**HOPE USA – Save Maternal and Infant Lives in Pakistan**

**Summary:**

Consider the dire reality in Pakistan with regards to maternal and infant health:

* A 2018 UNICEF report revealed that Pakistan has the highest Infant Mortality Rate in the world – newborns here face a one in 22 chance of dying within a month of birth
* Pakistan has a Maternal Mortality Rate of 127/100,000 which accounts for 28 percent of the global total
* Every 37 minutes, one woman dies giving birth in Pakistan (14,000 woman every year)

**Challenge:**

As an emerging nation, Pakistan faces many challenges when it comes to public health.  These are due primarily to a lack of resources dedicated to health solutions as well as a lack of awareness of basic health knowledge.  In Pakistan, 1 in 89 women die due to pregnancy or childbirth-related complications.  Similarly, almost 7 infants out of 100 die before they reach one year of age.  Almost 40 percent of children in Pakistan are malnourished.  Preventable conditions such as malaria, diarrhea, bronchial infections, and gastrointestinal infections abound.  Health indicators suggest that it is the lack of accessible healthcare — not terrorism, drones or the energy crisis — that is the greatest adversity facing Pakistan.  Pakistan spends a shockingly low percentage of its GDP (.2 percent) on healthcare.  The poor quality of government provided health services in Pakistan is the major reason behind the large role played by the private sector in healthcare.

**Solutions:**

The good news is that a majority of maternal and infant deaths are preventable:

* 80 percent of newborn deaths are preventable with trained midwives, clean water, proper hygiene, and breastfeeding within the first hour
* Out of the 14,000 deaths of women due to childbirth 1/3 of these are preventable (4,500 per year)

HOPE USA has been at the forefront of the battle against maternal and infant mortality since 1998 – we operate a network of four hospitals which treat over 500,000 patients yearly – 70 percent of those patients are women. Altogether, 30,000 women are given prenatal care per year at our hospitals. Each year, our hospitals welcome 7,000 newborns via normal birth and 8,500 newborns via cesarean birth. Approximately 3,000 infants are given neonatal treatment.

As of 2021, HOPE USA operates four charitable hospitals in Pakistan: one in Karachi, one in Thatta, one in Zia Colony, and one in Sujawal.  Each hospital is complete with surgical facilities, a neonatal intensive care unit, and labor and delivery rooms.  Emphasis is placed upon promoting safe deliveries and reducing maternal and infant mortality due to pregnancy-related complications. HOPE Hospitals offer the following services to beneficiaries:

* Maternal and prenatal care
* Incubator and neonatal care
* Pediatric care
* Diagnostic services (ultrasounds, labs, etc.)
* Infertility treatments
* Breastfeeding consultants
* Family planning services
* Awareness programs for diseases such as hepatitis, hypertension, diabetes
* Outpatient procedures
* 24/7 emergency unit
* Pharmacy providing medicines free of charge

HOPE USA’s Hospitals provide critical services to the underserved communities in which they operate. Our hospitals intervene to provide prenatal and neonatal care and provide solutions to the problems of maternal and infant mortality within Pakistan.

**Long-term Impact:**

Pregnancy-related complications are the number one cause of death and disability among women of reproductive age worldwide. It has been estimated that approximately 40 percent of women may suffer from an acute problem in pregnancy, and 9 to 15 percent may experience a problem needing higher secondary care. Childbirth-related deaths can be categorized as the following: hemorrhage accounts for 24 percent of deaths, unsafe abortions account for 13 percent, and obstructed labor accounts for 8 percent. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF estimate that each year 536,000 women die from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.In the Millennium Development Goal 5, countries committed to reduce maternal mortality by 75 percent between 1990 and 2015. However, between 1990 and 2005, the maternal mortality ratio declined by only 5 percent. Global data indicates that 45 million deliveries annually are not assisted by skilled birth attendants. Though women in every country and every part of the world develop these complications, those in developing countries are much less likely to get prompt adequate care and are therefore more likely to die. If a system is in place to recognize problems promptly and to transport a woman to a healthcare facility where she can receive appropriate and timely treatment, then the majority of maternal mortalities could be avoided.

It is vividly recognized that pregnancy outcomes serve as a litmus test for the health of nations[[1]](#footnote-1). Currently, 60 percent of the 188 countries studied have a Maternal Mortality Rate of 70 or below[[2]](#footnote-2). Not surprisingly, in societies such as Pakistan where the maternal mortality rate is very high, there are usually multiple causes that are linked to the issue: poverty, illiteracy, low social status of women, poor sanitation and nutrition, poor transport, and inadequate medical services. Ideally all these issues should be addressed if a substantial decline in maternal mortality is desired. Due to the complexity of these issues however, it is probably most pragmatic and efficient to concentrate intervention efforts on three to four activities which can be defined and accurately assessed for effectiveness within a short period of time.

By establishing four hospitals which have large units dedicated to maternal and child health, HOPE USA is taking concrete steps towards reducing Pakistan’s Maternal Mortality Rate and Infant Mortality Rate. Our hospitals employ skilled doctors and medical personnel to handle maternal and pediatric emergencies while our grass roots teams proactively educate the community about prevention and follow-through. These methods, along with our established levels of trust within the communities in which we operate, are fundamental to positively impacting the Maternal Mortality Rate and Infant Mortality Rate within Pakistan.

1. https://nyaspubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1196/annals.1425.016 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://tribune.com.pk/story/1187252/pakistan-ranks-149188-sdg-index/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)