

# MOTHERS MATTER

## Healthy Mothers, Healthy Societies



**Women are powerful – for what they contribute as individuals, as mothers, as family members, as community members, as citizens. The empowerment of women is at the heart of CARE’s strategy to reduce global poverty and nurture the growth of healthy societies. However, women cannot become powerful in their own lives if any pregnancy can be a death sentence.**

Maternal mortality is nothing short of an epidemic. In the developing world, 536,000 essentially healthy women die needlessly every year, leaving behind grieving families. That’s one woman every minute of every day. Their newborns face a substantially increased risk of dying, especially if they are girls.

Any pregnancy can result in a life-threatening complication. Most complications cannot be predicted. Nearly all complications can be managed with access to basic emergency obstetric care. But women in the developing world face risks in childbirth unimaginable in industrialized nations.

The reasons women die are complex. They are unable to choose if and when to get pregnant. They do not have access to money or the power to decide how family resources are spent – even for lifesaving medical care. They may live far from the nearest health facility and have no way to get there in an emergency. If they do, they may find a health facility without basic medicines, supplies or trained staff. They may be victims of tacitly sanctioned gender violence and discrimination. They may have limited or no education. They – and their children – are systematically excluded by governments and policymakers who do not make their fundamental human right to health a priority.

**Mothers matter.** When women are empowered to fulfill their potential, they invest in their families and work for lasting change. Women cannot fully participate in society – as family leaders, breadwinners, citizens – if they cannot expect to survive childbirth.

CARE has launched a new signature program – **Mothers Matter** – to reduce persisting high maternal mortality in the world’s poorest countries. It is time to honor and fulfill all human rights equally, which starts with ensuring that surviving pregnancy, childbirth and infancy is not a game of chance.



## Why a Maternal Mortality Initiative?

CARE's strategic position to implement the **Mothers Matter** program rests on our long history of implementing maternal child health programs around the world and our capacity to build and sustain effective partnerships. We know that if all women could have access to family planning and obstetric care, maternal mortality and morbidity could be significantly reduced.

Even though health experts agree about what interventions work, what they cost and how to implement them, the vast majority of women in the developing world do not have access to these interventions. CARE's aim is to bring to bear our decades of expertise in working at the community, health system and governmental levels to stimulate the political will and social change needed to reduce maternal mortality.

**Mothers Matter** will empower women by building human capacity and making institutions and services more equitable and responsive to the needs and concerns of all citizens. CARE will programmatically uphold the right of all women to good quality obstetric and reproductive health care in the context of supportive community and policy environments. **Mothers Matter** includes:

- Demonstrating approaches in strengthening access to care for poor and marginalized women and girls, combined with policy advocacy for replication;
- Community engagement activities that challenge entrenched attitudes about the value of women's lives and the capacity of women and communities to act on their own behalf;
- Collective global and national action in support of maternal health care;
- An explicit focus on access to emergency obstetric care, skilled attendance at birth and family planning.



## Proposed Goal and Outcomes

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

**Mothers Matter** will:

- Develop broader and more effective global and national constituencies to position maternal mortality at the top of the development agenda;
- Engage policymakers and other leaders in a coordinated effort to reduce their country's maternal death rate;
- Increase the number of women delivering safely in facilities;
- Strengthen the ability of health facility staff to provide responsive, compassionate, quality care;
- Empower communities to engage with the health system, advocate for their right to care, and respond to obstetric and neonatal emergencies.

**SHE HAS the POWER to change her world.  
YOU HAVE the POWER to help her do it.**

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