

# P r o j e c t X

## Boat Ambulances in Tanzania

September 18, 2014

Dear colleagues;

When you open a door and take those first steps in a new direction, there you stand not entirely sure you belong, but unable to do anything but move forward.

The time when you put a stake in the ground and find that your voice alongside others can change the world. I am only one voice and this letter today is about amplifying my voice for a cause that affects us all. The Capital Lab is committed to providing: access to emergency care and safe motherhood. A woman in a developing country is often likely to embark on a risky and uncertain journey once she is pregnant. We believe safe motherhood should be an entitlement and a right, and not be a privilege. "Safe motherhood is a human rights issue for which countries should be held accountable." (10 propositions for safe motherhood for all women, abridged from the International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics, Volume 72, No. 3, March 2001. By Professor Mahmoud Fathalla, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, former Dean of the Medical School at Assiut University, Egypt, and Chair of the WHO Advisory Committee on Health Research.)

## Lifetime risk of dying during pregnancy and childbirth: 1 in 3,300 in Europe, 1 in 40 in Africa

Source: World Health Organization, 2014

### Boat ambulances in Tanzania

The Capital Lab is committing to raising \$25,000 for the Plan Canada boat ambulance initiative in Tanzania. It is an opportunity to save a woman's life during pregnancy, and will provide ambulatory care for all island residents; men, women, and children. This accessible care does not currently exist for over 180,000 people. It is in an ongoing effort that supports and intensifies a health care program that the government has committed to and with Plan Canada's institutional support and long term mandate, the security of the investment exists.

Your investment in this effort will save a life. You are making an investment in social justice that tells the world very clearly that human rights and maternal health are fundamental acts of justice that we experience here on a daily basis and must be funded and made secure for women everywhere.

I would encourage you to make an investment in this initiative. Donations amounting to \$10,000 or more entitle a sponsor to travel to Tanzania. I look forward to a travel mate and raising awareness with you on this important issue. \$25,000 will be the first money raised for this effort and we are pleased to raise awareness for Plan Canada. Each dollar raised is matched 6x by the Government of Canada, making your investment a valuable one.



A gift of \$25,000  
will result in a  
\$175,000 investment

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## Tanzania strategy

I support Plan Canada and its **Because I am a Girl** initiative because it is a real and tangible manifestation of what needs to happen for human rights to be activated and made accessible to all women, men and children. I believe deeply that the Tanzania boat ambulance initiative, simple in its goal yet far reaching in its impact, will change the lives of 180,422 people in 57 communities because it is a visual and real demonstration that emergency care is being made available to pregnant women and their communities, and this a tangible step forward for the country to reduce its rates of death due to maternal causes. The United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set a target for countries with high levels of **maternal mortality** to reduce those levels by 75% between 1990 and 2015. A recent report by WHO in 2010 showed several countries are delivering on this goal with 100 countries having achieved the goal and nine making progress. But 25 countries are still falling short with little to no progress.



## Tanzania was identified as a priority country in May 2014 during the global summit hosted in Canada, Saving Every Woman Every Child: Within Arm's Reach

Tanzania has met the target for child mortality, one of the MDGs, and is on track to meet targets related to gender equality, and combating HIV/AIDS and malaria, but is off track on others, such as reducing income poverty and maternal mortality.

The structural barriers faced by many women factor into maternal health. Reducing maternal mortality in Tanzania, to take this project as an example, takes more than a boat ambulance and medical supplies. It requires a platform in the country to train health care workers, to educate women on their choices when it comes to pregnancy and provide access to antenatal and prenatal care. The program in Tanzania is in its fourth year and involves the following:

- Renovating and equipping district health centres and local clinics;
- Training health workers; and
- Raising awareness to men and women of maternal and child health issues

Please see [here](#) for more information.

Millions of women are at risk of death due to maternal causes. The broader issue that impacts every person is why? What barriers are causing unnecessary risks for millions of women? Maternal health is a social justice issue. Please view [this video](#) to see for yourself the long road that some women must travel to have their baby. You may want to share it, you will definitely not forget it:

[Why Did Mrs X Die, Retold](#)



Photo courtesy of Plan Canada and for illustration purposes only and may differ moderately to the actual boat.

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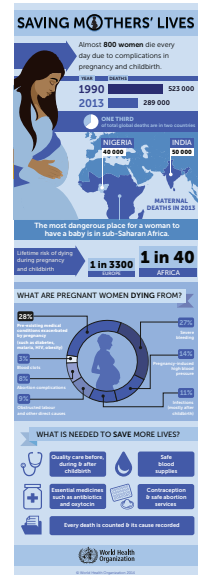


## Safe motherhood and Canada's leadership role

Thanks in large part to Canadian leadership one can be proud that Canada took a leading role in maternal health by taking on the world with the "Muskoka Initiative" in 2010: \$7.3 billion was pledged to improving maternal health globally over a five year period. The pledge was to prevent millions of mothers and children from dying unnecessarily and was the signature social issue of the 2010 G8 Summit.

Improving maternal health is quantified as follows in the MDGs: achieving a two-thirds reduction of mortality rates for children under the age of five by 2015 and a 75% reduction by 2015 of maternal mortality. A 2013 report by the UN identified that "meeting the MDG target of reducing the ratio by three quarters will require accelerated interventions and stronger political backing for women and children." See reference [here](#).

Plan Canada took a leadership role in the Muskoka Initiative. I am proud to support their efforts now in Tanzania, a country in need of accessible healthcare, particularly for pregnant women as Tanzania needs to make further progress in reducing rates of maternal mortality.



Please click here to enlarge

# Women can't contribute to the economy when they're dying in childbirth in their teens, or facing multiple barriers before, during, and after their maternity.

On average, only about 55% of pregnant women in the world will receive adequate antenatal or prenatal care. Adequate care is considered to be a minimum of four visits with a medical practitioner during the pregnancy. Just over a third of the world's mothers give birth without help or access to emergency care.

In our country, the media creates debate on whether or not a woman should birth at home or in a hospital and yet we miss the point entirely in that debate: that women can choose how they will access their rights to labour and maternal health. Not only do women have access to care, women have a multiplicity of options in how, where and when they give birth. Not so in Tanzania.



I believe deeply in the cause of reducing maternal mortality rates because the issue is fundamentally about equality and the path we must travel to provide basic human rights. Its not a metaphorical one either, it is many cases, a long and hard journey that a pregnant woman must travel. But in Tanzania, with your help, the journey can be reduced from a 10 hour trip by canoe to a 2 hour ride in a boat ambulance.

Please give generously at our dedicated website and make this boat a reality.

Please visit [www.plancanada.ca/thecapitallab](http://www.plancanada.ca/thecapitallab) and for more on our work in the community and globally, visit [www.thecapitallab.com/community](http://www.thecapitallab.com/community)

Sincerely,

Belinda Labatte

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