



A Preventable Global Health Crisis

Each year millions of children in the developing world are born to mothers living with HIV. For these women, the tragedy is two-fold: First, while the virus itself is physically devastating to both mother and child, the stigma women face in communities can be equally destructive. Second, without intervention, as many as **40% of these mothers will transmit the virus to their newborns**, and **each year more than a half-million children under the age of 15 will die from HIV/AIDS-related illnesses**. The fact is, **mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS is almost entirely preventable**. In the U.S., pediatric AIDS has been virtually eradicated...while in Africa transmission rates remain staggeringly and unacceptably high.

The Challenges:

- Limited knowledge of HIV/AIDS and how to prevent its transmission to newborns;
- Stigma and discrimination prevent women from getting tested, disclosing their status and adhering to medical interventions;
- Lack of access to treatment during pregnancy, during labor, and following birth;
- Lack of education to choose and embrace safer feeding methods for their infants

The mothers2mothers Solution:

An innovative and powerful HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment support project, **mothers2mothers (m2m)** uses education and empowerment as tools to prevent mother-to-child transmission of the virus, combat stigma within families and communities, support a mother's adherence to medical treatment, and reduce the risk of more AIDS orphans. Located in clinics and hospitals that offer medical treatment to women living with HIV, **m2m** fills the gaps left by understaffed public health systems, providing a secure, warm environment where these women can feel safe to share their fears and feelings; fears for the health of their children; fears of disclosure to their partners, friends and family; and the feelings of helplessness engendered by being alone, pregnant and infected with HIV/AIDS. A simple idea, **m2m** has developed a unique model that is replicable, adaptable and cost effective.

Succeeding Through Education and Empowerment:

mothers2mothers identifies new HIV positive mothers, puts them through a rigorous formal training program, and returns them to clinics and maternity wards as "Mentor Mothers." As Mentor Mothers, they educate new mothers, supporting them daily as they confront decisions that mean the difference between illness and health. It is critical to the success of the program that *Mentor Mothers are viewed as integral and valuable members of the health care team and, as such, are paid accordingly.*

The Facts Speak for Themselves:

- **95% of the mothers in m2m and 88% of their babies take the medicine that prevents mother to child transmission of HIV.**
- **97% of our mothers disclose their HIV status to a partner, family member or friend.**
- **89% of our mothers use safer forms of infant feeding.**
- **Each month our programs in South African touch on average 25,000 women...translating into women who are empowered to make healthy choices for themselves and their babies.**

m2m currently offers services in 99 sites in South Africa and Lesotho and with PEPFAR funding will soon begin rolling out programs in Kenya, Rwanda, and Zambia. During the next 12 to 18 months, **mothers2mothers** hopes to also initiate programs in Malawi, Mozambique, and Swaziland.