

# SafeBirth Africa:

## Reducing preventable deaths in childbirth

Each year, nearly 300,000 women die during childbirth. The vast majority of these deaths are preventable – yet maternal survival is still determined by where a woman lives, her access to care and the strength of the health system around her.

The leading cause of maternal death is postpartum hemorrhage (PPH)—a condition that, with appropriate quality care, is almost entirely preventable. Yet, due notably to limited access to the full range of recommended lifesaving, quality-assured medicines and devices, 86,000 women die of PPH each year.<sup>1</sup> Most of these deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa, where a woman is 130 times more likely to die in childbirth than a woman in Europe or North America.<sup>2</sup>

These preventable deaths of women and adolescent girls have an enormous impact on families and communities.<sup>3</sup> Data shows that infants who lose their mothers are 35 times more likely to die within the first six months of life.<sup>3</sup>

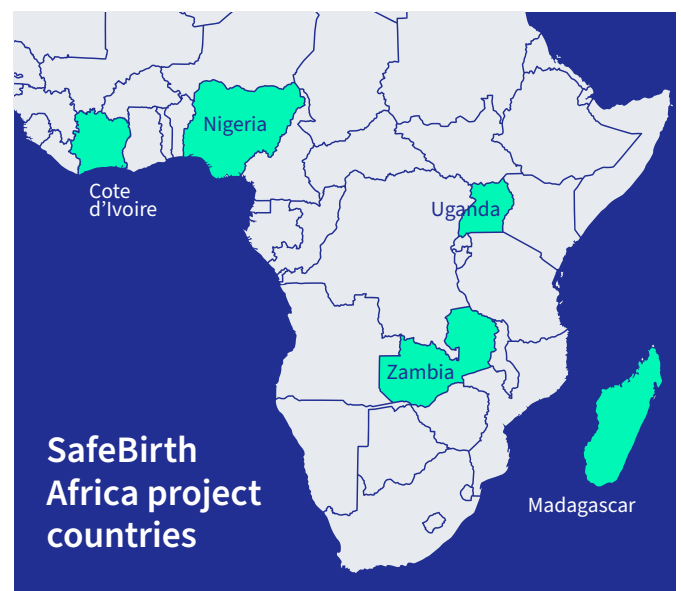
We know the causes, and we know the solutions. With proven interventions, access to quality assured life-saving commodities and sustainable investment, we can eliminate preventable maternal deaths and save millions of lives.

### SafeBirth Africa is a collaborative initiative addressing barriers to effective postpartum hemorrhage care in Africa.

Funded by the European Union in the framework of the Team Europe Initiative on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Africa and a Flagship project of the Global Gateway strategy, co-led by Unitaid and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and in partnership with African authorities, SafeBirth Africa aims to accelerate the access to World Health Organization (WHO)-recommended lifesaving tools for prevention, detection and treatment of PPH that are not yet widely used in Africa, while implementing innovative delivery solutions.

Unitaid and UNFPA are working with health authorities in five African countries as well as partners and communities to overcome barriers that limit access to these tools, ensure their routine quantification, procurement and supply, strengthen health systems' readiness to use them appropriately, and disseminate the latest WHO recommendations on the management of PPH.

*SafeBirth Africa is working with health authorities in five African countries to address the leading cause of death of women in childbirth.*



1. Say, L. et al. Global causes of maternal death: A WHO systematic analysis. *Lancet Glob. Health.* 2, 323–333 (2014)

2. <https://www.unfpa.org/swp2024>

3. Nguyen, D. T. N. et al. Risk of childhood mortality associated with death of a mother in low-and-middle-income countries: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC Public Health.* 19 19, 1–21 (2019).

As part of this project, Unitaid leads the efforts to tackle market barriers related to demand, cost, quality, supply and the optimal use of lifesaving medicines and diagnostic tools, including support for regional production. This initiative builds on Unitaid’s existing US\$45 million investment to increase access to lifesaving health products that prevent and treat PPH aiming to drive scalable, evidence-based solutions.

