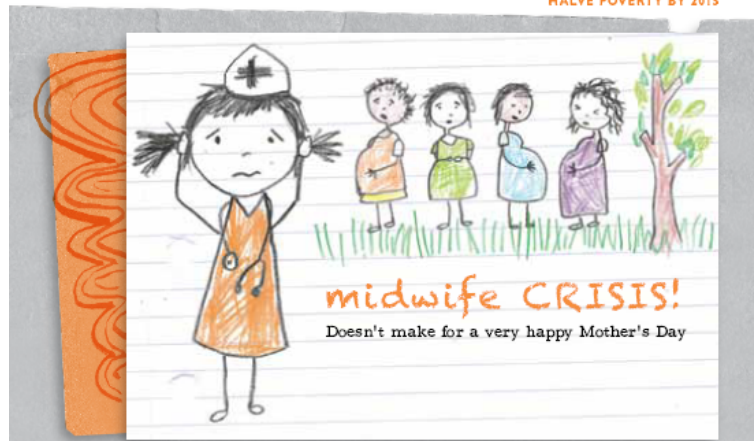


Church Brief

Midwife Crisis!

March - May 2011



Midwife Crisis Overview

On Mother's Day we are thankful for the love and sacrifice of our mothers. Whether in Australia or a developing country, mothers give of themselves from the very beginning. But some mothers around the world are being asked to give more than their bodies can bear – thousands die and thousands more are left disabled as they give birth without the support of midwives or health professionals.

Each year, there are almost 360,000 maternal deaths which are largely preventable through the presence of skilled birth attendants. Unfortunately, only about half of pregnancies and childbirths are attended by midwives and those without have a doubled risk of complications before, during or after childbirth. 99% of maternal deaths occur in developing countries where there is a major shortage of midwives or other skilled birth attendants. In developing countries, the risk of maternal death is about 1 in 30, compared to 1 in 8000 in developed countries. The main direct causes of death are infection, excessive bleeding, and obstructed labour. Factors of poverty and environment also complicate maternal health in childbirth indirectly, including malaria and malnutrition that can contribute to death. Many births in developing countries occur in remote and rural areas, far from accessible clinics or hospitals. However, through training local midwives in these communities, the risks of health complications for mothers and babies are greatly reduced. Addressing this Midwife Crisis will enable more women to ensure the safe delivery and improved maternal health.

As Christians, we believe in a faithful Creator God who cherishes life and who has deep concern for those who are sick and needy. In the gospels, countless times we read of our Lord who came across many people and "had compassion on them and healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14). Not only that, but Jesus also instructs his disciples to do the same. In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, Paul uses the image of a nursing mother to highlight both the care God gives us, and the love we must also have for others.

This Mother's Day we can show we care by reminding Australia's leaders of our commitments to the Millennium Development Goals.

Delivering on these will ensure Mother's Day is a celebration for many more mums!

Recommendations to the Australian Government

As part of the Midwife Crisis campaign, we are urging the Australian government to do more to ensure maternal health is high on the international aid agenda. By signing a Mother's Day card, you will be presenting the following recommendations:

1. Increase health aid to around \$1200m per year and provide a minimum of \$500m of this for services related to maternal and child health.
2. Encourage partner governments to recruit, train and place sufficient numbers of midwives and to provide adequate remuneration and support for midwifery staff.
3. Work with and advocate for partner countries to support effective fast-start training programs for midwives as part of their national health strategy.
4. Support the UNFPA and International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) programme, "Investing in Midwives and others with Midwifery Skills," to accelerate progress towards achieving MDGs 4 and 5.

Campaign Prayer points:

- Pray that the Australian government will respond to Micah Challenge calls to increase spending on health to 20% of Australia's development budget.
- Pray for God to intervene with regard to the provision of health facilities and trained midwives so that no woman has to go through pregnancy and childbirth without health support. Pray especially for Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia where most maternal deaths occur.
- Give thanks for the blessing of medical professionals during childbirth to ensure safe baby deliveries.
- Pray that cultural practices such as Female Genital Mutilation will be stopped so that the risk of obstructed labour will be reduced.
- Pray for those suffering from health complications related to pregnancy and childbirth such as fistula. Pray for healing and restoration through provision of health services.
- Ask God to bless the health of all mothers so that they can live well and provide for and nurture their children.
- Pray that Christians in Australia and across the universal church may appreciate the blessing of safe and accessible health care and stand up to their responsibility of caring for the sick and needy.

For more information visit www.micahchallenge.org.au

If you would like to contact Micah Challenge:

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