

Ottawa Journal: standing up for maternal and newborn health

Here in Canada, we are fortunate that our families have access to the resources needed to live happy, healthy, and productive lives. Unfortunately, this is not the case for many around the world. Things such as clean water and vaccinations?things we may take for granted? are desperately needed in many regions of the world. And without them, the health of countless human beings lies in jeopardy. This need for basic provisions is magnified when dealing with expecting mothers and newborn children. Without adequate health care services many mothers and children die each year. Indeed, the most recent data tells us that 6 million children will die before their 5th birthday and 300,000 women will die in pregnancy. Because no mother should have to choose between herself and her baby, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and our Government made maternal and child health our top development priority. We first brought this issue to the international spotlight with the ground-breaking Muskoka Initiative. Before we championed these issues, the world was falling short on reducing child mortality and curbing maternal death. Thanks to the Muskoka Initiative and subsequent global action, maternal and child mortality rates are declining. Between 2010 and 2013, Canada helped provide 5.8 million children with life-saving vaccines, over 180 million children with vitamin A, and 2 million pregnant women with supplements to help ensure healthier pregnancies. But there is still more work to be done. Helping stop these preventable deaths is not only a moral imperative, but something at the very heart of our shared Canadian values. At the end of May, Canada will host a Summit on Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health. Through this Summit we will be working to accelerate our health initiatives and continue to push this issue into the forefront. Canadians across the country can be proud of the difference we are making in the world and the work Canadians do every day to save lives. We are within arm's reach of our goal of eliminating these preventable deaths. During this Summit, we will take another step towards achieving that goal.

By David Tilson, MP