

Beginnings Fund – Press Release

Global philanthropies launch landmark initiative to accelerate maternal-newborn survival in Africa

- [The Beginnings Fund](#) aims to prevent over 300,000 avoidable deaths by expanding access to quality care for mothers and babies in sub-Saharan Africa, in partnership with Ministries of Health.
- The Fund is supported by anchor donors the Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity, The ELMA Foundation, Gates Foundation, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, Delta Philanthropies, and others.
- The launch took place in Kanad Hospital in Abu Dhabi, attended by Ministers of Health from Malawi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Zanzibar.

Abu Dhabi, UAE. April 29, 2025

A coalition of global philanthropies today announced the launch of the Beginnings Fund, a new philanthropic initiative committed to accelerating maternal and newborn survival across Africa.

With a focus on sustainability and local ownership, the Beginnings Fund will work in partnership with African governments, national organizations, and experts to prevent over 300,000 deaths and enhance access to quality care for 34 million mothers and babies by 2030.

The establishment of the Beginnings Fund is part of a joint philanthropic commitment of nearly \$600 million for maternal and newborn survival, including \$100 million in direct funding for initiatives that further the Beginnings Fund's mission. This joint commitment was enabled by a major grant from the Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity that unlocked matched funding from the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, Delta Philanthropies, The ELMA Foundation, Gates Foundation, joined by funding from Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, Patchwork Collective, and others.

Over the next five years, the Fund will partner with up to 10 African countries to make targeted investments in the products, people, and systems required to improve and scale maternal and newborn health. These investments will advance maternal and newborn survival in high-burden hospitals, health centers, and referral networks, in which most maternal and newborn deaths – the majority of which are preventable – occur.

The Beginnings Fund will focus on strengthening the workforce and equipping facilities with a bundle of low-cost, evidence-based interventions. By harnessing innovations, empowering a skilled workforce, and building strong data and referral systems, the



Beginnings Fund aims to support governments in giving mothers and babies the best chance at a healthy future.

The Fund's launch was held at Kanad Hospital in Abu Dhabi, the site of the emirate's first modern hospital.

His Highness Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Chairman of the Presidential Court for Development and Fallen Heroes' Affairs in the UAE, said: *"Through the Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity, we are honored to support the Beginnings Fund in giving more mothers and children the opportunity of a healthy start. In the earliest days of the UAE, our nation faced high maternal and newborn mortality rates. This journey taught us the profound importance of quality healthcare that is available to all, at every stage of life, and this knowledge continues to guide us today. Through this partnership, we further our dedication to working hand in hand with governments and partners to build a healthier, more hopeful future for generations to come."*

Newborn deaths in the first month of life are the single biggest driver of mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa, where 70% of maternal deaths also occur. Most of these deaths are preventable with trained health workers providing essential care to mothers and babies. Yet maternal and newborn health remains one of the most addressable, yet underfunded, areas in global health.

Without transformative action, 182,000 [women](#) and 1.2 million [newborns](#) in Africa will continue to die each year from preventable causes, in addition to 950,000 [stillbirths](#).

"Mothers and newborns should not be dying from causes we know how to prevent," said Dr Mekdes Daba, Minister of Health for Ethiopia. *"We all have a shared responsibility to build resilient and well-resourced health systems that can safeguard the life of every pregnant woman and newborn. With the right investments and innovations, countries around the world have succeeded in transforming maternal and newborn care. There is no reason that we cannot do the same."*

In collaboration with country-level implementation partners, the Beginnings Fund will operate in up to 10 countries - Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Lesotho, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe - and continue to pool and invest multi-year funding. The initial commitment from its founding philanthropies is designed to catalyze further funding from new donors, ensuring long-term sustainability.

"African governments, with support from philanthropic and bilateral organizations, are at the forefront of advancing maternal and newborn health and making groundbreaking innovations. The continent is making remarkable strides, but achieving lasting change requires collaborative action. I would like to express my gratitude to the African governments, national organizations and experts, and our founding investors who are



part of this unique collaborative effort to drive lasting change across Africa,” said Alice Kang’ethe, Chief Executive Officer of the Beginnings Fund.

Momentum is rapidly growing toward achieving global maternal and newborn health goals. The United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set ambitious targets to save the lives of mothers and newborns, and many African countries are advancing plans to accelerate progress. However, achieving these targets requires increased, more targeted philanthropic funding, and coordinated action.

Sir Chris Hohn, Founder and Chair of the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation, said: *“Mothers and babies dying in childbirth from preventable causes is a travesty – but ending this travesty is within our reach. Working with African governments, the Beginnings Fund will have a profound impact, giving millions of children a healthy start in life. However, this should only be the beginning. To achieve its ambitious targets for 2030, the Beginnings Fund will need more global funders and philanthropists to step up. Most importantly, it will need to work hand in hand with government to increase funding and improve delivery of life-saving interventions to ensure African mothers and children survive and thrive.”*

Tanya Masiyiwa, President and CEO of Delta Philanthropies, added: *“Never have we witnessed such a concerted effort by donors, national governments and other partners in collaborating to reduce maternal and infant mortality in Africa. As Delta Philanthropies, we have seen firsthand how collective investments drive real, transformative change. The Beginnings Fund will amplify our impact and save more lives. We hope that other African philanthropic organisations can join us on this important journey.”*

“The ELMA Foundation is impelled to pool our collective optimism and funding with others in the Beginnings Fund, so that we can move beyond making periodic grants and instead deploy significant capital to the tools, technologies, and people that will dramatically and sustainably reduce maternal and newborn mortality in Africa, preventing the unnecessary deaths of hundreds of thousands of mothers and newborns – and the devastation such profound loss wreaks on families and communities – for generations to come,” said Robyn Calder, President of ELMA Philanthropies.

"In the past decade, researchers have pioneered remarkable new ways to keep mothers and their children alive and healthy - but these solutions still aren't reaching the people who need them most," said Mark Suzman, CEO of the Gates Foundation. *"We're committed to working with government, health workers, and partners like the Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity, ClIFF, Delta Philanthropies, ELMA, and others, to address this unacceptable disparity and accelerate progress on maternal and newborn health."*

About the Beginnings Fund



The Beginnings Fund is a unique philanthropic initiative aiming to save more than 300,000 lives and ensure 34 million women and newborns across Africa receive quality care by 2030. Working in partnership with African governments and organizations, the Beginnings Fund will make targeted investments to improve and scale the quality of care in high-burden hospitals and their referral networks by strengthening the workforce and equipping facilities with a bundle of low-cost, evidence-based maternal and newborn health interventions. The Beginnings Fund aims to deploy \$500 million in philanthropic funding by 2030, of which 90% has been raised.

For more information, visit <https://beginningsfund.org/>

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