

# Pathways

A Publication of Pathfinder International

Summer 2015

## Saving Mothers' Lives

 **Pathfinder**  
INTERNATIONAL

A GLOBAL LEADER IN SEXUAL  
AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

# Dear Pathfinders,

**Nigeria is my home.** As a doctor, I have dedicated my life to improving the health of women in my country because I have seen what happens when they are denied care.

I will never forget what I saw during my training at a major maternity hospital in Kano. On the backs of trucks, women arrived in absolute crisis, having suffered extreme complications giving birth alone at home. Others had it even worse. Weak and bleeding, they traveled for hours on rickshaws, pulled by mules or camels, to reach a doctor who could save their lives.

Can you picture them? Because I will never forget.

A girl was rushed into our national hospital in Abuja during my residency. She couldn't have been more than 12 or 13, and she had this unforgettable name—Beauty. Two days earlier, she

had an unsafe abortion at the hands of someone without training. **Beauty bled severely and developed an infection.** The man couldn't stop her bleeding, left her in a park, and ran away. When the police found her and brought her to us, she was still wearing her school uniform. Her infection spread; she was septic. Despite our best efforts, she didn't survive.

As a Pathfinder, you know all of this suffering is absolutely needless. It doesn't have to happen. It's a common tragedy, particularly in Northern Nigeria, where women have not had a say about what happens to their bodies.

**But I promise you, that is changing. By supporting Pathfinder, you are making a difference.**

For the past 50 years, Pathfinder has been at the forefront of empowering Nigeria's women and men to take control of their reproductive health and lives by:

- Introducing family planning into the public health system for the first time in Northern Nigeria.
- Partnering with communities and religious leaders to champion family planning, while mobilizing governments, hospitals, and families in seven states and 81 health facilities to help eliminate preventable maternal mortality.
- This includes the establishment of emergency transportation in 43 communities, seven new solar-powered blood banks, birth plans for over 42,000 mothers, and nearly 1,000 expertly trained providers—all working together to save women's lives.

Today, I see the whole picture. While I will never forget Beauty and the faces of women we have lost, Pathfinder's results keep me going. The lives of hundreds of thousands of women have been forever changed because they could exercise their basic human right to sexual and reproductive health care. That is what gets me out of bed in the morning.

Thank you for believing in me and joining Pathfinder in this mission,



**Farouk Jega, MD, MPH**  
Country Representative, Pathfinder Nigeria

## Take 2 Minutes to Save a Life



PHOTO: AKINTUNDE AKINYELE

**You can take action to ensure lifesaving services reach the world's most vulnerable women and girls, like Beauty.**

### VISIT

[pathfinder.org/NoMore](https://pathfinder.org/NoMore) to pledge your commitment to ending preventable maternal and child deaths by 2035.

*\*This work was supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and by a grant from Merck, through its Merck for Mothers program.*

“I cried,  
screamed, and  
pleaded with  
the doctors—

“I Want  
to Live”

That was the last  
thing I remember  
before I lost  
consciousness.”

**Pregnancy should never be a death sentence.**

Every day, 800 women die from complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Virtually all of these deaths—99 percent—occur in developing countries. We cannot sit by and watch this happen. And you don't. That's what makes you a Pathfinder.

Thank you for supporting our work. Because of you, women like Ojaswini are not alone.

**Ojaswini's Story**

Ojaswini is a primary school teacher and mother of two young boys in rural India, a country with the highest number of maternal deaths in the world. In her native state of Uttar Pradesh, an estimated 13,000 women are dying every year due to pregnancy related causes. This is the reality Ojaswini faces as her labor pains begin.



PHOTOS: top and bottom: Maren Vespia



During her delivery, Ojaswini experiences complications and needs a cesarean section. At the rural district hospital, while she recovers with her newborn son sleeping in her arms, she begins to bleed.

### Something Is Wrong

At first she thinks the bleeding is normal. Soon her sari is filled with blood. "I feel dizzy..." she alerts the nurse. "Very weak... I can't move."

This is postpartum hemorrhage—the leading cause of maternal death in low-income countries.

Through tears, Ojaswini watches as doctors try to save her life. They give her IV fluids and a drug—oxytocin—to control her bleeding. "Please..." she cries. "Don't let me die." Then her eyes close and she loses consciousness.

Doctors lift Ojaswini, wrapping her tightly in a neoprene fabric from her ankles to her abdomen. This first-aid device is called a non-pneumatic anti-shock garment or NASG and its job is critical. It helps push her remaining blood to her brain, heart, and lungs, and slows her bleeding, buying her time until she can reach a higher-level facility capable of treating such severe hemorrhage. Without it, Ojaswini could be dead in less than two hours.

