



# **PRESS STATEMENT**

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## **TRAINED MIDWIVES KEEP BIRTHING MOTHERS SAFE ALL YEAR**

This Mother's Day, spare a thought for the families of the 1,500 PNG women who die each year as a result of pregnancy and childbirth.

PNG has one of the highest maternal mortality ratios in the world, with 733 mothers dying for every 100,000 live births. Most deaths occur in rural areas, where women give birth alone or without a trained midwife.

Access to good health services, especially trained midwives, is the key to a safe birth, yet many women do not seek medical help, even when it is available, said Lisa Vallely, Section Head, Maternal and Child Health, at the PNG Institute of Medical Research (IMR).

Mrs Vallely and her team are investigating maternal health in Upper Bena, a village with access to a health centre and day clinic that is less than one hour by road from Goroka in the Eastern Highlands.

"We spent six months interviewing Upper Bena women and men to learn about the key issues and constraints facing women during pregnancy and childbirth," Mrs Vallely said.

"Both men and women could recall women dying from excessive bleeding, among other complications, yet health centre records showed that three-quarters of the women who attend the antenatal clinic fail to use the service to give birth, with dangerous outcomes for mother and baby.

IMR is working to strengthen facilities and will conduct a feasibility study in Upper Bena later this year, collaborating with the National Department of Health and other stakeholders.

Women who attend Upper Bena's antenatal clinic will receive a clean birth kit containing disposable items such as soap, a plastic sheet, cord ties, a blade and tablets to prevent post partum haemorrhage – the leading cause of maternal death in developing countries.

"The key message will be for women to go to the health facility during labour and child birth; the kits will be provided for use in the situation where women cannot reach the facility," Mrs Vallely said.

"We want more mothers to survive and celebrate Mother's Day each year with their loved ones," she said.

**INTERNATIONAL MIDWIVES DAY IS 5 MAY; MOTHER'S DAY IS 6 MAY 2012**

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