Planning, Family Planning International, New Zealand's International Development Agency (NZAID), and the New Zealand Parliamentarians' Group on Population and Development (NZPPD), on the benefits of investing in sexual and reproductive health and rights.

"Each year, modern contraceptives help prevent 215,000 pregnancy related deaths, 2.7 million infant deaths and the loss of 60 million years of healthy life", says Dr Sharon Camp.

An investment in sexual and reproductive health can be recouped several times over by reducing the need for public spending on health, education, and other social services.

Guttmacher Institute studies document the wide ranging benefits of investing in sexual and reproductive health and rights. In developing nations, donor country support for these programmes contributes toward development, economic growth, and stability. It protects the lives, health and rights of individuals, improves the status of women, and helps build healthier, better educated and more productive societies.

The United Nations Population Fund estimates that in 2009 the cost of sexual, reproductive and contraceptive care in developing countries will be US\$23.45 billion. It also estimates that in 2008 there was a nearly US\$4 billion gap between actual and needed support for family planning from donor nations.

“In a time of global financial difficulty, donor countries may be tempted to avoid fulfilling their financial commitments. That would be a grave error. These programmes are highly cost effective. A relatively modest investment now will result in large future savings. Studies show that each dollar invested in contraceptive services saves between US\$1.70 and US\$4.00 in expenditures on antenatal, maternal and newborn health care,” says Dr Sharon Camp.

Family Planning Chief Executive Jackie Edmond says the research is highly relevant for New Zealand and the Pacific region. “Our region faces severe sexual and reproductive health challenges and continuing investment is needed to address these and remove any barriers that prevent people using services.”

There are high rates of sexually transmissible infections (STIs), maternal deaths, and unintended teenage pregnancies in several Pacific countries. The HIV epidemic continues to grow in Papua New Guinea, whilst at the same time, access to sexual and reproductive health services and supplies is limited across the region.

### **Background**

The Guttmacher Institute is a leading policy and research organisation which has worked for over 40 years to advance sexual and reproductive health in the United States and worldwide. Dr Sharon Camp is a widely quoted authority on sexual and reproductive health and rights, a popular public speaker, and the author or co-author of more than 70 publications on family planning and related subjects. In addition to heading the Guttmacher Institute, Dr Sharon Camp currently serves as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Population and Family Health at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health.

Family Planning works to promote a positive view of sexuality and to enable people to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health and well-being. Family Planning has 32 clinics across New Zealand and has 180,000 client visits each year for services such as contraception, testing and treatment for sexually transmissible infections, pregnancy testing and advice, cervical smears, and help with fertility and menopause.

Family Planning International 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 health and rights. The unit has a particular focus on the Pacific region.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights means people having the information and services to have safe intimate relationships, pregnancies, and births, as well as living in supportive, non-discriminatory communities.

**Spokespeople and images available on request**