UNFPA brings its technical expertise in emergency obstetric and newborn care and midwifery models of care. By training providers in evidence-based practices

and supporting the quantification and procurement of quality-assured PPH commodities through its Supplies Partnership, UNFPA contributes to strengthening health supply chains and building the readiness of health systems to uptake the full range of recommended products.

This initiative complements UNFPA’s Maternal and Newborn Health Fund, which provides catalytic support to strengthen public health systems in countries with high maternal mortality and morbidity, focusing on providing quality maternal and newborn care and integrated SRH services in line with the UNFPA Start with Her Strategy.

## SafeBirth Africa is accelerating access and improving service delivery for quality maternal care.

Lifesaving tools to manage PPH	Policy, supply and delivery improvements
<p><b>Oxytocin:</b> The first-line uterotonic recommended to prevent and treat postpartum hemorrhage.</p> <p><b>Misoprostol:</b> Uterotonic option which can be administered orally, and recommended for use in community and home delivery settings.</p> <p><b>Heat-stable carbetocin:</b> A heat-stable uterotonic option recommended for PPH prevention, particularly in low-resource settings.</p> <p><b>Tranexamic acid:</b> A key component of the PPH treatment bundle, used to reduce excessive bleeding.</p> <p><b>Calibrated drape:</b> Essential component of PPH management that enables objective measurement of blood loss, improving early detection and deployment of the PPH treatment bundle.</p> <p><b>Uterine ballon tamponade:</b> A device to control severe bleeding when uterotonics are ineffective, which buys time for definitive care.</p>	<p>Updating lists of essential medicines, national guidelines, protocols and training materials on PPH management.</p> <p>Training of skilled health personnel to increase the practical use of new and underused commodities.</p> <p>Monitoring availability and use of recommended products by developing health and logistics information systems.<sup>5</sup></p> <p>Supporting quantification of commodities, and their routine integration in the national supply plans for reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health products.</p> <p>Catalyzing the local production of misoprostol and tranexamic acid.</p> <p>Conducting implementation research, contributing to national and regional learning.</p>

## SafeBirth Africa aligns with global, African and European commitments to reduce maternal death.

At the national level, improvements in maternal health are guided by the national health strategies of the five project countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia.

At the regional level, the African Union's Agenda 2063, the CARMMA Plus Campaign 2021-2030 and the health strategies of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) capture Africa's commitment to reduce maternal deaths.

In its Global health strategy to improve global health security and deliver better health for all, the EU commits to strengthen support for universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including maternal health.

The global commitment is reflected in the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030) and the resolution for acceleration towards the Sustainable Development Goal target for maternal newborn and child mortality adopted at the 77th World Health Assembly (2024).

SafeBirth Africa contributes to the achievement of all these strategies, including the Every Woman, Every Newborn,

Everywhere (EWENE) milestones for health product access. It also addresses specific areas highlighted in the global roadmap to combat postpartum hemorrhage between 2023 and 2030, the EWENE coverage targets, and supports progress toward [SDG targets 3.1 and 3.2 on maternal, newborn and child mortality](#).



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### SafeBirth Africa aims to:

#### Generate evidence on and catalyze uptake of recommended PPH products in five countries.

SafeBirth Africa partners are assessing the impact, acceptability and feasibility of new and underused tools for postpartum hemorrhage across different health system levels, and supporting their roll out in Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Madagascar, Uganda and Zambia.

#### Improve policy, regulatory, financing and delivery environments at regional level.

SafeBirth Africa partners support South-South learning and provide technical assistance to increase the capacity of the national health systems to roll out new and underused quality-assured PPH commodities, through the health platforms of the African Union Commission (AUC) and three regional economic communities.

