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# SUCCESS STORY

## Reaching Out to Midwives

**USAID has supported training courses to develop midwives' skills to reduce the risks of infection during labor and delivery.**



*Midwives participate in training courses.*

Photo: National Yemeni Midwives Association

Maternal and infant mortality rates in Yemen are among the highest in the developing world. An estimated 84 percent of Yemeni women give birth at home without a trained attendant, and less than half of the 65 district hospitals have the ability to perform cesarean sections. Midwives are therefore crucial in delivering health care in Yemen, particularly in rural areas where they may be the only providers of reproductive and maternal and child health services.

USAID has responded to the need to strengthen and promote the midwifery profession in Yemen. On September 2, 2004, nearly 100 midwives traveled from around the country to participate in the USAID-guided establishment of the National Yemeni Midwives Association.

USAID sponsored a skills training workshop for the new board of directors, which created a maternal health center in the capital of Sana'a to provide low-cost services for pregnant women and mothers. USAID has also supported training courses to develop midwives' skills to manage a normal delivery resulting in a healthy mother and healthy newborn.

Most of the reported direct causes of maternal mortality in developing countries, including Yemen, are hemorrhage, hypertensive disorders, infection, abortion, obstructed labor, and anemia. Many of these complications can be prevented or appropriately managed if a trained midwife is conducting the delivery at a facility or at home. The trained midwife is also capable of referring cases that require surgical interventions. Midwives are also trained to care for the newborn to provide basic resuscitation, care of the umbilical cord to avoid infection, and maintain body temperature which, if neglected, is a major cause of death, especially in premature and low-birthweight babies.

In just over a year, about 600 midwives from all governorates have joined the Association. It is anticipated that the Association will be active in training new graduates and ensure the quality of training offered in midwifery schools, both of which should have a direct impact on maternal mortality in Yemen.