Refurbishing Maternity Waiting Homes to Enhance Maternal Health Services

Maternity Waiting Homes provide pregnant women with information on pregnancy, new born care, family planning services and HIV treatment, prevention and counselling services.

As part of the ongoing collective efforts to stem the high maternal mortality rate in the country, which stands at 525 deaths per 100,000 live births (2012 Zimbabwe Census), the United Nations in Zimbabwe is supporting the refurbishment of maternity waiting homes.

The maternity waiting homes are facilities, within easy reach of a hospital or health centre where pregnant women can stay towards the end of pregnancy and await labour. Once labour starts, expecting mothers are transferred to the nearby health facility or hospital so that labour and child birth are assisted by a skilled birth attendant.

The maternity waiting homes also provide an opportunity for pregnant women to receive information on pregnancy, labour, childbirth, new born care, family planning services and HIV treatment, prevention and counselling services.

Through funding of USD 13 million from the European Union (EU), the United Nations and the Ministry of Health and Child Care have been renovating and refurbishing 105 maternity waiting homes at district, mission and rural hospitals.

The programme has also procured 63 ambulances, which have since been distributed to benefiting hospitals across the country. The EU supported programme also seeks to train 800 service providers in emergency obstetric care, neonatal care and community mobilisation and awareness building. Additionally, two UN agencies, namely the World Food Programme and the UN Population Fund, are collaborating to ensure that the nutritional needs of pregnant women are met.

Apart from the nutritional support, the women are also provided with mosquito nets, hygiene and sanitation services.