

MILLENNIUM GOAL # 5

Improve Maternal Health

The Goals

- 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- 2 Achieve universal primary education
- 3 Promote gender equality and empower women
- 4 Reduce child mortality
- 5 Improve maternal health
- 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- 7 Ensure environmental sustainability
- 8 Develop a global partnership for development

A woman dies from complications in childbirth every minute – about 529,000 each year -- the vast majority of them in developing countries.

Source: World Health Organization

A woman in sub-Saharan Africa has a 1 in 16 chance of dying in pregnancy or childbirth, compared to a 1 in 4,000 risk in a developing country – the largest difference between poor and rich countries of any health indicator.

Source: WHO

The life expectancy of women in Congo-Kinshasa is a little over half the life expectancy of women in the United States.

Source: WHO

A Story from Peru

Sister Juana Rivera, who cares for pregnant women and their newborns in Tambogrande, Peru, tells the story of Adelaida. Adelaida traveled from her home in the mountains to the health center in Tambogrande. The doctor examined her and, because hers was a high-risk pregnancy, advised that she not return home. Taking that advice, she stayed in the house of hospitality Sister Juana runs for expectant mothers. The home hosted Adelaida, her husband and their seven-year-old daughter for two and a half days. Adelaida was then hospitalized and gave birth to a beautiful baby girl.

“Without the house, where would she have gone?” wonders Sister Juana. “Perhaps home to the Sierra? I don’t know what might have happened.”

Hundreds of thousands of women die every year due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth. Without Sister Juana’s home, Adelaida could have been one of them.



Some indicators

Country	GCP/per capita	Health exp per capita	Health exp as % of GDP	Life expectancy at birth		child mortality per 1000	
				m	f	m	f
USA	\$39.901	\$5.711	15.2%	75	80	8	7
Belgium	\$31.481	\$2.828	9.4%	75	81	5	4
Japan	\$30.039	\$2.244	7.9%	79	86	4	3
Brazil	\$8.140	\$597	7.6%	67	74	38	31
Congo-Kin	\$382	\$14	4.0%	42	47	217	192

Source: WHO

Look for the indicators in your country: www.who.int/countries

The problem.

Goal 5 aims to improve the conditions of mothers giving birth. Every year more than 500,000 women die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth.

Worldwide, more than 50 million women suffer from poor reproductive health and serious pregnancy-related illness and disability.

Making sure women are safe giving birth saves the life of the mother, and her unborn child.

The target

Reduce by three quarters the ratio of women dying in childbirth.

What needs to be done

Increased services are needed for pregnant women. The primary means of preventing maternal deaths is to provide fast access to emergency obstetrical care. It is also important to ensure that a midwife or doctor is present at every delivery. In developing countries only about half of deliveries are attended by professional health staff.

Skilled attendants must be supported by adequate medical care. Life-saving interventions such as antibiotics, surgery, and transportation to medical centers are unavailable to many women, especially in rural areas. These women may lack the money for proper health care and transportation, or may not have the ability to seek help due to societal rules.

Source: www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/mdgs

PRAYER SUGGESTION

For prayer, use one or other of the two passages from the Gospel according to Luke provided below. Ask yourself what grace it carries for you. Ask the same question for three days in a row.

SCRIPTURE

Luke

Chapter 1:10-163

He was teaching in a synagogue on the sabbath. And a woman was there who for eighteen years had been crippled by a spirit; she was bent over, completely incapable of standing erect. When Jesus saw her, he called to her and said, "Woman, you are set free of your infirmity." He laid his hands on her, and she at once stood up straight and glorified God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant that Jesus had cured on the sabbath, said to the crowd in reply, "There are six days when work should be done. Come on those days to be cured, not on the sabbath day." The Lord said to him in reply, "Hypocrites! Does not each one of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger and lead it out for watering? This daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen years now, ought she not to have been set free on the sabbath day from this bondage?"

New American Bible

Luke

Chapter 8:43-38

And a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years, ¹⁵ who (had spent her whole livelihood on doctors and) was unable to be cured by anyone, came up behind him and touched the tassel on his cloak. Immediately her bleeding stopped. Jesus then asked, "Who touched me?" While all were denying it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are pushing and pressing in upon you." But Jesus said, "Someone has touched me; for I know that power has gone out from me." When the woman realized that she had not escaped notice, she came forward trembling. Falling down before him, she explained in the presence of all the people why she had touched him and how she had been healed immediately. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace."

New American Bible

Sources for Further Information

www.catholicreliefservices.org Look up programs in mother and child care. CRS serves in many countries around the world.

www.millenniumcampaign.org This website is a United Nations initiative that aims to raise awareness and build political will for the achievement of the Goals. Find out what is happening in various countries. This is a very active website with much information about practical actions that many people are taking.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

1. What do you feel as you read the statistics from the World Health Organizations (WHO) on page 1 of this module? Can these feelings lead you to positive motivation?
2. What does the story from Sister Juana Rivera in Tambogrande add to your understanding of the work of Sisters of Notre Dame in Peru? Would you consider learning more about the work of SNDs in Peru and sharing this information with others? Do you see this sharing as a practical way of working for social justice?
3. For each dollar of federal income tax U.S. citizens paid in 2006, the federal government spent 41 cents for war and obligations from past wars and 1 cent for humanitarian aid, diplomatic missions and international cooperation. What does this suggest to you about citizen responsibility?