

# maternal health



## the facts

- Problems due to pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of disease burden for women in developing countries.
- A woman dies from complications in pregnancy and childbirth every minute – more than 500,000 women die each year.
- A woman in sub-Saharan Africa has a 1 in 16 chance of dying in pregnancy or childbirth, compared to a 1 in 3,000 risk in the United States.
- 40 percent of all child deaths each year, most of which are preventable, are linked to poor maternal health.



### CARE's Response

CARE recognizes the right of every woman to experience a safe and healthy pregnancy and delivery. Healthy mothers are fundamental to overcoming poverty and injustice: a healthy mother is more likely

to earn an income, participate in her community and raise healthier children. Through our maternal health programs, we tackle gender and social inequities, empower communities, improve access to maternal and newborn health information and services, and advocate for policies that safeguard maternal health.

Over the past decade, we have intensified our efforts to strengthen and expand our maternal health programs to better serve communities. CARE's evidence-based initiatives are contributing to the Millennium Development Goals to significantly reduce maternal and child mortality by 2015. Through our holistic approach to maternal health, CARE seeks to:

#### *Improve human conditions*

Improve care during pregnancy by detecting and treating problems, educating women and their families on the warning signs of pregnancy complications, and ensuring adequate nutrition and health education.

Enhance care during delivery to ensure a safe, healthy delivery for both mothers and infants. CARE works alongside women, communities and health providers to increase access to skilled care during labor and delivery and to remove barriers to maternal care.

Strengthen postpartum care to monitor for complications such as postpartum hemorrhage (the leading cause of death among women following childbirth), promote the use of family planning and provide support to improve newborn health and survival.

#### *Improve social positions*

Increase the power and status of women and recognize maternal health as a human right.

Empower and involve communities in maternal health care with an understanding that community action and participation are instrumental to linking health systems and the people they serve – particularly for poor, vulnerable women and children.

#### *Foster an enabling environment*

Leverage CARE's experience and deep understanding of community aspirations and the rights of women. We press for proven solutions and advocate for policy change.

### **Maternal Health Highlights**

**In Peru,** CARE's FEMME project addressed an acute need for emergency obstetric care services for poor, indigenous women and their families in the country's rural highlands. Our rights-based approach included not only women, families and the community but also health workers and policymakers. As a result, the number of women who used emergency obstetric services more than doubled, survival rates improved dramatically and Peru's Ministry of Health introduced new guidelines and protocols in 2007 based largely on CARE's field experience.

**In Tanzania,** CARE worked with communities to develop transportation systems to give pregnant women fast, safe access to emergency health care. Communities designed systems including tricycles, ox-carts, canoes and boats to address specific transportation problems. At the end of the project, more than half of the communities had up-to-date action plans to address maternal health problems.



## **Mothers Matter**

*Healthy Mothers, Healthy Societies*

CARE has launched a new signature program – Mothers Matter – to reduce persisting high maternal mortality in the world's poorest countries. The Mothers Matter initiative will make pregnancy and delivery safe for 30 million women in 10 countries. The key strategic objectives are:

**Global Commitment Policy Action  
Responsive Health Systems  
Empowered Communities**

CARE will build on our decades of experience working at the community, health system and government level to promote social change and stimulate the political will needed to reduce maternal mortality.



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