### Every Second Counts

For 1.5 hours, speeding toward Kanpur Medical College, Ojaswini's body jostles in the back of an ambulance. Her husband, Vikas, is close by. He is terrified. An EMT wraps Ojaswini in a sheet for warmth. When she finally reaches the hospital, she appears lifeless.

As she is rushed through the doors of the crowded hospital, Vikas overhears an exchange between two nurses. "Critical," says one. "Unconscious for too long," says the other. "Unlikely she'll survive."

Behind curtains in the medical college's maternity ward, surrounded by expectant mothers, doctors examine Ojaswini.

*"Because of Pathfinder's training, I feel more confident that postpartum hemorrhage does not have to mean death for a woman. I learned how to help her. Before my training, if a woman was hemorrhaging, I could only watch and assist. Now I can personally and effectively manage the case."*

—RAJNI KATIYAR, Doctor, Chaubepur Community Health Center

PHOTOS: top, Pathfinder India, center and lower right, Linda Suttentfield

They pull back the blood-soaked sheet and see it—the anti-shock garment.

Knowing that the NASG may have effectively supported her vital organs during her transfer, they go from preparing for death to fighting for life. This sends them into a flurry of action, scheduling her surgery and urging Vikas and the rest of his family to donate blood immediately. Ojaswini now has a chance.

## Thank You for Giving Women a Chance

The government of India is committed to preventing the death of mothers like Ojaswini, and through your support for Pathfinder, you make it possible.

**“I wore that garment for three days. It was my partner. It kept me alive.”**

In 2007, we dedicated ourselves to eliminating preventable maternal death from postpartum hemorrhage when we launched Pathfinder’s *Clinical and Community Action Model* to prevent, recognize, and manage life-threatening postpartum hemorrhage. Today our model, which includes the use of the NASG, is saving lives in Burundi, India, Nigeria, Peru, and Tanzania.

In Uttar Pradesh, India, our Matrika project\* has:

- Trained 200 doctors, nurses, and midwives to provide quality antenatal care, ensure safe delivery, and address the major causes of maternal mortality using our *Clinical and Community Action Model*.
- Improved the quality of care at 59 private and 189 public health facilities and established a strong referral system—to expand women’s access to life-saving care in extremely underserved districts where there were not enough services.

- Trained nearly 1,000 of the government’s community health volunteers to guide women and families safely through pregnancy and childbirth.
- Ensured women have access to postpartum contraception, helping distribute 67,000+ oral contraceptives, nearly 700,000 condoms, and 13,000 IUDs so far.
- Brought lifesaving technology to underserved, rural communities. For the first time in Uttar Pradesh, rural district-level hospitals use the anti-shock garment to help save the lives of hemorrhaging women.

What does that mean for women like Ojaswini?

## I Survived

“His name is ‘Lucky,’” Ojaswini says, scooping her baby onto her lap. It’s been about a year since Ojaswini nearly died giving birth. Lucky just had his first birthday.

“I recently went back to the hospital to give all the doctors sweets,” she says. “To thank them for what they did for me...” She gestures towards her family members—eight of them—crowded into the small bedroom to show their support as she shares her difficult story. “And for them.”

Vikas sits closest to his wife. “If the anti-shock garment had not been there...” his voice trails off. “If the doctors did not know what to do...”

Ojaswini nods. “I wore that garment for three days. It was my partner. It kept me alive.” She rests her hand on Lucky’s head.

*\*The Matrika project is led by Pathfinder International in collaboration with the government of Uttar Pradesh and World Health Partners, with funding from Merck, through its Merck for Mothers program.*

PHOTO: Maren Vespia



PHOTO: Linda Sutterfield





# Significant progress has been made around the world

Globally, mothers are now

**42%** less likely to die

from complications of pregnancy than in 1995



## But there is still extreme inequality

99% of maternal deaths occur in developing countries. Most are preventable.



54% of all the world's maternal deaths occur in just **nine countries**  
**Pathfinder works in all of them**



SOURCE: World Health Organization

Your support does more than save women on the brink of death. You stop emergencies before they start. Watch a video from Uttar Pradesh to see how Pathfinder ensures quality antenatal care for those most in need.

[www.pathfinder.org/poonam](http://www.pathfinder.org/poonam)

## You Can Help Us Ensure No Woman Is Left Behind

# Lifesaving Choice in Pakistan

Like you, Pathfinder knows one of the best ways to stop the needless deaths of women is by ensuring everyone who wants contraception gets it.

**This year in Pakistan**, the world's sixth most populous country, nearly 8,000 women will die from complications during pregnancy and childbirth, and almost 400,000 children won't survive to see their fifth birthday.



**Dr. Hassan inserts an implant**

You know it doesn't have to be this way. So does Dr. Ammarah Hassan.

