



Mums Helping Mums a Project of Dangwa Initiative

In 2009 I had the opportunity to visit an HIV Clinic and a Women's maternity ward at a government funded rural hospital and what I experienced was atrocious to say the least.

First I got to learn about women who couldn't afford the \$2 services fee to receive free ARVs so that their babies can have a chance of being born HIV free. In talking to the nurses and administrators, one thing they agreed on was that they had no way of tracking mothers who were unable to actually come to the clinic for medical care for lack of that \$2. For the most part people who use this government facility are entrenched in poverty, they live on less than a \$1 a day in a country where an average government worker earns \$100/month.

Secondly, and even more disheartening were the women who made it to the hospital, after walking for days while in labor. Sometimes the choice is walk to the hospital and save the little you have to hospital fees or ride to the hospital but not afford to receive the services.

The Maternity Ward at Chivhu¹ Hospital

With the exception of run-down beds, nothing in the ward was welcoming both to the expectant mother or

¹ Chivhu is a small town in Zimbabwe which serves the surrounding rural areas.

the new born. I remember thinking to myself, "What chance does a baby born in this environment have"? I couldn't help but think of Veterinary hospitals in the States with better facilities than these uncomplaining expectant mothers. The few pictures on the walls were hand-drawn by nurses attempting to show the female anatomy. There were no brochures or other educational materials that you we take for granted in the West. The walls used to be white at some point but now the paint has pilled off and in some places the wall is falling apart. There were 10 beds with thin and torn mattresses, no bedding and some had old pillows and some didn't. Mothers are expected to bring their own bedding.

The hospital is so poor the mothers had to bring their own birthing kits. I didn't even know there was such a thing till that moment. Before I tell you what a birthing kit consists of, let me give you some background on giving birth in Africa.

'Giving birth safely remains a privilege of the rich.' This sad fact is nowhere more apparent than in sub-Saharan Africa where 1 in 13 women die of causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. The risk of dying as a result of pregnancy if you live in the industrialized world stands at 1 in 4,100.²

Improving maternal health by providing basic support to pregnant women is the single most effective way to lower the staggeringly tragic infant and maternal death rates throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

Infection following delivery remains a leading cause of death among both mothers and newborns. This risk can be mitigated. Both maternal and neonatal infection rates have been proven to decrease if women are given access to the most basic elements of medical sanitation while birthing: **soap**, a **length of clean string** to tie the umbilical cord, a **clean razor blade** to cut the umbilical cord and a **1m² clean cloth** on which to deliver.

If you are interested in helping a mother have a safe delivery, please put together a *Mums Helping Mums Care Package* as detailed below and mail to the address at the bottom of this flier. You can call 518.221.9423 or

² UNICEF and WHO stats

email info@dangwa.org if you would like us to pickup. Please enclose \$10 to go towards shipping, hospital fees and transportation for mother and baby to return home.

Mums Helping Mums Care Package:

Birth Kit: **Soap**, a **length of clean string** to tie the umbilical cord, a **clean razor blade** to cut the umbilical cord and a **1m² clean cloth** on which to deliver, **bag of cotton wool or pads** to catch the bleeding, bottle of alcohol or antiseptic to treat the umbilical cord.

Other Basics: Baby blanket, baby clothes, diapers, baby bag, baby soap, baby lotion, couple baby bottles, adult underwear, towel and bucket. (Mothers have to bring their own bucket to use for bathing and washing dirty linen).

Our faith-based mission is to restore dignity and empower AIDS orphan girls and women made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS through access to quality education and health care.



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Thank you for your support and generosity. Dangwa Initiative is a 501c3 non-profit organization therefore all donations are tax-deductible to the full extent permitted by law.