

# Keep saving MOTHERS keep on track

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Mothers always put family and children first. Often, they do not give priority to their health and the health issue of women are frequently overlooked. But improving mothers' health, preventing unnecessary maternal deaths would ultimately help in both way for mothers as well as their babies. On ahead of International Mother's Day on this Sunday, a little light projected here to show the state of Bangladeshi mothers and ways to move forward.

Recent data published this year from Bangladesh Maternal Mortality and Health Care Survey (BMMS) shows that maternal mortality has dropped by 40 percent in last 9 years from 322 in 2001 to 194 in 2010. The rate of decline was at an average about 5.5 percent compared to average annual reduction rate of about 5.4 percent for achieving the primary target of MDG-5. It

seems that Bangladesh is on the track of reaching target to reduce maternal mortality ratio by three quarters by 2015. Now the target is to cut the number of death from 194 to 143 per 100,000 live births.

This is a significant achievement. Yet, thousands more lives could be saved by strengthening and expanding our support for basic, low-cost health services and the front line health workers who deliver lifesaving care. Although the proportion of women delivering in a healthcare facility has risen to 23 percent in 2010, still, 2.4 million births take place annually at home.

Births with Skilled Birth Attendance (SBA) have doubled (26.5 percent) in last 9 years but almost entirely increased in a facility centre, not at home. It signifies the need of improvement and expanding services at healthcare facilities to increase the use of SBA.

Although maternal mortality during pregnancy and delivery has declined by 50 percent, reduction of death in post-partum (period after delivery) is insignificant and accounts for 73 percent of all maternal deaths. So, care including referral system and referral level care after delivery should be increased.

Haemorrhage specially in post-partum still the main cause of death followed by eclampsia (life threatening pregnancy complication characterised by high blood pressure and convulsion). Some haemorrhage cases can be avoided by proper management of placenta.

Antenatal care (ANC), a component of safe motherhood, is still lower which needs to be increased. Less than one in four (23.4 percent) women receive the recommended four or more ANC visits in Bangladesh.

This year, Save the Children



ranked Bangladesh 18 out of 42 least developed countries category. We need to go forward on the top of the list and should step up our efforts to achieve an additional 25 percent reduction in the maternal mortality ratio. Future gains in maternal mortality may be achieved by ensuring effective family planning to lower fertility to replacement level and below, promoting the rising trends in education levels

among young women.

When mothers have access to basic health care like antenatal care, skilled attendance before, during and after childbirth, referral level care and inexpensive medicine including antibiotics and other lifesaving drugs, thousands would survived who otherwise died. Let us help them survive.

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## ASTHMA CONTROL

### Know what triggers your asthma

Asthma is a chronic breathing disorder characterised by recurrent attacks of breathlessness and wheezing. Some causes and triggers are common to all people with asthma, and some are more individual. The strongest risk factors for developing Asthma are inhaled Asthma triggers which include:


- indoor allergens (for example house dust mites in bedding, carpets and stuffed furniture, pollution and pet dander)
- outdoor allergens (such as pollens and moulds)
- tobacco smoke; and
- chemical irritants in the workplace

Other triggers may include cold air, extreme emotional arousal such as anger or fear, and physical exercise. In some people, asthma can even be triggered by certain medications. Urbanisation has also been associated with an increase in Asthma, however the exact nature of this relationship is unclear.

According to WHO estimates, 235 million people suffer from asthma globally. Although Asthma cannot be cured, appropriate management can control the disorder and enable people to enjoy good quality of life. In addition, some children with milder forms of asthma outgrow their symptoms with age.

Source: World Health Organisation (WHO)

HEALTHbulletin



**Prolonged bottle feeding boosts kids' obesity risk**

Nearly one-quarter of 2-year-old bottle feeders were obese at age 5, researchers say. Babies who are still drinking from a bottle at 2 years of age may be prone to obesity by the time they turn 5, a new study from Temple University's Center for Obesity Research and Education in Philadelphia suggests.

Source: The Journal of Pediatrics

**High Potassium, low Sodium may reduce risk of cardiovascular diseases**

Consuming twice as much Potassium as Sodium can halve the risk of dying from cardiovascular diseases — according to a study by the Journal of the American College of Cardiology.

## WORLD THALASSAEMIA DAY

# Ensuring equal chance to life for thalassaemic

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Thalassaemia is a blood disorder characterised by less haemoglobin and fewer red blood cells in the body. It is transmitted from parents to children. Since haemoglobin allows red blood cells to carry oxygen, the deficiency leads to anaemia, marked by growth retardation, fatigue, pale appearance, shortness of breath and weakness.

Children with Thalassaemia often require frequent blood transfusions and lifelong medical treatment. The disease affects more than 7 percent of Bangladesh's population, which accounts for approximately 11.2 million. More than 7,000 children are born with Thalassaemia each year in Bangladesh.

The definite treatment of Thalassaemia is Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) which is very costly and unaffordable for the poor.

According to Health Bulletin 2009, Thalassaemia was the tenth most common disease among 5-14 yrs old patients of government medical college hospitals of Bangladesh.

However, there are inadequate facilities available addressing the



needs of Thalassaemia patients in the government health system. These inadequate treatment facilities have been multiplied by the lack of updated knowledge of the health service providers, poverty of the patients and lack of diagnostic facilities.

The only way to combat this serious condition is prevention. Thalassaemia can easily be prevented by pre-marital/pre-conceptual or early pregnancy screening followed by marriage counselling and antenatal diagnosis.

With a view to increasing awareness and discuss effective strategy to combat Thalassaemia, Bangladesh Thalassaemia Foundation (BTF) and Sandhani, Sir Salimullah Medical College (SSMC) unit has organised a seminar today at BIRDEM Hospital, Dhaka on the eve of World Thalassaemia Day on May 8. It is a matter of hope that the issues related to the disease have been included in the proposed Health Policy of Bangladesh. The patients are looking forward to get better opportunities following the implementation of the policy.

## Pakistan prepares to abolish Ministry of Health!

By June this year, Pakistan could be the first country without a health ministry. Pakistani Parliament has signed off on a constitutional amendment that paves the way for the abolition the institutional structure for healthcare — Ministry of Health, state department, directorate, or equivalent structure — at the federal level in charge of national responsibilities for health.

This amendment comes at a time when there is a dire need to increase the capacity of the health system in view of many serious challenges. For example, the failure to eradicate Poliomyelitis means that Pakistan might be the last remaining reservoir of endemic Polio virus transmission in the world.

The 18th constitutional amendment has granted provinces greater autonomy, and has devolved decision making in many sectors including health. In principle, devolution of powers can improve governance and has the potential to improve health equity. However, it is vital that national health matters are identified, and related responsibilities are entrusted to a federal institution.

Source: The Lancet



A community health worker in Grax, a village on the outskirts of Karachi, Pakistan

## Knowing for better living

### In Bangladesh...

36% of all newborns are low birth weight & height !

- Ensure adequate nutrition for pregnant woman
- Arrange regular medical checkup during pregnancy
- Take special care for pregnant woman
- Keep away from active or passive smoking during pregnancy
- Take medicine only on Doctor's prescription



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