FIGHTING AGAINST MATERNAL AND NEONATAL MORTALITY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

CONNECTING MIDWIVES

February 2014
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Key figures

**Worldwide**

- Only 2% of global aid is spent on maternal healthcare
- Nearly 350,000 women die each year from complications related to pregnancy or childbirth
- 91% of global maternal mortality - nearly 1,000 women per day - and 82% of deaths of newborns concern 58 developing countries classified as high risk
- Each year, two million newborns die within 24 hours; 99% of these deaths occur in low-income countries
- There is a need for 350,000 midwives worldwide

**In Africa**

- 70% of the population lives in rural areas and 50% below the poverty line
- 90% of the medical staff is concentrated in large urban centers
- 40% of women do not receive prenatal care
- Each year, 162,000 women die during pregnancy, childbirth or the puerperium
- There is a 1 in 30 risk of maternal death in sub-Saharan Africa against 1 in 5,600 in developed countries
- More than 1 million children are left motherless each year due to lack of care during pregnancy and childbirth
- Half of births take place at home without medical assistance
- One trained African midwife can support 500 mothers each year

**The Sanofi Espoir Foundation**

- 12 programs to fight against maternal and neonatal mortality supported by the Sanofi Espoir Foundation
- Six of these programs aim to train 4,200 midwives by 2015 in seven developing countries
- Partnerships last a minimum of three years
- The Sanofi Espoir Foundation devoted €2.5 million to these programs in 2013.
In February 2014, the Sanofi Espoir Foundation in partnership with the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) decided to launch the “Connecting Midwives” web platform (http://fr.connectingmidwives.com/web) as a confirmation of its commitment to support midwives in the fight against maternal and neonatal mortality in developing countries.

This innovative instrument is intended to provide midwives worldwide with a dedicated website where they can share their experiences, and discuss and pool ideas, projects and innovations.

The resulting network will help them to enrich their professional practices and strengthen their role in improving the healthcare of women, newborns and families. Their actions will also be given due respect in their community, helping them overcome their sense of isolation.

The “Sanofi Espoir Foundation’s Award for Midwives”

As well as being a platform for sharing ideas and practices, the website will also highlight the commitment of midwives and the field initiatives they carry out in their villages and communities by virtue of the “Sanofi Espoir Foundation’s Award for Midwives.”

Any qualified midwife who belongs to a member association of the ICM can take part in this unique recognition program, provided that their project is intended to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality and improve healthcare of the neediest women and their newborns.

The 10 winning projects will be selected by a committee of experts. Each of them will win a financial support of €3 000, and the jury’s three favorite projects will have the chance to have a documentary film on their project.
Too many women still die in the process of giving new life, yet most of these deaths could be prevented by improving access to health centers and better-trained, qualified and more numerous staff, especially in rural areas.

The Sanofi Espoir Foundation supports in-the-field programs to ensure better access to healthcare for every mother and newborn child, with the aim of fighting more effectively against maternal and neonatal mortality. Twelve programs are currently underway: eight in Africa, three in Asia and one in Latin America involving many local and international partners: healthcare players, international organizations, local NGOs, corporate foundations and Ministries of Health.

For example, the project carried out with CARE in Benin, where every year 1,500 women8 die from complications related to pregnancy, has an impact on 36 villages. What makes this initiative original is the decision to build a participatory approach for village communities and to network all health players together using a mobile application for sharing messages about education and prevention, enabling better monitoring for pregnant women and rapid alerts to health centers in case of emergencies.

These programs show that midwives are key players in the healthcare stakeholder chain by acting to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality.

“A midwife for every mother and baby”: a new call for proposals to support six programs

The Sanofi Espoir Foundation, in partnership with the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), supports six new projects that were launched in the in the second half of 2013. By 2015 they will have trained 4,200 midwives in the following developing countries: Ethiopia, Tanzania, Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, Burma, Cambodia, and Mexico and will help strengthen the health policies of these countries.

These programs will be supported for a first three-year phase and will aim at increasing the number and skills of midwives by improving training conditions, working to retain them in their jobs, and assigning them to areas where the needs are greatest. The programs will also expand opportunities for midwives to network more effectively with other health professionals and community workers in towns or whole regions, and enable all partners to share resources and expertise so as to fight more intelligently for better quality midwifery.

These programs include several innovations, such as the use of mobile or remote training. They all rely on a strong sense of community effort to step up education and prevention in families.
Programs to overcome the isolation of midwives through the use of distance learning

Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire: a regional e-learning platform to reduce the isolation of midwives

Background: In Senegal, the rate of maternal and infant mortality is 401 for every 100,000 live births, and nearly half of all women receive no aid from skilled healthcare staff. In Côte d’Ivoire, medical facilities have deteriorated after years of political instability and the infant mortality rate remains high at 470 for every 100,000 live births.

Program goals: To establish the first regional e-learning diploma in West Africa, increase the number of centers using distance learning, and reduce the isolation of midwives.

The program provides training and booster courses for 2,200 midwives in Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire, and training for 2,700 nurses.

Partner: AMREF

Mexico and Latin America: digital training to improve the skills of indigenous midwives and strengthen links between them

Background: In the state of Guerrero in Mexico, the maternal mortality rate is over 200 for every 100,000 live births. In Guatemala and Ecuador, only 17-20% of women receive care from trained health workers during pregnancy and childbirth.

