



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **UK Government supportive of Zambia's CARMMA launch**

The UK Government welcomes Zambia's country launch of the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA). CARMMA is an African Union initiative which aims to accelerate the reduction of maternal deaths on the African continent. Today's launch (Saturday 12 June) will be followed by a week of activities to raise awareness of maternal mortality in Zambia.

Zambia is severely off track to meet the 2015 maternal mortality target of 185 per 100,000 live births. The findings of the 2007 Demographic Health Survey (DHS) show a significant improvement, with rates reducing from 729 in 2002 to 591 per 100,000 in 2007, but further progress is being hindered by a lack of trained health workers, inadequate supplies of medicines and emergency equipment and barriers to accessing facilities.

The UK Government, through the Department for International Development, is supporting the Government of Zambia in its efforts to tackle maternal mortality through a £5 million maternal health programme (2009-2012). The programme is addressing some of the issues that currently hinder progress on maternal health in Zambia by implementing a series of initiatives. The most significant, is the purchase of £2.5 million worth of Emergency Obstetric Equipment. This is vitally needed to ensure that more mothers are able to deliver safely in health facilities, and should ensure that Emergency Obstetric Care is available in all 72 districts by 2011. The programme also supports the Mobilising Access to Maternal Health services in Zambia programme (MaMaZ) which aims to educate and empower local communities to identify and tackle the barriers that women face in accessing safe deliveries and maternal health services. The findings of the DHS will also be looked at to understand the reasons behind the decline in maternal mortality which will help to inform future national and regional policy on maternal health.

Speaking about the CARMMA initiative Mike Hammond, the Head of DFID's office in Zambia, said:

"Tackling maternal mortality is a top priority for the UK Government and I welcome the launch of this initiative in Zambia which reaffirms the Government of Zambia's commitment to this important agenda. I hope that with DFID support we can work together to reduce the number of mothers that die unnecessarily in childbirth."