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## Eighty per cent of maternal deaths in low-resource countries take place at the moment of delivery and childbirth

Ottawa – As the G8 approaches, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) is urging the Canadian government to recognize that a strategy on maternal and child health must focus on preventing deaths during delivery and childbirth as 80% of maternal deaths in low-resource countries take place at that time.

As experts in the field of maternal health, the SOGC is proposing practical solutions that exist today to prevent these unnecessary deaths. What is missing is the political will and commitment of G8 nations to invest in and implement these solutions. Doing so would allow life-saving interventions to reach the regions of the world where they are needed most.

The main causes of maternal mortality during childbirth are well-known: postpartum hemorrhage, eclampsia, dystocia and sepsis. The solutions to prevent and treat these complications exist and are also well known, well documented and cost-effective.

“While clean water and nutritional supplements contribute to achieving maternal and child health, they do not save mothers and babies during childbirth. Since complications during labour and birth are the main reason mothers are dying, it seems clear that this should be the primary focus of any Maternal and Child Health Initiative.” said Dr. André Lalonde, Executive Vice-President of the SOGC and Canadian representative of the International Federation of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians (FIGO) as well as the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH).

The SOGC is convinced that G8 countries can agree. But this agreement should come with a firm commitment to allocate adequate funds to implement simple, concrete and effective solutions that could save mothers and babies immediately.

Known solutions only go so far. Low-resource countries also suffer from a severe shortage of trained health professionals who are able to address pregnancy complications and to appropriately use available resources to save a mother and her baby. More health-care professionals and community workers must be trained and be provided with the tools they need to address the main causes of maternal mortality.

“To ensure the health of a child, you must save the mother. To save the mother, you must have skilled attendants able to provide emergency obstetric care during childbirth.” expressed Dr. Dorothy Shaw, past President of the SOGC and FIGO, and Canadian spokesperson for the PMNCH.

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Tackling maternal mortality is possible ... now. G8 countries have invested millions of dollars to talk about maternal and child health. The SOGC insists that an equal or greater amount should be committed to implementing real solutions. The money spent on talking about solutions could have saved the 300,000 pregnant women dying needlessly, especially during childbirth.

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### **About the SOGC**

*The SOGC is one of Canada's oldest national specialty organizations. Established in 1944, the Society's mission is to promote excellence in the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology and to advance the health of women through leadership, advocacy, collaboration, outreach and education. The SOGC represents obstetricians/gynaecologists, family physicians, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals working in the field of sexual reproductive health. For more information, visit [www.sogc.org](http://www.sogc.org).*

### **About the SOGC's International Women's Health Symposium**

#### ***Uniting voices for women's health worldwide: Integrating advocacy as a means to improve quality care for women***

*During the SOGC's Annual Clinical Meeting, a full day is dedicated to international women's health. During this year's International Women's Health Symposium, we will reflect on the progress of women's health issues in the development arena, specifically regarding three main issues: maternal mortality, cervical cancer and female genital mutilation. We will explore the questions of why, despite many advocacy efforts, we have seen little progress in reducing maternal mortality and why, considering the high number of deaths caused by cervical cancer each year and the numerable health risks resulting from female genital mutilation, there are so few advocacy efforts that address these issues. Guest speakers (Canadian and international) share their own experiences of advocating for women's health internationally. We will explore some of the issues which have gained importance thanks to advocacy and review what it takes for advocacy efforts to be successful and to ultimately improve the lives of women around the world.*