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**March 24, 2006**

### **Unsafe Abortions Kill 90 African Women Per Day**

Experts at the Regional Consultation on Unsafe Abortion in Africa, which ended yesterday, discussed the prevalence of unsafe abortions and how policy changes can change these statistics. The conference was sponsored by two US organizations, Ipas and the Guttmacher Institute, and drew medical experts and policy-makers to Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia for four days. Eunice Brookman-Amissah, Ipas vice-president for Africa, told *Inter Press Service* that "There is a silent war waged against women, mostly in the developing world, and their right to reproductive health - especially to safe abortion. This war is fuelled by... archaic abortion laws. We need to ask ourselves whether we will allow old... laws to kill women."

Abortion is illegal in most African countries except when the life of the mother is at stake, a condition which requires the agreement of more than one doctor. The World Health Organization Estimates that there are 4.2 million unsafe abortions in Africa each year, causing about 30,000 yearly deaths. Ghanaian doctor Fred Sai criticized the restrictions when speaking with *IRIN News*, pointing out the "double standard" that allowed wealthy people to obtain safe abortions while the poor could not, and calling restrictive abortion laws "the worst case of medical apartheid that exists. There is no law forbidding men to decide on their own body." South Africa, which legalized abortion without restrictions in 1997, saw a precipitous drop in deaths from abortion, from 425 per year to less than 20.

Media Resources: Angola Press 3/22/06; IRIN 3/24/06; Mail and Guardian/Inter Press Service 3/23/06

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