



Beyond Borders



Walking Beyond Our Borders With Frontline Health Workers in Guatemala

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Imagine you or your newborn is sick, and that you live in a rural village of a developing country. You have no telephone or car. There is no doctor or midwife in your village, and the nearest clinic or hospital is 3 to 4 hours away. For women and babies in developing countries, the risk of dying in childbirth is an everyday reality. An estimated 287,000 maternal deaths from complications in pregnancy and childbirth resulted from hemorrhage, sepsis, hypertension and other causes in 2010 (United Nations [UN],

2012). Worldwide, almost 3 million newborns die before they reach 1 month of age, with complications of preterm birth, asphyxia or infection accounting for 43 percent of deaths of children under the age of 5 years (Save the Children, 2013a). Sadly, many of these deaths are preventable if health care is available.

Save the Children

Save the Children was established in 1919 by Eglantyne Jebb, a British woman, to assist with European children of World War I. As an outgrowth

Abstract In many developing countries, access to health care can be out of reach for many women and newborns. Trained frontline health workers serve as the first point of contact for medical care in many of these areas, and their efforts can prevent illness and death from conditions such as malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea. Their work is especially vital to reducing maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality. Due to the global shortage of health workers, nurses and organizations need to collectively advocate for the support and training of frontline health workers. DOI: 10.1111/1751-486X.12082

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My trip to Guatemala was a glimpse into how women and newborns survive without access to care in developing countries

of the organization's mission to help children in need, Save the Children USA was founded in 1932 to help children of families in Appalachia survive the Great Depression. Save the Children serves the needs of children and families in the poorest, most remote communities in the United States and 125 countries around the globe. In partnership with these countries, Save the Children helps women and children improve their lives with access to health care, education and emergency relief during disasters. Since 2011, Save the Children and the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN) have partnered to raise awareness of the fact that many illnesses and deaths are preventable with trained frontline health workers working in their own communities.

In 2011, Save the Children's frontline health workers treated more than 16 million children for life-threatening diseases such as pneumonia, malaria and diarrhea in countries such as

Africa, Asia, India and Latin America (Save the Children, 2013b). Frontline health workers use low-cost interventions, such as teaching breastfeeding support and encouraging skin-to-skin contact for preterm infants, as well as providing mosquito nets to prevent malaria and medications (e.g., misoprostol) to prevent postpartum hemorrhage. Frontline health workers use basic supplies, such as chlorhexidine for cord care at a cost of 23 cents, and antibiotics to treat newborn sepsis or pneumonia at a cost of \$2 per dose, which saved an estimated 509,000 lives; resuscitation equipment available at birth saved an estimated 229,000 infants (Save the Children, 2013a, p. 42).

Millennium Development Goals

In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals were created as an initiative of the UN to raise international awareness of health care disparities worldwide and set goals to decrease these disparities (see Box 1). Currently, 192 countries have adopted the goals and use them as a framework to partner in the reduction of global socioeconomic and health care disparities by setting specific, measurable goals to be accomplished by the year 2015 (Geoghegan, 2012).

Journey to Guatemala

For more than 40 years, Save the Children has worked in the rural, poverty stricken areas of

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