

www.amref.org



Background

Although recent evidence suggests a global reduction in maternal mortality, the African Medical and Research Foundation's (AMREF's) view is that this remains a major problem in sub-Saharan Africa.

Most of these deaths are easily preventable, as they are mainly caused by insufficient care during pregnancy and delivery. Over 80 per cent are as a result of complications that could be taken care of in facilities with basic emergency obstetric care services. What women in the developed world take for granted – skilled midwives, an obstetrician and operating theatre if needed, and the infusions and medicines to ensure that should complications arise, the mother is rapidly brought back to good health – are regarded as great luxuries in Africa.

In summary, maternal mortality remains a heavy burden in sub-Saharan Africa:

- In 2010, about 177,000 women died in Africa during pregnancy and childbirth, representing 60 per cent of the global total. These women died for lack of simple, affordable and reachable medical care.

- Consequently, 950,000 African children were left without a mother because she died trying to give birth to a brother or sister.
- Women face an adult lifetime risk of 1 in 39 of dying from pregnancy or childbirth related causes, compared to a low risk of 1 in 4,300 for developed countries, a risk which can be as low as 1 in 30,000 as in Scandinavia, the area with the lowest maternal mortality ratio in the world.
- Over 80 per cent of these deaths are as a result of complications that could be taken care of in facilities with basic emergency obstetric care services.

Why are these women dying?



- They die because they are not informed or educated about the need to look for antenatal care during pregnancy and to deliver in the hospitals with skilled assistance, so they deliver at home.
- They die because the health centres are too far and most of the time there is no transport or ambulance to take them there when their labour is too long.
- They die because there are not enough midwives available to take care of them. Instead, they call the traditional birth attendants
- Most importantly, women die because they get pregnant too often with pregnancies too close to each other, exposing them to many complications – simply because they have no access to family planning to stop unwanted pregnancies; midwives are a key source of family planning services and information
- Most of the time they die of bleeding, or infections, high blood pressure, unsafe abortions, malaria, HIV or anaemia – all of which can be prevented with the right health care.

AMREF believes that the role of women is fundamental to the sustainable development of the continent, because healthy women can work, raise children, and contribute to the social and economic progress of their families and communities. That is why AMREF is determined to reverse this trend and wants to show how far-sighted and smart it would be to invest in women's health through the Stand Up for African Mothers campaign. Apart from continuing our efforts and activities in training community health workers and midwives to assist women in accessing health services, including family planning, we want to sensitise governments, opinion leaders, policy makers and other key stakeholders on the critical issue of maternal deaths so that they can take direct, strong and incisive actions and work towards long-term solutions.



To address maternal mortality and contribute towards the Millennium Development Goals, particularly MDG 5, which focuses on reduction of maternal mortality, AMREF launched the international Stand Up for African Mothers campaign in October 2011. The campaign seeks to draw attention to the plight of African mothers and to mobilise citizens worldwide to ensure that mothers get the basic medical care they need during pregnancy and childbirth. Stand Up for African Mothers is an awareness and fundraising campaign that will run from 2012 to 2015 to make childbearing a matter of joy, instead of a life-threatening ordeal, for African women.

What are the main components of the campaign?

- The training of 15,000 midwives by 2015 in order to contribute towards the reduction of maternal death and attainment of MDG 5. One midwife can look after 500 mothers every year and safely deliver 100 babies.
- Nomination of Esther Madudu, a Ugandan midwife, for the Nobel Peace Prize 2015. This is a symbolic nomination through which AMREF wants to honour all African midwives for the important role they play in saving the lives of mothers and their children.
- Raising US\$ 1 from every African. This will help train a midwife as well as enable Africans to contribute towards their own health development.

The campaign is extremely proud and honoured to work under the patronage of Mrs Graca Machel, a renowned and well respected advocate for women's and children's rights and recipient of numerous awards for her countless achievements in the development sector and beyond. Other celebrities drawn from various corners of the globe are also standing up for African mothers and supporting the campaign through public awareness campaigns and other forums.

"African women are at the centre of the social and economic development chain. The death of a mother while giving birth is a big setback for African society. Through the training of more midwives, AMREF is helping to deliver an immediate, sustainable solution. A healthy Africa needs healthy mothers, and African mothers need African midwives."

Dr Teguest Guerma, Director General, AMREF

Take Action - Stand Up for African Mothers

1. Sponsor the training of a midwife. Once trained, a single midwife can provide care for 500 mothers each year including safe delivery of 100 babies. 2000 Euros will train one midwife.
2. Log in to www.standupforafricanmothers.com and sign the petition for Esther Madudu's nomination for the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize as a symbol of midwives in Africa. By signing the online petition, you can take a stand for African mothers and midwives, giving them a voice with governments and international organisations. The goal is to have 100,000 signatures from people around the world who are standing up for African mothers in support of the petition.
3. US\$ 1 from every African- the campaign gives an opportunity to Africans to contribute towards their own health development and ensure that African mothers live and not die during pregnancy and childbirth. One dollar from every African will go a long way in training midwives and saving the lives of African mothers.
4. Make a donation and personally contribute to the training, funding and equipment needed to help reduce maternal mortality in Africa.
5. Spread the word about Stand Up for African Mothers through social networks and encourage friends, family and colleagues to take action.

The Training

Training of midwives will take place across various countries in Africa. Countries targeted are Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. 15,000 midwives will be trained using diverse methods including direct entry classroom based training and competency based training through eg e-learning. Different cadres of midwives from community to enrolled midwives will be targetted. The training needs per country have been established in partnership with the respective ministries of health.

For as long as I have been in midwifery, I have been championing the fight against maternal and child mortality for this cause. My job goes beyond deliveries. It is about getting the proper information and services to those that need it most, and advocating for maternal health to be prioritised. We are all alive today because someone gave birth to us. How can we not make that a priority in health care?

Esther Madudu, Midwife

PO Box 27691-00506, Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: +254 20 6993000, Fax: +254 20 609518

Email: info@amrefhq.org, Website: www.amref.org

www.standupforafricanmothers.com