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Philippine Birthing Centers Help New Mothers, Healthy Infants

Richmond, Va. – Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2009 - Access to high quality health care facilities is important for mothers to have healthy newborns. In the Philippines, six new birthing centers have made giving birth much safer and less worrisome for women in Pili, Camarines Sur.

“We want to emphasize the importance of bringing pregnant women to health care facilities, which is the most important factor in preventing maternal and newborn mortality,” said Dr. Sadia Parveen, Christian Children’s Fund reproductive health specialist.

Thanks to funding from the CCF’s Sky Siegfried Fund, six new birthing centers were officially launched in Pili, Camarines Sur in September.

Elisa, 38, was the first resident to give birth in one of the new facilities, delivering a healthy 7-pound baby girl in October at the Kabukludan Birthing Center. The other birthing centers are operating smoothly, according to CCF staff in the region.

“The health attendant and the midwife took good care of me before and after delivery,” Elisa said. “I will recommend this center to my relatives because I feel at home and safe.”

CCF Philippines, partnering with Mt. Zion Family Development Association-Christ the King Center, initiated the project, “Saving Women’s Lives Through Improved Maternal Care.” Goals of the project include reducing vulnerability of women to the risks related to pregnancy; providing women access to safe maternal and newborn care; and improving community health.

“A primary objective of this project is to build partnerships with groups such as the provincial and municipal health offices, local government units and the communities,” said Parveen.

Plans are under way to make these centers more comprehensive in their primary health care approach, in terms of broadening their reach to cater to not only pregnant women, but also to women and children in general, Parveen said. This would help take comprehensive



Christian Children's Fund (CCF) is a global force for children, helping the world's deprived, excluded and vulnerable survive and thrive in order to reach their full potential. Serving children since 1938, CCF works in 31 countries and assists approximately 15.2 million children and family members worldwide, regardless of race, creed or origin. CCF is a member of the ChildFund Alliance.

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primary health care to the community level, and thereby bridge the gap between the public health infrastructure and the communities.

Pili, Camarines Sur, is located in the Bicol Region of the Philippines. More than half of the pregnant women in this rural area have traditionally received care from traditional birth attendants, also known as hilots.

The new facilities allow pregnant mothers quicker access to health care. According to the Rural Health Unit of Pili, only 40 percent of total pregnancies in 2006 were attended by professional health workers. This is consistent with findings from the National Demographic and Health Surveys, which show that women residing in rural areas usually receive little or no care from health professionals and are not informed of the dangers of pregnancy, such as miscarriage and pre-term labor.

The facilities offer patients access to trained health care workers. As part of the nearly \$200,000 project, pre- and post-natal obstetric and pediatric care training was conducted by specialists from the Bicol Medial Center to 16 health professionals composed of midwives and nurses. Midwives, rural health nurses and volunteer nurses also attended a five-day training workshop on community-managed maternal and newborn care. Five village pharmacies have been formed and are ready to operate as well to provide medicine to mothers and newborns if needed.

Assisted delivery by skilled and trained personnel is associated with lower levels of illness and infant mortality, Parveen said.

CCF believes that what happens in the first years of life is the cornerstone upon which the child grows and develops. These new birthing centers are critical to CCF's goal of having healthy and secure infants in its programs.

The Sky Siegfried Fund is an annual gift from the Siegfried family. The family donates \$500,000 and challenges CCF donors to match the gift. The Sky Siegfried Fund supports health initiatives throughout the world.

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