

Making Strides, Saving Lives: Jhpiego's Work in Maternal, Newborn and Child Health



Photo by S. Suhowatsky, Jhpiego
Women and children in Dumka, India.

Healthy women are the foundation of a strong community, and healthy newborns are the future. Yet each year, over 500,000 women die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth, and an estimated four million newborns die within the first month of life.¹ The vast majority of these deaths occur in developing countries,¹ where adequate health services are often unavailable or inaccessible—leading many women to give birth in facilities without adequate equipment and services, as well as at home without skilled providers. Adding to the tragic loss of so many lives is that the most common causes of maternal and neonatal death and disability can be prevented or managed through high-impact, low-cost interventions that are proven to save lives.

Jhpiego, an international health organization affiliated with The Johns Hopkins University, has been working to bring such life-saving measures to mothers and newborns around the world for more than three decades. Since 1998, we have led the U.S. Agency for International Development's flagship global programs to increase maternal and newborn health and survival: first, the Maternal and Neonatal Health (MNH) Program (1998–2004); currently, the Access to Clinical and Community Maternal, Neonatal and Women's Health Services (ACCESS) Program (2004–2010); the global ACCESS Family Planning Program (2005–2010); and starting in 2008 and continuing through 2013, the Maternal and Child Health Integrated Program (MCHIP). As the lead partner in these multifaceted, international programs, Jhpiego plays a critical role in guiding the world's efforts toward attainment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals for reducing maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality.

What Jhpiego Is Doing

Jhpiego has maternal and newborn health programs in more than 25 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Through these ongoing efforts,² we partner with ministries of health and hundreds of international and local organizations to address the barriers to use of high-quality maternal, newborn and child health care from the household to hospital. Our collaborations focus on an expanding range of critical technical interventions—drawing on our clinical expertise in obstetrics/ gynecology, midwifery and newborn health—including:

- Increased access to and use of **skilled providers to deliver maternal and newborn care**—the single most important intervention in saving lives

In Afghanistan, where Jhpiego works to strengthen the midwifery education system, the number of midwives trained and ready to provide skilled care to women in childbirth increased 363% over a five-year period.

¹ Save the Children. 2008. *State of the World's Mothers 2008: Closing the Survival Gap for Children Under 5*.

² With funding from USAID; global entities, such as the British Department for International Development (DFID), UNICEF and the World Health Organization; and private corporations and foundations, including ExxonMobil and the MacArthur Foundation.

Jhpiego partnered with the World Health Organization to author and implement the widely endorsed global manual *Managing Complications in Pregnancy and Childbirth: A Guide for Midwives and Doctors* (2000). These life-saving guidelines have since been translated into more than 25 languages.

- Integration of a broad range of services for improving maternal and newborn outcomes into the platform of **focused antenatal care**, which promotes a basic package of interventions delivered over at least four visits
- Increased access to and use of **basic and comprehensive emergency obstetric and newborn care**, helping to ensure that the approximately 15% of births that develop complications are promptly identified and managed
- Provision of **family planning** information and services during the postpartum period, another life-saving intervention that has the potential to reach over 90% of women of reproductive age in high-fertility settings
- Prevention and treatment of **malaria in pregnancy**, addressing a major cause of maternal and newborn death in endemic countries
- Prevention of **mother-to-child transmission of HIV**, helping to prevent the main cause of HIV/AIDS in children
- Prevention and treatment of **postpartum hemorrhage; prolonged/obstructed labor, a major cause of obstetric fistula; and pre-eclampsia/eclampsia**, targeting some of the most common and readily preventable causes of maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity
- Increased access and use of quality **postabortion care services** to prevent mortality from abortion complications
- Improved **quality of services and infection prevention practices** that help reduce postpartum and newborn infections

Getting What Works to Work

The technical interventions that Jhpiego promotes have the potential to save many lives. However, they must be delivered by properly trained health care providers in the context of a functional health system—one that values its clients and continually strives for and recognizes high-quality services. To help establish this context, Jhpiego works closely with ministries of health, policymakers and other local partners to implement innovative approaches and methodologies in the following programmatic areas:

- Building an enabling environment for improved health systems through the development of **policies and guidelines**
- Strengthening human resources for health through **education and training** of health workers
- Implementing a standards-based approach to **performance and quality improvement** of health workers and facilities
- Using **community-based approaches** to empower people to become active participants in their own health care

Through our work in maternal and newborn health, as with all of our efforts, Jhpiego's ultimate goal is sustainability—leaving behind a well-prepared network of health care professionals and a strong foundation that they can build upon when we move on.