Program goals: To improve the quality of school programs and introduce high-quality digital-based training for midwives. Teaching new technology will be included in the curriculum and a team of experienced midwives acting as “mentors” to the young graduates will be trained.

By 2015, it is planned to train 225 indigenous girls from Mexico, Panama, Ecuador and Guatemala, and to open a new midwives training school in Mexico that currently has only two.

Partner: CASA
Programs to improve networking between midwives and health professionals using mobile phone services

Ethiopia: applications for smartphone and tablets to support the work of midwives

**Background:** In Ethiopia, maternal mortality is 470 for every 100,000 live births\(^\text{10}\). Only 10% of women deliver in the presence of skilled health workers and only 14% of health centers deliver emergency obstetric and basic neonatal care\(^\text{10}\).

**Program goals:** To give booster courses to 184 midwives and 1,000 auxiliaries working in remote areas, renovate the 42 most remote health centers, strengthen links among midwives and other health professionals, and introduce mobile applications as decision support tools for midwives. Advocacy actions will also help raise awareness among health authorities to improve working conditions.

**Partner:** WAHA

Burma: mobile phones to improve the network of midwives and intensify information sharing

**Background:** In Burma, the healthcare budgets barely reach 0.2% of GDP. In the Dala Township on the outskirts of Rangoon, maternal mortality is 177 for every 100,000 live births, and just six doctors and 21 midwives are available for every 150,000 inhabitants\(^\text{11}\).

**Program goals:** To upgrade the skills of about 170 midwives by training and creating a network of auxiliary midwives who will be trained and accompanied by experienced mentors. Using mobile phones, the auxiliary staff will be able to use special diagnosis and treatment applications, and carry out remote consultations with experienced midwives.

**Partner:** Première Urgence - Aide Médicale Internationale
Programs to strengthen ties with traditional birth attendants in villages

Tanzania: expanding the network using traditional birth attendants (TBAs) and retired midwives

Background: In Tanzania, the number of maternal deaths is estimated at 14,000 per year and the neonatal mortality rate at 34 for every 1,000 live births. Only 5% of clinics are providing comprehensive emergency obstetric and neonatal care.

Program goals: To expand the capacity of 320 midwives practicing in rural areas and identify TBAs so they can be paired with retired midwives who will be responsible for overseeing and providing technical support. An emergency fund will also be set up to finance transportation to health centers, particularly for high-risk women. This project is based on twinning the Tanzanian Registered Midwives Association with the Canadian Association of Midwives.

Partner: Canadian Association of Midwives
Tanzania Registered Midwives Association

Cambodia: a sustainable collaborative network of midwives and "doulas" (auxiliary midwives)

Background: In the province of Kampong Speu, less than half of deliveries are carried out by competent persons. Every woman has an average of 4.5 children. The maternal mortality rate was 206 for every 100,000 births.

Program goals: To train 106 midwives in 37 health centers and 133 village doulas who will then be responsible for informing and monitoring women during their pregnancy and during the first months of the child’s life. Nearly 13,000 pregnant women will benefit from support during the three years of the project.

Partner: Enfants & Développement
The right to health is a human right that is still far from being guaranteed for everyone. According to the WHO, almost a third of the world’s population still lacks access to basic healthcare. Progress in different countries and even between regions and populations within a single country is also highly unequal, due to the weakness of some health systems and limited access to healthcare for disadvantaged people.

Founded in October 2010, the Sanofi Espoir Foundation supports public interest initiatives in the field of healthcare. It is tasked with helping to reduce healthcare inequality by supporting innovation and development partnerships. Working with partners in the field, it builds programs to train and health actors programs of prevention, education, support of local policies to improve the diagnosis and management in early care. These multi-year programs are centered on three main priorities: the fight against childhood cancer in low-and middle-income countries, the fight against maternal and neonatal mortality and access to healthcare for the poor in France and outside France through pilot projects for healthcare coverage.

Set by the United Nations in 2000, the goals of the Millennium Development program in the fight against maternal and child mortality are far from being achieved, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where there are still significant needs: maternal mortality has been reduced by 50% in recent years but this is still only two-thirds of the target of 75%. This is why the Foundation has decided to focus on this constant affliction through 12 programs specifically geared towards enhancing the number and skills of midwives, who are the key players in reducing birthing complications and mortality.

In addition to long-term involvement in the field, an international “Connecting Midwives” collaborative web platform has just been launched.

Caty Forget, Managing Director of the Sanofi Espoir Foundation

“ Our mission is to support innovation and development partnerships. We always try to take the most holistic approach possible by supporting local policies to boost health schemes and address the needs of prevention, education and access to healthcare.”
The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) is an accredited non-governmental organization representing midwives and their profession in various organizations around the world to ensure that women can have access to quality obstetric care before, during and after childbirth. The ICM works closely with the World Health Organization, UN agencies and governments to support care strategies for safe motherhood and primary health care for families worldwide.

For more information
www.internationalmidwives.org

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1 2010 report on Millennium Development Goals, WHS
3 International Confederation of Midwives
4 Club Santé Afrique
5 AMREF
6 Un Summit on ’Eliminating Poverty 2015, Millennium Development Goals, September 2010
8 CARE
9 CASA
10 WAHA
11 PU-AMI
12 Canadian Association of Midwives et Tanzania Registered Midwives Association
13 Enfants & Développement
For more information  
www.fondation-sanofi-espoir.com