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Poverty the Leading Cause of Maternal Deaths

Sitting in a hallway in South Sudan's main hospital, the midwife recounted the day she watched a young mother bleed to death after giving birth (In South Sudan, midwives bring down deaths despite the odds). According to the World Health Organization Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asian make up 86% of the global maternal deaths (Maternal Mortality). Experiences like this really bring to life how serious maternal deaths are. Poverty continues to be the leading cause of these deaths and must be addressed for lives to be saved.

To begin with, poverty leads to a lack of access to healthcare and medications. Due to poor infrastructure and inadequate transportation in these countries, many mothers who live in rural areas are not able to get to health facilities. They are unable to receive the treatment that they need to keep them safe. It is customary for women in South Sudan to give birth at home, so many women hesitate to go to the hospital unless complications arise. Many times by then, it is too late. Some of the complications these women face are hemorrhaging eclampsia and sepsis. Hospitals in Sudan do not have enough blood to treat things like hemorrhaging, nor do they have enough knowledge to be able to treat other complications. Out of 100,000 live births in Sudan 780 mothers die(In South Sudan, midwives bring down deaths despite the odds). This causes an enormous problem; poverty continues to grow as well as maternal deaths.

Another example of poverty being the main factor of maternal deaths is the lack of education and the ability to control multiple births. Examples of this are a lack of professional midwives and doctors. More than 90 percent of births in South Sudan happened without the help of a skilled attendant. As of 2013, there were only eight registered midwives in South Sudan. One for every 125,000 women (Ashrita Rau) Child births also play a huge part in this. Child marriage contributes to the rates of maternal mortality. Many children who become pregnant are not yet fully developed enough to safely carry the baby and give birth. The risk of dying is highest in girls under 15 (Maternal Mortality). People in Sudan especially young girls are not educated in safe sex practice. Women don't have access to birth control, this can lead to multiple births and higher death rates (No control, no choice). As you can see by the facts above poverty increases these women's chances of death.

People will argue the fact that poverty is the main cause of maternal deaths. In an article written by Donna Murray, RN, BSN she describes many contributing factors. She identifies age as the number one contributing cause. The author states young girls under the age of 15 and women in their late 40s and 50s have a much greater chance of complications that lead to death (Murray). She goes on to identify socioeconomic status, gender inequality, resources, and the number of times a woman has been pregnant as factors. The argument that age plays a greater part in these deaths than poverty is not true; it may be a factor but not the greatest influence. The argument that

poverty affects the maternal death rates greatest is clear from the evidence provided above. Resources, education, healthcare, and even cultural norms are all changed when someone lives in poverty. It is true that age does contribute to maternal deaths, but it is not the main contributor. Poverty is the greatest risk factor for pregnant women.

Statistics continue to show that countries with a good economy and access to health care decrease the number of deaths. Whether it's a lack of information, inadequate or poor quality services, or even cultural beliefs all of these factors are affected when people can not provide their basic needs. In order for women's lives to be saved, they need access to quality care during and after pregnancy. Poverty takes away people's ability to address inequalities and strengthen their own lives and health.

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