Gates Foundation Pledges $1.5 Billion for Mother and Child Health

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The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation pledged $1.5 billion during the next five years for improving maternal and child health, family planning and nutrition in developing countries, *The Seattle Times* reports.

“It is not that the world doesn’t know how to save the 350,000 mothers and 3 million newborns who die each year,” said Melinda Gates, co-chair of the foundation. “It is that we haven’t tried hard enough.”

Family planning could reduce maternal deaths by 30 percent and newborn deaths by 20 percent, Gaits said. She plans to make mother and child health outcomes her personal priority.

According to the article, 80 percent of maternal deaths occurred in 21 countries, and six of those countries—India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo—accounted for half of the deaths.

While the number of women dying from pregnancy-related complications dropped from about 526,300 annually in 1980 to 342,900 in 2008, a study published in the medical journal The Lancet showed that a large number of pregnant women still die from AIDS-related complications, which could be remedied with better access to HIV treatment and care including prenatal care, nutrition and family planning.

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