



Advocacy Update

Sent April 27, 2011

Take Action: Help to Prevent Obstetric Fistula

The Obstetric Fistula Prevention, Treatment, Hope, and Dignity Restoration Act of 2011, H.R. 949, was introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Carolyn Maloney on March 8th. Obstetric fistula is a hole in the birth canal caused by prolonged labor when adequate medical intervention is unavailable. The woman is left incontinent and the child is most often stillborn. Yearly, over half a million women die during pregnancy and childbirth and many more suffer serious injury, such as fistula, if they do not have access to obstetric care. In 2003, UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) came together with other organizations to launch a global Campaign to End Fistula in an effort to eliminate the incidence of obstetric fistula in developing countries by 2015.

H.R. 949 currently has six co-sponsors and seeks to prevent obstetric fistula by providing support for:

- programs that make trained maternal care available during pregnancy, childbirth, and after delivery; and
- programs that would deal with early marriage and girls' lack of access to schooling, societal factors that contribute to the incidence of obstetric fistula.
- Moreover, the bill would also provide needed support to train surgeons to perform fistula repair surgery to shrink the tremendous number women suffering with fistula.

Following introduction of the bill in the House, Americans for UNFPA began mobilizing concerned individuals to urge their representatives to support H.R. 949. Urge your sisterhood to join the mobilization today – call on your representative to co-sponsor the Obstetric Fistula Prevention, Treatment, Hope, and Dignity Restoration Act of 2011.