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# CLEAN BIRTH KITS

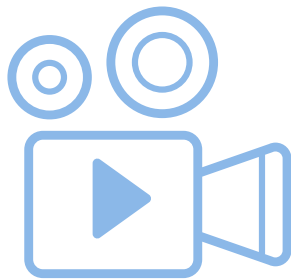
## A guide for our Australian partners



# Our story

Birthing Kit Foundation Australia (BKFA) is a for-purpose organisation that works in developing countries to facilitate better access to health, education and employment opportunities for women and girls.

One of our key initiatives is the provision of clean birth kits to pregnant women. These kits are a simple but extremely effective resource in preventing unnecessary death and disease as a result of childbirth.



[Watch our video](#)  
["Journey of the Birthing Kit"](#)

Since 1999, BKFA is proud to have partnered with over 100,000 Australians to create 2 million birthing kits.



# Why are clean birth kits needed?

BKFA's clean birth kits are an internationally accepted intervention to support a clean and safe birth.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that 99% of all maternal deaths and the vast majority of newborn deaths occur in low and middle-income countries.

Sadly, over 300,000 women and 2.5 million babies die annually in childbirth, many from preventable infections.

Infection (such as sepsis) acquired during or directly after childbirth, is one of the leading (third most likely) causes of newborn and maternal death.

Good hygiene is critical in eliminating infection during and after childbirth.

By providing a clean birthing kit, mothers giving birth at home or with limited medical support have the resources to reduce their exposure to disease and infection.

A clean birth kit is a powerful gift of hope, and importantly, a gift that saves lives.

## What components are in a clean birth kit?

Each item in the kit works to reduce infections at high-risk moments of care during labour, birth and post-birth for the mother, newborn and birth attendant.

The 6 disposable components included in BKFA's clean birth kit include:

1. Soap to wash the birth attendant's hands and the mother's perineum
2. Plastic Sheet to prevent the mother and newborn coming into contact with an unhygienic surface
3. Gloves to cover the birth attendant's hands and provide protection from infections such as HIV
4. Gauze to wipe the newborn baby's eyes, and to clean the mother's perineum prior to birth
5. Cord Ties to cleanly tie the umbilical cord
6. Sterile Blade to cut the umbilical cord and reduce risk of newborn tetanus and sepsis.





# Where do our kits go?

In 2018/2019, BKFA sent over 210,000 clean birth kits to its accredited field partners in 20 countries. This result was achieved thanks to the support of over 19,000 Australians who partnered with us to fundraise and assemble these kits.

## Africa and Haiti

Ethiopia  
Uganda  
DR Congo  
Ghana  
Nigeria  
Zimbabwe  
Nigeria  
Tanzania  
Kenya  
Zambia  
Cameroon  
Somalia  
Haiti

## South Asia and Papua New Guinea

India  
Pakistan  
Nepal  
Afghanistan  
Kashmir  
Cambodia  
Papua New Guinea



# Clean birth kits and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



The Sustainable Development Goals are a call for action by all countries – poor, rich and middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

BKFA is actively supporting Goal 3 "Good Health and Well-Being" through the provision of clean birth kits, as well as Goal 4 "Quality Education" and Goal 5 "Gender Equality" as part of other community partnerships that BKFA supports in Uganda and Ethiopia.



## Maternal health in focus

- Maternal mortality has fallen by 37% since 2000.
- In Eastern Asia, Northern Africa and Southern Asia, mortality has declined by around two thirds. However, the maternal mortality ratio (the proportion of mothers that do not survive childbirth compared to those who do) in developing regions, is still 14 times higher than in the developed regions.
- More women are receiving antenatal care. In developing regions, antenatal care increased from 65 per cent in 1990 to 83 per cent in 2012.
- Fewer teens are having children in most developing regions, but progress has slowed. The need for family planning is slowly being met for more women, but demand is increasing at a rapid pace.

SOURCE: [United Nations Sustainable Development](#)

# Together, let's make safe motherhood universal

BKFA's field partners share regular stories with our program team that demonstrate the incredible impact our clean birth kits make to the lives of vulnerable women.

The story below is from our partner Aid for Africa, Down Under (AFADU) in Zimbabwe.

Antenatal care and childbirth in Zimbabwe can be challenging for pregnant women. In many cases, women are given a list of items they need to acquire for their delivery and asked to bring them to the health facility for labour.

For the mothers, especially in rural areas far from pharmacies or town, it is very difficult and costly to collect these items. They are very thankful to receive most of the items they require in the birthing kits free of charge.

Blessing is a 19 year-old Zimbabwe woman who lives with her in-laws while her husband works away in South Africa to earn money for their family. She arrived at hospital by donkey car, a 1.5 hour ride, to deliver her first baby.

The labour went well and the family was so thankful that the financial burden of travelling 3 hours to town to acquire birthing items was taken away from them and they were able to welcome this little life into their family.



# How the global pandemic is impacting women and girls

The COVID-19 Crisis is undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges that the global community has had to face this century. As many world-class health systems fight to respond to this unexpected pandemic, we must not overlook the indirect consequences that disease outbreaks have on vulnerable groups of people.

Current evidence suggests that pregnant women are at no greater risk of illness from COVID-19 than the standard population (1). However, the indirect impacts of this disease outbreak are significantly heightening the risk of poor health outcomes for vulnerable women and girls around the world.

Evidence from prior events suggests that the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls is increasingly threatened during health crisis' (2, 4). Pre-existing inequalities worsen, with women, children and socially marginalised people often enduring the consequences. Reports of gender-based violence has markedly increased since the onset of the crisis (3, 4).

The heightened demand for medical supplies and subsequent supply chain disruptions have made it even more difficult for underserved communities to get the health commodities that they so desperately need – including equipment that helps prevent maternal and infant mortality.

Many nation-wide lockdowns and quarantine regulations are preventing women from accessing essential care during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period. As already-fragile health systems come under increasing pressure, it is likely that essential sexual and reproductive health services will be interrupted or reduced (4). At times like these, it is essential that governments and aid organisations work in collaboration and address the issues facing the most vulnerable people.

Support to expectant mothers in high-need settings must continue if we wish to reduce the burden faced by women and reduce preventable mortality and morbidity. Every day, an estimated 808 women die due to causes related to pregnancy or childbirth (5) – this number is already too high; we must not let it get higher. By partnering with BKFA to assemble clean birth kits you are helping to support women and newborns in their time of need – thank you!

## REFERENCES

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- (5) UNFPA 2020, Maternal Health, United Nations Population Fund, New York. Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/maternal-health>.





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