

### Maternal and Child Health

Pregnancy and childbirth are often the most joyful moments in a woman's life, but in Africa the birth of a new baby often leads to death.

The unnecessary deaths of millions of mothers and babies every year is one of the most critical yet largely neglected health issues in the world today. In east and southern Africa maternal and child death rates are alarming.

The lifetime risk of a woman dying from pregnancy or labour-related complications in these regions is 1 in 16. In countries like Canada the lifetime risk is 1 in 30,000 – one of the most glaring health inequalities in the world.

The death rates of newborn babies are equally as grim. More than 4,000 newborns die in Sub-Saharan Africa every day, which is over 1 million newborn deaths every year.

But the majority of these deaths are preventable. A third could be prevented by simply providing mothers with proper hygiene during delivery.



### Empowering Mothers and Opening Doors to Train Health Workers

A baby also depends on his or her mother's health. When pregnant women have access to proper care and nutrition during pregnancy, labour and after giving birth, their babies have a much better chance of survival.

Most maternal deaths in Africa are from severe bleeding (hemorrhaging), which is easily preventable when a trained mid-wife or doctor is present during delivery. But only 40% of women in east and southern Africa have this option, compared to 98% of women in Canada.

AMREF believes this silent crisis killing mothers and newborns is one of the most pressing health issues in Africa today. AMREF works to educate pregnant mothers to provide adequate maternal and neonatal care and train midwives and birth attendants.

In Southern Sudan AMREF has built a new maternity unit while training dozens of midwives to work in the region. AMREF's programs in Tanzania help to reduce HIV transmission between mothers and newborns. In Uganda AMREF is providing critical maternal care in internally displaced persons camps. These initiatives have saved thousands of lives but more work is urgently needed.

### AMREF SUCCESS: Saving Mothers in Southern Sudan

After 20 years of civil war health care in Southern Sudan is dire. The country has the worst maternal health rate in the world - more than 2,000 women die for every 100,000 who give birth. Only five per cent of women have a health care professional with them during labour.

Infant and child mortality rates are also alarming. One in four children will die before the age of five.

But AMREF believes there is a lot of potential in the region and is working with the Tali community to save mothers and babies by;

- Building a maternity unit at a local health centre.
- Providing maternity care for 1,000 mothers.
- Training mid-wives and clinical officers.
- Vaccinating 600 people against meningitis.
- Promoting health and hygiene through community health care workers.

### Child and Maternal Health Facts

- 1,500 women die everyday giving birth worldwide
- 10,000 newborns die everyday around the world
- 80% of maternal deaths could be avoided with basic health care
- Less than ½ of women in Africa have a health professional with them while giving birth.

Mary Keji's story:



Mary Keji is from Bukan Southern Sudan. She heard about the Tali Health Care Centre's maternity care while 8 months pregnant with her third child. Mary gave birth to her first two children at home and there were serious complications.

Mary was told treatment at Tali was very good, so she decided to visit a nurse at the centre. After an examination Mary was told her baby was healthy but in the wrong position. The nurse asked Mary not to deliver at home but to return to the clinic. Mary returned, and both her and her new baby are healthy. Mary now encourages other pregnant women in her community to visit the clinic.

For more information, images, video or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Salima Pirani  
AMREF Canada Communications Manager  
[spirani@amrefcanada.org](mailto:spirani@amrefcanada.org)  
(416) 961-6981