

Global Maternal and Newborn Health

Over the past 10 years, U.S. government-funded maternal and child survival programs have helped **save more than 7.4 million lives** in priority countries.

Every two minutes, a woman dies from complications related to pregnancy or childbirth. Every year, millions of babies die before they reach one month of age. These deaths are devastating, but they are also largely preventable.

Maternal health refers to the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the period after delivery. Newborn health focuses on babies during their first 28 days—the most vulnerable time in our lives. The state of maternal and newborn health is one of the clearest measures of whether health systems are working. It's also one of the strongest investments countries can make in healthier, more stable futures.

Why Do Mothers and Newborns Die?

Globally, [about 260,000](#) women die each year from pregnancy related causes. Around 2.3 million newborns die in their first month of life annually. The burden is not evenly distributed. Today, nearly all maternal and newborn deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.

Approximately [92 percent](#) of maternal deaths occurred in low- and lower-middle income countries in 2023, and most could have been prevented with access to quality basic health services, especially around the time of birth. Severe bleeding after birth can kill a healthy woman within hours if she is not attended to by a skilled health professional. Nearly half of all newborn deaths (1 million) happen within 24 hours of birth and [75 percent](#) of newborn deaths are within the first week of life.

Leading causes of maternal deaths	Leading causes of newborn deaths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Severe bleeding (mostly bleeding after childbirth)• Infections (usually after childbirth)• High blood pressure during pregnancy (pre-eclampsia and eclampsia)• Complications during delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complications from pre-term birth• Birth complications (like lack of oxygen during labor)• Infections (like sepsis and pneumonia)

When these basics are in place, most maternal and newborn deaths can be prevented:

- Access to skilled health workers like midwives and nurses
- Clean facilities and essential supplies such as medicines and blood
- Timely care for complications like bleeding, infection, and high blood pressure

Maternal and Newborn Health as a U.S. Global Health Priority

There is a clear moral case to support maternal and newborn health. No one should die giving life, and no baby's chance to live should depend on where they are born.

For decades, the U.S. has been one of the largest supporters of global maternal and newborn health through foreign assistance.

Since 2000, there has been a 55 percent drop in under-five child mortality and a 42 percent decrease in maternal mortality across the U.S. government's 25 priority countries—even as populations increased.

When the new [America First Global Health Strategy](#) was released in 2025, comprehensive Maternal and Child Health was noticeably left out. But several key components, like strengthening the healthcare workforce and resilient supply chains for medical products, are integral to MCH.

What Can Congress Do?

To implement this strategy, the U.S. has started a new process of negotiating global health agreements with partner countries. The structure and outcomes of the new bilateral health compacts will determine funding agreements, shape how maternal and newborn health programs operate going forward, and whether progress toward ending preventable maternal and child deaths can be sustained.

With bipartisan backing year after year, the U.S. government supported countries to deliver essential, lifesaving care for women and children. In 2023 alone, U.S.-government supported programs:

- Helped 12 million women give birth in healthcare facilities
- Resuscitated 238,000 newborns who were not breathing at birth
- Supported 10 million newborns with healthcare within 2 days of birth

As the Administration works to implement its new global health strategy, Congress should sustain and increase funding for evidence-based, cost-effective health interventions and ensure comprehensive maternal and child health is fully integrated into new bilateral health agreements.