



## SAVING WOMEN S LIVES

### EVERY MINUTE:

- 380 women become pregnant
- 190 women face an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy
- 110 women experience a pregnancy-related complication
- 40 women have an unsafe abortion
- 1 woman dies from a pregnancy-related complication

### HERE ARE THE FACTS:<sup>1</sup>

#### Safe Motherhood

- Every day at least 1,600 women die from the complications of pregnancy and childbirth. That is 585,000 women dying each year – the equivalent of four jumbo jets full of only pregnant women crashing each day. Complications of pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death and disability for women in developing countries aged 15 to 49.
- Of all the health statistics monitored by the World Health Organization, maternal mortality has the largest discrepancy between developed and developing countries.
- In addition to maternal deaths, each year millions of women experience pregnancy-related complications, many of which lead to long-term illness or disability.
- Experts agree that good quality maternal health care is the single most important intervention to prevent maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity. Still, millions of women do not get this care; only 53% of deliveries in developing countries take place with a skilled birth attendant.
- By spacing births, family planning lowers mortality among both women and children. Just by increasing the time between births or the age of first motherhood, family planning can reduce infant and child mortality by up to 25% – about three million children s lives a year. Use of family planning can also help reduce the toll of repeated pregnancy and childbirth on women s health.
- Abortions performed under unsafe conditions kill more than 75,000 women annually, roughly one of every seven pregnancy-related deaths. The recent experience of Russia and several Eastern European countries provides evidence that increased use of family planning helps reduce reliance on abortion. At the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, more than 150 countries agreed that unsafe abortion was a major public health problem.



## STIs/HIV/AIDS

- Every day, more than 1 million people are infected with a curable sexually transmitted infection (STI). Women and men aged 20 to 24 are at highest risk.
- The four most common STIs – syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia and trichomoniasis – are relatively easy to cure through antibiotic treatment. However, many people who have an STI, especially women, do not show any symptoms, so do not know they need treatment.
- At least 16,000 men, women and children are infected with HIV each day – almost six million last year alone. Half of all new cases are among young people aged 10 to 24. In most countries, 40% of new HIV infections are among women, and this rate is rising. In developing countries, most HIV infection is due to heterosexual intercourse.
- Family planning helps stem the spread of HIV/AIDS – directly, by making condoms available, and indirectly, by teaching women how to better negotiate condom use by their male partners.

## Female Genital Cutting (FGC)

- Between 100 million and 180 million women around the world have undergone FGC – also called female circumcision, female genital mutilation (FGM), and female genital surgeries (FGS) – and some 600 girls are at risk every day.
- FGC is a serious health issue, whose short-term consequences include pain, injury to adjacent tissue of the urethra, hemorrhage, shock, acute urine retention, infection, and failure to heal. Long-term health effects can include recurrent urinary tract infections, pelvic infections, infertility, keloid scars (cysts), damage to the urethra or anus, and problems during childbirth. Because FGC violates a woman's right to good health and bodily integrity, it is a human rights issue as well.
- Although it occurs predominantly in Africa, FGC is not confined to that continent. Through migration, it has spread to Europe and North America; it is also practiced by minority groups in some Asian countries such as India and Indonesia.

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<sup>1</sup>Information from Family Care International; *Sexual and Reproductive Health Briefing Cards*, New York, NY, March 1999, [http://www.familycareintl.org/briefing\\_cards/bc.htm](http://www.familycareintl.org/briefing_cards/bc.htm); and USAID Intra-Agency Working Group on FGC, *Female Genital Cutting: The Facts and the Myths*, Washington, DC, June 1999, [http://www.measurecommunication.org/topics/fgc\\_symposium/index.html](http://www.measurecommunication.org/topics/fgc_symposium/index.html).