



↘ CLOSING STATEMENT

PRESENTED BY ANN M. STARRS, EVP, FAMILY CARE INTERNATIONAL

WOMEN DELIVER CONFERENCE

LONDON, 20 OCTOBER 2007

*Women Deliver, a landmark conference held in October 2007 in London, brought together nearly 2,000 global leaders from 115 countries to inspire and inform action to end the needless deaths from pregnancy and childbirth that occur around the world every day. Experts in health and development demonstrated that investing in women is a primary engine for economic, social, and political progress. A catalytic event, **Women Deliver** generated new political will and resources to ensure women's health and rights as part of sustainable and just development. Summarizing key themes and a commitment to on-going action, Ann Starrs, Executive Vice-President of Family Care International, the organizing partner for the conference, presented the following statement at the close of the conference:*

This conference is about change. About changing the way we think, what we say, what we do. It's about changing the world.

All of us have committed ourselves to being part of the process of change. During the past 2.5 days we have heard the stories—of loss, and of inspiration; of neglect, and of dedication; of cruelty, and of caring. We have heard, and made, promises. We have seen an unprecedented outpouring of ideas, knowledge, and commitment—a response far beyond anything the organizers had expected, or perhaps even hoped for. And we have answers to the questions we asked at the beginning:

1. What needs to be done differently?

There is a great deal that needs to change, and no way to describe or even list it all within the time we have this afternoon. But there are three main themes that we have heard, in the plenaries and breakout sessions and hallways:

- a. First, we must recognize, build and strengthen **synergies between health and other sectors** that are critical to women's survival and well-being, their equality and their leadership—education, economic empowerment, and rights being the core ones.
- b. Second, within health, we now have **a clear consensus on the three pillars** for saving the lives of women and newborns: comprehensive reproductive health services; skilled care during and immediately after pregnancy and childbirth; and emergency care when life-threatening complications develop. Every government and every donor needs to prioritize and support these three pillars, within the context of global commitments to strengthening health systems, involving communities, and prioritizing the needs of the poor and marginalized.
- c. Third, significant **new resources** are needed for this to happen. For these resources to be mobilized, allocated, and used effectively, we need political will, especially among governments and donors; and we need accountability, led by and driven by civil society.

2. Who can make it happen?

Everyone who is here today, and thousands who are not, are the individuals and institutions who can and must make these changes happen. We know who we are, and we know who we represent; many of us have been working on these issues for many years. Some, however, have not: the young people who are here for the first time, and those from non-health sectors, including corporations, who have joined us this week. They deserve special mention, since they will be catalysts for the future.

3. How do we get it done?

Some of the answers have already been suggested: more funds, with greater accountability; closer synergies with HIV, education, and rights; and a global movement to deliver for women and newborns, led by civil society, supported by partnerships. There are many channels for carrying Women Deliver forward. The country delegations, including Ministers, who have been with us these past three days have shown their commitment and acknowledged their responsibilities for action at the country level in the statement we have just heard. The organizers have also heard your call, and pledge here and now to meet again within the next two years, to review our progress, renew our commitment, and revitalize our energy and ideas.

The pain of childbirth fades quickly from a woman's memory, but the pain of a woman's death in childbirth lingers on forever for the children and family she leaves behind. Today, here and now, we are making a promise to the women of the world—to the young schoolgirls full of hope; to the adolescents, just awakening to their power and potential; to the mothers, awed and sometimes burdened by their responsibilities; and to the farmers, teachers, soldiers, lawyers, parliamentarians, health workers, community leaders, and millions of other women. Our promise is this: we recognize your contributions and value your lives. We will not allow this injustice and waste to continue. We will deliver.

Thank you.