

SAFE MOTHERHOOD

Safe Motherhood for all calls for the introduction of social policies that reflect safe motherhood as a core value of our society.

Birthing is just one aspect of a continuum of safe motherhood across the life span of both mother and child. Safe motherhood is much 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 an issue confined to developing communities, as is commonly understood and where infant and maternal morbidity and mortality are often the most shocking. It also affects developing 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. In many Western countries for example, pregnant women and new mothers are more likely to be the victim of partner violence than at any other time of their lives. 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, Safe Motherhood for All is working actively to influence how to reduce the inequities.

Sources

The White Ribbon Alliance - <http://www.whiteribbonalliance.org/>
 United Nations Population Fund - <http://www.unfpa.org/public/mothers>
 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/
 The Safe Motherhood Initiative - <http://www.womendeliver.org/>
 Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing - <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/clinical-practice-guidelines-ac-mod1~part-b~clinical-assessments+~domestic-violence>

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