

Not On Our Watch Awards Grant to U.S. Fund for UNICEF to Reduce Maternal Mortality Rates in Southern Sudan

New York, NY (April 20, 2010) – Not On Our Watch, the international advocacy and grant making organization founded by actors George Clooney, Don Cheadle, Matt Damon, Brad Pitt, producer Jerry Weintraub, and human rights lawyer David Pressman, has awarded the U.S. Fund for UNICEF a grant of \$250,000 to support an innovative program to reduce maternal mortality in Southern Sudan. The grant will provide motorcycle ambulances and improved maternal health care in five states of the Southern Sudan region, including Western Equatoria, Lakes, Jonglei, Western Bahr El Ghazal, and Central Equatoria.

"As the situation in Sudan grows increasingly unstable, it is imperative that the international community take action to help those most vulnerable," **said Not On Our Watch co-founder Matt Damon**. "The maternal mortality rate in South Sudan is one of the highest in the world. We are proud to help UNICEF as they work to save lives, especially during this critical period."

Southern Sudan has received scant international attention, though the region remains mired in a deep humanitarian crisis following decades of conflict. Southern Sudan has among the highest maternal mortality rates in the world–maternal health services are of poor quality, too far away, or simply unavailable, and a woman has a one-in-six chance of dying from complications during pregnancy or childbirth. Skilled attendants assist only 10 percent of deliveries, and the region lacks a reliable referral and transportation system for women who need emergency obstetric care. All of these factors contribute to thousands of needless deaths.

With its partners, UNICEF aims to reduce maternal deaths by placing motorcycle ambulances in health facilities to transport pregnant women from home to health centers. Motorcycles can withstand the rough terrain, and give pregnant women living in distant communities access to appropriate facilities in towns.

The project will likewise train motorcycle operators and improve services at health facilities through staff training and provision of needed supplies and equipment. The lives of many mothers can be saved by improving the quality of maternal health care services through increased training, combined with a practical, reliable referral and transportation system that safely and comfortably carries a pregnant woman in a sidecar to a clinic where she can receive lifesaving treatment.

"The U.S. Fund for UNICEF is grateful to Not On Our Watch for recognizing the extent of the crisis in Southern Sudan and for supporting UNICEF's Maternal Health Programs," **said President and CEO of the U.S. Fund for UNICEF Caryl Stern**. "By reducing maternal mortality rates, we not only save women's lives, we greatly improve children's chances for survival, as their lives depend on the care provided by their mothers."

UNICEF will further work with communities to raise awareness concerning the importance of accessing life-saving emergency obstetric services and giving birth in the presence of skilled attendants.

About UNICEF

UNICEF has saved more children's lives than any other humanitarian organization in the world. Working in over 150 countries, UNICEF provides children with health care, clean water, nutrition, education, emergency relief, and more. The U.S. Fund for UNICEF supports UNICEF's work through fundraising, advocacy, and education in the United States.

UNICEF is at the forefront of efforts to reduce child mortality worldwide. There has been substantial progress—the annual number of under-five deaths dropped from 13 million in 1990 to 8.8 million in 2008. But still, 24,000 children die each day from preventable causes. Our mission is to do whatever it takes to make that number zero by giving children the essentials for a safe and healthy childhood. For more information, visit www.unicefusa.org.

About Not On Our Watch

Not On Our Watch was founded by George Clooney, Don Cheadle, Matt Damon, Brad Pitt, Jerry Weintraub, and David Pressman to focus global attention and resources to stop and prevent mass atrocities. Drawing upon the voices of cultural leaders, its mission is to protect and assist the vulnerable, marginalized, and displaced. Website: www.notonourwatchproject.org.

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