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EMBARGO

Wednesday 20 March 4:30pm CET

## Joint UNFPA-Unitaid venture backed by major EU funding aims to eliminate the leading cause of mothers dying in childbirth in Africa

***Partnership combines Unitaid's record of innovative solutions in treating major diseases in low- and middle-income countries with UNFPA's global maternal health leadership and network of midwives saving lives***

**Brussels, 20 March 2024** – A groundbreaking venture between two global health agencies – backed by EUR 20 million to be awarded by the European Union – and in partnership with African authorities, aims to strengthen health systems in Africa and accelerate access to life-saving medicines in a significant drive to end preventable maternal deaths.

Every year, 70,000 women die from severe bleeding in childbirth, known as postpartum hemorrhage – the leading cause of maternal deaths globally. The majority of these women reside in Africa where access to health systems that can consistently provide quality assured life-saving medicines is limited.

The joint initiative will be led by the global health organization Unitaid, which has been instrumental in accelerating access to innovative solutions and medicines in low- and middle-income countries, in partnership with UNFPA, the UN sexual and reproductive health agency. Together, they will work with health authorities in five African countries as well as partners and communities to overcome barriers that limit access to life-saving solutions and medicines that are widely used in wealthy countries to prevent women from dying from postpartum hemorrhaging.

“We have largely succeeded in ending postpartum hemorrhage death in high-income settings, yet women in resource-limited areas continue to die at unacceptable rates because effective medicines are inaccessible,” said Dr Philippe Duneton, Executive Director of Unitaid. “But products alone cannot solve the problem without a health system that is primed for implementation. That’s why Unitaid is delighted to partner with the UNFPA, the UN sexual and reproductive health agency to ensure that our efforts to enable greater affordability and accessibility of tools quickly translate into widespread uptake and, ultimately, safer births.”

“Every woman has the right to give birth safely,” stressed Dr Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of UNFPA. “By combining the expertise of UNFPA and Unitaid, and teaming up with health authorities across Africa, we will be able to accelerate women’s access to innovative maternal health care that improves health outcomes and saves lives.”

Awarded by the European Commission today at a [European Union-African Union](#) high level event on global health, the initiative will accelerate access to new and underused maternal health medicines in Côte d’Ivoire, Madagascar, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia, and improve postpartum hemorrhage management

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more widely across Africa through regional policy dialogue, strengthened regional pooled procurement mechanisms for saving medicines, technical assistance and knowledge sharing in the Global South.

WHO recommends a number of important interventions that, if appropriately deployed, are transformational for pregnant women in low- and middle-income countries. But the medicines needed for these interventions – drugs such as heat-stable carbetocin and tranexamic acid that can prevent and stop blood-loss – suffer from access barriers that prevent broader use.

Unitaid will lead efforts to address the demand, cost, quality, supply and optimal use of three life-saving medicines, including through regional production of products, while UNFPA will focus on strengthening national level capacity, notably the capacity of midwives, to scale up tools and interventions for managing postpartum hemorrhage in line with the latest WHO guidelines. The evidence generated through these collective efforts will create models of care that can be disseminated to other countries and drive down the risk of death in childbirth across Africa and beyond.

The joint venture is part of the “Team Europe Initiative on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (TEI SRHR) in Africa”, a partnership with the African Union and its Regional Economic Communities with the support of the European Union and 10 of its member States. It aligns with the priority of the African Union and the European Union to improve maternal health including the AU Africa Cares: better reproductive health for women, children and adolescents by 2030, the EU Global Health Strategy and with the Global Roadmap to combat postpartum hemorrhage between 2020 and 2030.

Unitaid’s efforts under this new funding arrangement will build on an [existing US\\$45 million of investment](#) to increase access to lifesaving products that prevent and treat postpartum hemorrhage and complements UNFPA’s [Maternal and Newborn Health Thematic Fund](#) which to date has supported training of more than 350,000 midwives.

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## About Unitaid

Unitaid saves lives by making new health products available and affordable for people in low- and middle-income countries. Unitaid works with partners to identify innovative treatments, tests and tools, helps tackle the market barriers that are holding them back, and gets them to the people who need them most – fast. Since it was created in 2006, Unitaid has unlocked access to more than 100 groundbreaking health products to help address the world’s greatest health challenges, including HIV, TB, and malaria; women’s and children’s health; and pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. Every year, these products benefit more than 170 million people. Unitaid is a hosted partnership of the World Health Organization.

[www.unitaid.org](http://www.unitaid.org)

## About UNFPA

UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. UNFPA's mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. UNFPA calls for the realization of reproductive rights for all and supports access to a wide range of sexual and reproductive health services, including voluntary family planning, quality maternal health care and comprehensive sexuality education.

[unfpa.org](http://unfpa.org)