

Malaysia's Success In Declining Maternal Mortality Rate Can Be Lesson To Others
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 28 (Bernama) -- Malaysia's successful story on the decline of maternal mortality rate can be a lesson for other countries in efforts to improve the health and well-being of the girls and women.

The founder and president of Women Deliver, Jill Sheffield said it was the major reason that the Third Women Deliver Conference was held in this country as the Malaysian government has been generous in sharing their lessons.

"We have the opportunity to learn how it happened, who worked to make it happen and how it continues to work today," she said in her welcoming remarks at the three-day conference held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC), here today.

Sheffield said today's girls were tomorrow's women where safe, healthy and educated girls would become strong women to transform the world and leading to a stronger community for a more prosperous country.

"It is true when you invest in girls and women, it is not just the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do," she said.

She said the world was changing very rapidly and leaders had to grab the chance to create a better world and change the landscape for girls and women as well as change the way people thought about women rights and reproductive health.

Women Deliver Asia Regional Director, Dr Raj Abdul Karim said national maternal mortality ratios in Malaysia has declined from 540/100,000 in 1957 to just 28 in 2010.

"In Malaysia, there have been strong investments made in the maternal health sector and improving access to quality water, sanitation, nutrition and girls' education, in recent years Malaysia has tremendously declined in pregnancy and child birth related death," she said.

Dr Raj said across Asia, there was great work being done from community health services in rural India to impressive cervical cancer programmes in Thailand and recent reproductive law in the Philippines which was inspiring to see progress being made.

"There are many significant challenges that remain in Asia and across the world, all of us here are committed to overcoming these challenges, we have a lot to learn from each other and other countries in the region," she said.

Meanwhile, via video remarks, former United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said women are still the majority of the world's poor and uneducated.

"In many places, they are the last to be schooled, or receive medical care, many still have little or no access to reproductive health services including family planning and maternal health care," she said.

Clinton, from the Bill, Hillary and Chelsea Clinton Foundation said investing in women and girls had a transformative impact.

"There is a direct connection between a woman's ability to plan her family, space her

pregnancy, give birth safely and the ability to get education, support her family and participate fully in the life of a community," she said.

More than 3,000 delegates, including policymakers, advocates and world leaders representing over 150 countries, are attending the three-day conference beginning today.

Malaysia is the first Asian country to be given the honour to host the global conference previously held in London and Washington D.C.

The event is touted as the largest global conference of the decade to focus on the health and well-being of girls and women. It is organised by Women Deliver which has its headquarters in New York.

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