"As a girl, I wanted to do good for Pakistan," says Dr. Hassan, a medical officer in Punjab. "Today, I provide services for healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy. I know how critical it is for a mother's health and life."

Dr. Hassan is passionate about ensuring women have choices to prevent frequent, unwanted pregnancies and to protect their children. That's why it was painful to turn women away.

"Women asked me for contraceptive implants, but I was not familiar with

such a modern method." Why did women want implants so badly?

Here's why: This tiny progestin-releasing rod inserted under the skin of a woman's upper arm can prevent pregnancy for up to five years. An implant offers many benefits: it's discreet, it doesn't require frequent trips to a distant health center for a new supply, and its effects are completely reversible. If a woman chooses to become pregnant again, it is easily removed.

***"My country can no longer sacrifice the lives of mothers and infants. We must uphold the sexual and reproductive rights of women in Pakistan."***

—DR. TAUSEEF AHMED, Country Representative, Pathfinder Pakistan

Implants are among the most effective contraceptive methods available—180 times more effective than pills\* and 360 times more effective than condoms.

This is an option no woman should be forced to go without. The women of Pakistan have a right to the knowledge and health care they need. Your support is making it happen.

Before her training from Pathfinder, Dr. Hassan could only offer women methods like pills or condoms. Today that has changed.

## Our Impact in Pakistan

Women are counseled on contraceptive methods, including IUDs and implants, by 1,300 Pathfinder-trained community health workers.

Men in 24 districts are creating a supportive environment for family planning thanks to the work of 2,200 religious leaders trained by Pathfinder. Religious leaders hold meetings, facilitated by Pathfinder, and share a transformative lesson: healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy is *not* irreligious; it is essential for a family's future.

When women visit health facilities, they are finally getting the quality contraceptive services they need from Pathfinder-trained providers like Dr. Hassan. That means for the first time in Kasur district, Punjab, women can get contraceptive implants.

"No longer must women travel to other cities for the methods they want," she says. "I can help them. Through my training from Pathfinder, I gained knowledge and skills. I learned how to provide implants. Now I am confident—I can give *all of the choices* to my clients."

Ammarah Hassan is fulfilling a dream she's had since childhood. "A healthy mother means a healthy nation."

**"On behalf of the people of Pakistan, I want to say thank you."**

*Pathfinder thanks the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, BoldeReach, and individual donors like you for making this possible.*

\*Based on women's typical use

# A Pathfinder for Life

Dr. Robert Brooks was there from the beginning. A volunteer opportunity in 1954 with Dr. Clarence Gamble, Pathfinder's founder, turned him into a lifetime supporter.

**"I don't quite remember** now what I was volunteering for at the time," the 86-year old chuckles. "But it stuck with me."

He was a young medical student with no interest in anything related to sexual and reproductive health. Until he heard Dr. Gamble speak.

"Just hearing him...I got interested in the whole idea of contraceptives," he recalls.

Pathfinder became a fully registered non-profit in 1957. Nearly 60 years later, Dr. Brooks still contributes to what he considers an extremely important cause.

Dr. Brooks had a long, successful career as a pathologist, served in the military, and has lived all over the United States. Now retired, he lives comfortably with his wife, Jean, in Phoenix, Arizona. Through all of those years, he's watched Pathfinder grow and evolve into an organization that creates meaningful impact for some of the most vulnerable communities in the world.

"It was amazing how Dr. Gamble was working and getting Pathfinder started," he remembers. "It was just a small local organization, so I started supporting it as much as I could. I knew my money would be put to good use."

That good use included access to contraception—something as critical to him now as it was then. He views it as the ability for women to control their own health.

*"If all women had the knowledge and ability to make decisions about their own bodies, they would,"* he says. "Unfortunately, in many parts of the world, they don't—they're not even allowed."



That's why he feels the need to champion women's health both domestically and around the world. For him, it's simple: all people deserve a fair chance to live a healthy, happy life. We must provide all women—everywhere—with the knowledge and tools they need to do so.

So what's kept him coming back to Pathfinder for nearly 60 years?

*"My donations help Pathfinder continue doing the good work it has always done. I can help increase their ability to serve the world."*

We thank Dr. Brooks for serving with us.

*If you've been a Pathfinder like Dr. Brooks since the 1950s or 1960s, let us know your story. Contact Stacey Perlman at [sperlman@pathfinder.org](mailto:sperlman@pathfinder.org) or 617-972-1239.*

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**COVER:** Reshma, a mother of two from Uttar Pradesh, India, suffered acute anemia during her 7th month of pregnancy. Pathfinder was there to ensure Reshma had the health care she needed to protect herself and her baby. PHOTO: Linda Suttienfield