

# Ending Preventable Maternal, Newborn and Child Deaths Worldwide

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## About the Reach Every Mother and Child Act

The Reach Every Mother and Child Act is a bold, bipartisan policy initiative supported by more than 20 diverse NGOs. This transformative legislation can dramatically accelerate the reduction of preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths worldwide – helping achieve the U.S. commitment of ending these deaths by 2035.



Panna Aktar with her daughter, Sriti, in Bangladesh. Panna has given birth four times, but two of her children died shortly after their birth. Panna says: "Giving birth to Sriti was much better. I had complications but I could go to the local health center and get help. I hope that health services continue to improve because it is very good for poor people like us."

## An Ambitious but Achievable Goal

Since 1990, deaths of mothers and children under age 5 worldwide have been nearly cut in half. Mortality rates are declining faster than they ever have before. This is one of the greatest success stories in international development in the last 25 years. Progress has largely been achieved with simple solutions and proven, inexpensive interventions to address leading causes of death, including diarrhea, pneumonia, malnutrition and complications during pregnancy and birth.

The United States has led the way in improving the lives of mothers and children and building the capacity of countries to care for them and ensure they reach their full potential. Building on this progress, the U.S. has declared ending preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths within a generation (by 2035) a national priority. In 2014, the U.S. laid out a roadmap to take even more aggressive action to save 15 million children's lives and 600,000 women's lives by 2020 in *Acting on the Call: Ending Preventable Child and Maternal Deaths*. These goals are ambitious, but experts agree they are achievable.

***The U.S. has an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate its leadership and fulfill its promise to end preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths within a generation. Congress can help by bringing this bold new initiative forward.***

## What's at Stake

Despite great progress, still:

- 17,000 children die every day – most from preventable and treatable causes such as pneumonia, diarrhea and malaria.

- 2.8 million newborns around the world die each year. About 1 million of these newborns die on their very first day of life, from causes that are almost entirely preventable.
- Nearly 300,000 women die annually due to complications during pregnancy or child birth.
- Malnutrition contributes to approximately 45 percent of deaths among children under the age of 5; this amounts to 3 million children's lives lost each year.
- The poorer the household, the greater the risk of maternal death, with 99 percent of the maternal deaths occurring in the developing world.

## We Know What Works

We know how to end preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths. The United States has been a global leader in saving the lives of mothers and babies, working in partnership with developing countries to increase access to lifesaving, cost-effective and evidence-based interventions.

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## A More Efficient, Sustainable Approach

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) leads the U.S. government's work in maternal, newborn and child health as part of its efforts to empower countries and end extreme global poverty. It has contributed greatly to the progress toward ending preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths. For example, the 24 priority countries where USAID works have achieved an 8 percent reduction in deaths of children under age 5 in the last two years alone, saving 500,000 lives. USAID's efforts also contributed to the global 45 percent decline in maternal mortality between 1990 and 2013. Despite its progress so far, USAID could have a greater impact if key reforms are put in place.

An analysis by a blue-ribbon panel of business and development experts identified areas for improvement to make USAID's maternal and child survival programs more efficient and effective. USAID has already begun implementing the panel's recommendations, including realigning \$2.9 billion in funding last year, but more work remains.

## The Roadmap

Bipartisan legislation called the Reach Act would help scale up the solutions we know work to save the lives of 15 million children and 600,000 women by 2020 and end preventable maternal and child deaths by 2035.

Introduced by Senators Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Chris Coons (D-Del.), the legislation would:

- Coordinate a U.S. government strategy to end preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths and help ensure healthy lives by 2035;
- Require ambitious targets to be set, tracked and annually reported on;



*Fatmara, 21, lost a baby a few years ago after giving birth in her home in Sierra Leone. She recently gave birth to a healthy baby with the help of a trained birth attendant at a clinic that opened in Susan's Bay slum in April 2012 with U.S. government funding.*

- Focus on the poorest and most vulnerable populations, recognizing the unique needs within different countries and communities;
- Improve coordination among the U.S. government agencies and relevant foreign governments, international organizations and civil society;
- Complement strong U.S. bilateral investments with innovative, public-private financing mechanisms; and
- Accelerate partner country progress toward self-sustainability for maternal, newborn and child health.

***Together, we can end preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths around the world within a generation. There is no more important goal we can share, no more important investment in the future health and stability of our world, than saving the lives of women and children.***

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