#### Advance regional pooled procurement and local production.

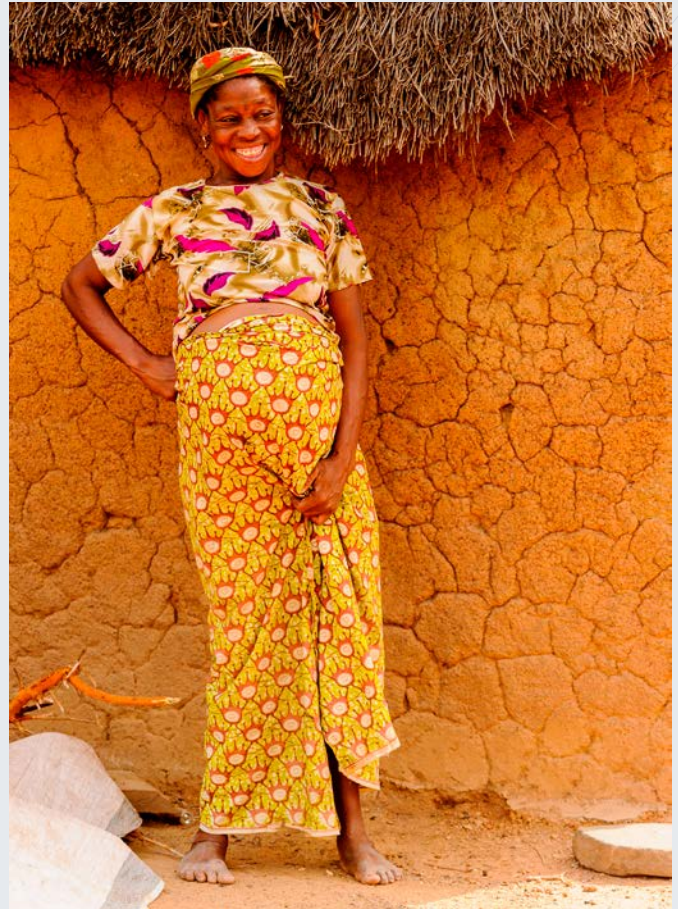
SafeBirth Africa partners support [regional manufacturing](#) and regional pooled procurement initiatives, to advance a market-based approach that aligns technology, quality and regulatory systems to increase production of quality PPH commodities in Africa.

## Leveraging partnerships for impact

SafeBirth Africa aligns with the efforts of African continental, regional and national authorities that have put maternal health at the forefront of their priorities. The African Union, the East African Community, the Southern African Development Community, and the West African Health Organization are driving advocacy and South-South learning to disseminate the latest global recommendations on PPH management throughout the region.

The Ministries of Health in Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia are leading the rollout of new lifesaving commodities for PPH management in health facilities providing obstetric care in their respective countries.

Jhpiego, the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics, and regional and national associations of midwives and gynecologists are also involved in the implementation of the project. Together, health authorities, professional associations and technical partners are addressing barriers that limit access to critical commodities for PPH management across the continent.



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### About Unitaid

Unitaid is a global health organization that saves lives by making new health products available and affordable for people in low- and middle-income countries. Unitaid works with partners to identify innovative treatments, tests and tools, help tackle the market barriers that are holding them back, and get them to the people who need them most – fast. Since Unitaid was created in 2006, the organization has unlocked access to more than 100 groundbreaking health products to help address the world's biggest health challenges, including HIV, TB and malaria; women's and children's health; and pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. Every year, more than 300 million people benefit from the products Unitaid has helped roll out. Unitaid is hosted by the World Health Organization.

Learn more at [unitaid.org](https://unitaid.org)



### About UNFPA

As the UN agency for sexual and reproductive health, UNFPA's mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. UNFPA is also the global leader in delivering essential sexual and reproductive health commodities in low- and middle-income countries. Managing over \$400 million annually, the agency supports supply chain planning, sourcing, procurement, logistics, and governance for SRH products, including maternal health medicines, medical devices and modern contraceptive methods. Through innovative financing, UNFPA drives sustainability and domestic resource mobilization.

Learn more at [unfpa.org](https://unfpa.org)



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