



## Safe Motherhood

*Social policies need to reflect that safe motherhood is a core value of our society*

Safe motherhood is a continuum across the life span of both mother and child, with safe birthing being just one aspect. Safe motherhood is more than the prevention of death and disability in mother and child: It is respect for every woman's humanity, feelings, choices, and preferences.

Safe motherhood is not just a developing economies issue. It also affects developed economies – that motherhood is unsafe for some women is the hidden secret of developed economies. Mothers lifestyle and the conditions in which they live and work strongly influence their ability to mother.

Motherhood is specific to women, and therefore gender equity and gender violence are also at the core of safety. Thus, the notion of safe motherhood must be expanded beyond the prevention of morbidity or mortality to encompass respect for women's basic human rights, including respect for women's autonomy, dignity, feelings, choices, and preferences during motherhood.

Social policies need to reflect that safe motherhood is a core value of our society. This means working together to address the social determinants of safe motherhood. The social determinants of motherhood are the conditions in which mothers are born, grow, live, work and age. These include: poverty; social exclusion; shortcomings in safeguarding early childhood development; unsafe relationships; unsafe employment conditions, and a lack of access to quality education and health care. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels, which are themselves influenced by policy choices. The social determinants of motherhood are mostly responsible for the inequities - the unfair and avoidable differences in motherhood status seen within and between countries.

There is an urgent need to improve daily living conditions, increase access to secondary education, tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources and to measure and understand the problem, so as to assess the impact.

***Responding to increasing concern about these persisting and widening inequities in our world, Maternal Health Matters is working actively to influence how to reduce the inequities.***

Safe Motherhood for All, now and into the future, because *“healthy girls make healthy women make healthy babies make healthy nations”*.

- **The White Ribbon Alliance** - <http://www.whiteribbonalliance.org/>
- **United Nations Population Fund** - <http://www.unfpa.org/public/mothers>

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- **State of the World Midwifery Report** - International Confederation of Midwives  
<http://www.internationalmidwives.org/Whoweare/Partners/StateoftheWorldMidwiferyReport/tabid/933/Default.aspx>
- **Implementing Safe Motherhood in Countries** -  
[http://www.who.int/maternal\\_child\\_adolescent/documents/who\\_dhe\\_msm\\_9411/en/](http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/documents/who_dhe_msm_9411/en/)
- **The Safe Motherhood Initiative** - <http://www.womendeliver.org/>