the Beginnings Fund

Photo: Frederic Courbet

By the time you finish reading this, approximately 18 women and newborns will have died from preventable causes during pregnancy, labor, birth, and the postpartum period. In Africa, that is one life lost every 14 seconds, a staggering and unacceptable loss.

The Beginnings Fund aims to dramatically increase maternal and newborn survival in Africa by making high-impact investments in the products, people, and systems required to improve care at scale. Join our community of philanthropists committed to ensuring women and children in Africa survive and thrive.

Why is collaborative action needed?

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 are most vulnerable in the period before, during, and after labor, when the majority of maternal deaths occur. Likewise, babies are most vulnerable in the first month of life, with nearly half of the annual 5 million global under-five deaths occurring during this period.

The vast majority of these deaths are preventable by improving access to quality care for pregnant mothers and their newborns. This means ensuring a sufficient number of trained healthcare workers are delivering care to women and babies in health facilities equipped with cost-effective, high-quality, and evidence-based products, equipment, and referral and data systems.

Through unprecedented collaborative action between government, philanthropy, and local partners, the Beginnings Fund aims to address shortfalls in care and change the trajectory for maternal and newborn survival—effecting more impact than what any donor can achieve on their own.

over 70% of global maternal deaths are in Africa

50% of global newborn deaths are in Africa

What is the Beginnings Fund?

The first of its kind, the Beginnings Fund is a philanthropic initiative partnering with African governments and organizations to accelerate progress in saving maternal and newborn lives on the continent. Aligned with government plans and priorities, and leveraging investments by multilateral and bilateral donors, the Beginnings Fund pools and dispatches multi-year funding to drive down maternal and newborn mortality in settings with the highest burden.

The Beginnings Fund works to improve the quality of care in high-burden district hospitals, health centers, and their referral networks by strengthening the workforce and equipping facilities to deliver evidence-based maternal and newborn health interventions. **By 2030, we aim to prevent over 300,000 avoidable deaths and improve the quality of care for 34 million women and newborns.**

Photo: Jjumba Martin

How does it work?

The right tools, coupled with investments in well-trained health workers at all levels of care, can save lives. In fact, nearly 75% of maternal and newborn deaths in Africa are preventable by ensuring appropriately trained and equipped health workers attend to births.

The Beginnings Fund makes targeted investments in the products, people, and systems necessary to improve maternal and newborn care at scale. Bundling innovations—clinical interventions, tools, and services targeting the key drivers of risk and mortality—with a robust, highly-trained workforce offers women and babies the best chance of a healthy future.

Examples of interventions we invest in:

- Bundling obstetric drapes and critical drugs to prevent, detect, and treat postpartum hemorrhage in real time
- Rolling out antibiotics and point-of-care ultrasounds to minimize the risk of infections and other pregnancy complications early
- Ensuring neonatal units have functioning continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machines, oxygen, and Kangaroo Mother Care protocols to address common newborn complications such as respiratory distress, asphyxia, and hypothermia
- Partnering with nursing colleges to accelerate the number of appropriately trained midwives and neonatal nurses

Products and people can only be as effective as the health systems in which they're delivered. In collaboration with governments, WHO, academic institutions, and national partners, the Beginnings Fund invests in the strengthening of data systems for decision-making and quality improvement—and emergency transport and referral systems to achieve greatest impact at all levels of care.

A Nairobi-based Investment Team develops and manages the Beginnings Fund's investments, which are approved and monitored by an investment committee. Founding funders include the Mohamed Bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, Delta Philanthropies, The ELMA Foundation, Gates Foundation, Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, Molly and Bill Ford, The Patchwork Collective, and others.

How can you take action for mothers and babies?

Founded in 2024 as a fiscally-sponsored initiative of Global Impact, the Beginnings Fund aims to pool an initial $525 million to save lives in its first five years, with plans to continue beyond the 2030 target date for the Sustainable Development Goals.

We invite you to join us in ensuring global maternal and newborn health equity in our lifetime.

The preventable deaths of millions of mothers and newborns worldwide are inexcusable. But the combined force of our philanthropic resources invested in the innovations, people, and systems needed for quality maternal and newborn care can transform birth outcomes for generations to come.

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