

Invest In Women – It pays!¹

Healthy women deliver for their families, communities and nations.

- Women's unpaid household, caregiving and farm work worldwide equals about a third of the world's Gross National Product.
- Women's income is more likely than men's to go for food, education, medicine and other family needs.
- Death or disability of a mother raises death and illness rates for children, destroys families, takes children out of school and lowers household and community economic productivity.
- Women are the sole income earners for 25 to 33 percent of all households.
- In 2001, the U.S. Agency for International Development estimated the global economic impact of maternal and newborn mortality at US\$15 billion in lost potential production per year – half associated with women and half with newborns.

The return on investment in women is enormous.

- Investment in educating girls one extra year beyond the average boosts their eventual wages 10 to 20 percent.
- Investment in female secondary education yields returns in the form of higher wages that range from 15 to 25 percent, according to Yale economist Paul Schultz.²
- Credit extended to women increases household consumption about twice as much as men's borrowing.
- Providing emergency obstetric services and equipment to save women's lives also creates the capacity to perform operations and transfusions for accidents and other emergencies.
- Investing in family planning services lowers the rate of unintended pregnancies, which reduces unsafe abortions, which reduces health care costs.
- In some low- and middle-income countries, hospitals spend up to half their obstetric and gynecological budgets to treat women with complications from unsafe abortions.
- A 1993 World Bank study found that antenatal and delivery care and family planning were among the six most cost-effective health interventions for low-income countries.

Investment in women creates a “virtuous circle”

- Educated, employed and economically productive women are more likely to use health care systems.
- One study found that unemployed women have more than four times the chance of maternal death than employed women, and a greater chance of maternal health complications and illness after childbirth.

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- ✚ Women who use maternal health services are more likely to use other reproductive health services, such as HIV/AIDS testing and treatment, and family planning.
- ✚ Women who use maternal health care services are also more likely to obtain vaccinations for themselves and their children.
- ✚ Job status is more important to improving maternal health than overall household economic status, perhaps because paid work increases women's power over household resources.

The necessary investment is well within reach.

- ✚ Several reports estimate that the package of services essential to make significant improvements in maternal health would cost less than US\$1.50 per person in the 75 countries where 95 percent of maternal deaths occur.
- ✚ International development assistance for maternal and newborn health totaled US\$530 million in 2004 and US\$1.2 billion in 2006. While funding has increased between the period 2004-2006, an additional US\$5 billion per year is needed by 2010 to achieve maternal and newborn health goals.
- ✚ Projections suggest that such funding requirements could be met if countries invested 15 percent of their national budgets in health and if official development assistance climbed further towards 0.7 percent of Gross National Income in the OECD countries.
- ✚ That sum is only 0.016 percent of global GNP and 2 percent of aid, well within the grasp of donor countries. And it would return three times as much in the maternal and newborn productivity that would otherwise be lost.

¹ Figures in this fact sheet, except where indicated, from K. Gill, R. Pande and A. Malhotra, "Women Deliver for Development," International Center for Research on Women, Washington DC, July 24, 2007, pp. 37-41.

² These two points on education from B. Herz & G. Sperling, "What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence and Policies from the Developing World," Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 2004, pp. 3-6