



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

NOTE FOR THE PRESS

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WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION ANNOUNCES "RIVER OF LIFE" PHOTO COMPETITION

On the theme of sexual and reproductive health

Geneva -- The World Health Organization (WHO) is inviting photographers from around the world to submit images under the theme of sexual and reproductive health that capture four key stages in the "River of Life": Love, Life, Illness and Death. Cultural and social taboos often obscure the central role reproductive and sexual health plays in all our lives as individuals, couples or families. WHO is challenging photographers to bring to life success stories in sexual and reproductive health and also to zoom in on the glaring inequities where we, as a global community, must do better.

This competition is part of WHO's broader effort to raise public awareness of the importance of sexual and reproductive health and the challenges the international community faces in this area. Too many people, particularly in developing countries, suffer from persistently high rates of maternal deaths, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortion.

Some facts:

- Annually, over half a million women die during pregnancy and childbirth;
- In 2003, five million new cases of HIV infection occurred, 600 000 of which were in infants due to mother-to-child-transmission;
- Almost 70 000 women die each year from unsafe abortions;
- Every year, 80 million women have unintended or unwanted pregnancies.

This contest is open to both amateur and professional photographers and will run between 9 March and 13 April 2004. Judged by a panel of experts, the winning photographs will be displayed at the World Health Assembly in Geneva in May 2004, and used in a WHO campaign on sexual and reproductive health.

For contest rules and other details please visit: <http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/photocompetition.html>

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