

Cross-border health programs could reduce maternal and child deaths

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A policy promoting "cross-border" health programs could contribute to reducing maternal and child mortality in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan, says an international team of health experts in this week's *PLoS Medicine*.

Gijs Walraven (Secrétariat de Son Altesse l'Aga Khan, Gouvieux, France) and colleagues based in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Switzerland, say that health indicators, including levels of maternal and infant mortality, are very different in adjacent geographical border areas of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. "These differences," they say "reflect the combined and complex interplay of elements within the different health systems, as well as political, economic, social, and cultural factors."

The authors argue that reducing maternal and child mortality requires "focus and balance in all of these dimensions" and can best be achieved through health service interventions underpinned by general development. They believe that a policy promoting cross-border health programs could immediately make available existing resources that could contribute to reducing maternal and child mortality in all three geographical locations.

Citation: Walraven G, Manaseki-Holland S, Hussain A, Tomaro JB (2009) Improving maternal and child health in difficult environments: The case for "cross-border" health care. *PLoS Med* 6(1): e1000005. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1000005

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