

# Women Deliver Evaluation 2014

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## *Final Report*



Submitted by Global Health Visions

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### Advisory Committee

- (Chair) John Townsend, Population Council
- Beth Fredrick, Advance Family Planning
- Lars Gronseth, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
- Elly Leemhumis, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands
- Josh Lozman, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Lori McDougall, Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health
- Deepak Mehra, BBC Media Action
- Jotham Musinguzi, Partners in Population and Development
- Matilde Pinto, Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization
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- Anita Sharma, Every Woman Every Child
- Dorothy Shaw, International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics
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# Executive Summary

## About the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is twofold: First, to assess the extent to which Women Deliver contributed to the visibility and elevation of, as well as commitment to, maternal and reproductive health/Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5; and second, to inform Women Deliver's strategic planning process, which is already underway.

The evaluation's intended audiences are Women Deliver staff, Women Deliver donors, and other interested stakeholders. The intended uses are to support learning within Women Deliver, to promote transparency and accountability to donors, and to provide information for use in Women Deliver communications.

A Global Health Visions team conducted the evaluation. Anna Williams and Carlisle Levine were the evaluators, and Nejla Lias provided guidance and oversight.

The evaluation used a mixed-method approach consisting of information and document review, interviews, an on-line survey, and media analysis. The media analysis also incorporated a message analysis. The evaluators interviewed 75 individuals, and 537 people completed the survey.<sup>1</sup>

## Findings

### Overarching Finding

Women Deliver and its conferences have played an important and unique role in building a global advocacy movement to support maternal and reproductive health. Stakeholders from a wide range of sectors, countries, and perspectives greatly appreciate and value Women Deliver. Recognizing important shifts in the external landscape and within Women Deliver, Women Deliver now has the opportunity to address several challenges, transition to its next phase, and continue advancing the movement.

The remainder of the findings are divided into four topic areas: Women Deliver's strategies; contributions to global advocacy outcomes; overarching role and core strengths; and challenges and opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> 731 people began the survey; of these 537 completed it.

<sup>2</sup> Additional research beyond the scope of this evaluation might reveal more examples.

## Women Deliver's Strategies

A number of Women Deliver's strategies have been very effective, particularly convening, leadership development among young people, journalist and media engagement, and message development.

**Convening:** Women Deliver is widely recognized as an extraordinary convener. Stakeholders consider Women Deliver's conferences unique, given the diversity of people who attend, the numbers of high-level officials they attract, and the global advocacy platform they provide.

**Leadership Development among Young People:** Women Deliver is pioneering in its efforts to raise youth voices. Those familiar with Women Deliver's work with youth appreciate Women Deliver's efforts to strengthen and amplify youth voices as advocates for maternal and reproductive health. Women Deliver's work with youth is broadly viewed as exciting, worthwhile, and full of potential.

**Journalists and Media Engagement:** Women Deliver has increased journalists' awareness of maternal and reproductive health, as well as their likelihood to cover these issues. The media coverage, either directly about Women Deliver and the substantive issues it is promoting or indirectly about Women Deliver as part of a larger movement, has been widespread.

**Messaging:** Stakeholders consistently identify messaging as one of Women Deliver's core strengths. Many interviewees identified Women Deliver's messaging at the conferences as influencing the policy agenda, and giving participants new ways to convey and conduct their advocacy. Terms used to describe the messaging include accessible, clear, consistent, joyful, energizing, and powerful. Women Deliver's messaging – starting with “Invest in women and girls – it pays” and statistics conveyed by Women Deliver appeared in most of the substantive Women Deliver media coverage.

Women Deliver's other strategies around **research and publications**, formal **coalition and network building**, **C-Exchange**, and **Catapult** are less central to Women Deliver's effectiveness, but each has also helped to contribute to Women Deliver's overarching role as a strong global advocate and movement builder.



Photo Credit: Mark Tuschman

## Women Deliver's Contributions to Advancing Global Advocacy

Women Deliver has substantially contributed to building a movement around maternal and reproductive health.

**Advancing the Policy Agenda:** Women Deliver has helped to elevate maternal and reproductive health on the global policy agenda. While it is true that these issues were growing

on their own accord when Women Deliver launched in 2007, Women Deliver helped to increase issue visibility and salience in a marked way.

**Promoting Political Commitments:** Most stakeholders thought that Women Deliver likely influenced political commitments, even though they cited few specific examples. We did identify eight country-level examples in Africa and Asia where stakeholders reported that Women Deliver played a clear role in catalyzing political commitments, and we think there are likely more that we did not find.<sup>2</sup> The exact number of commitments that Women Deliver can “take credit for” (in part or in entirety) is not clear due to the numerous simultaneous influences at play.

**Promoting Financial Commitments:** Several donors have used the Women Deliver platform to announce significant funding commitments. We identified one funding commitment made by a donor as a direct result of Women Deliver. It is likely that most other financial commitments were driven by internal priorities and would have been made independent of Women Deliver, even if Women Deliver conferences provided excellent opportunities to announce them.

**Advancing Advocacy Capacity:** Women Deliver has helped to build advocacy capacity at the individual and organizational levels. Many individuals and organizations increased their focus on maternal and reproductive health and took new actions as a result of their involvement with Women Deliver.

### Women Deliver’s Overarching Role and Core Strengths

Although Women Deliver works on the same issues as other organizations, Women Deliver plays a unique role, due to its combination of position and core strengths. First, **Women Deliver convenes many diverse stakeholders in a powerful way.** Second, **Women Deliver is independent.** Women Deliver has fewer constraints than the UN or other organizations representing governments, particularly around its agenda and messaging. It chooses both what to focus on and how to undertake its work, and this adds to its uniqueness. Third, **Women Deliver helps to shape a common advocacy agenda and build a movement.** Women Deliver’s strong messages, coupled with the conference program, networking enabled by the conferences and other events, and media surrounding the conferences, raise global awareness and the profile of the issues in a way that would not happen otherwise. *All three of these things, taken together, set Women Deliver apart.*

There is wide recognition that Women Deliver’s strength lies largely with Jill Sheffield, and that Women Deliver has, up until now, been synonymous with Jill herself, even though Jill credits others. At the same time, Women Deliver is well prepared to transition from Jill to new leadership and this transition is already underway.

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<sup>2</sup> Additional research beyond the scope of this evaluation might reveal more examples.

Women Deliver has other core strengths, most notably the work with youth leaders and engagement with journalists.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Like other organizations, Women Deliver faces both internal and external landscape-level challenges. Both sets of challenges point to opportunities for Women Deliver to refine its model and strengthen its position as a key stakeholder in the effort to advance maternal and reproductive health. In this vein, we identify eight priority opportunities. We also suggest additional opportunities to respond to external challenges.

### Internal Challenges and Opportunities

Six thematic areas are listed below as challenges worthy of Women Deliver's attention as it considers the future through the current strategic planning work. Two additional thematic areas are worth highlighting, along with those above, as opportunities for Women Deliver to expand on its existing good work.

**Clarity around Women Deliver's Substantive Priority Areas and Objectives:** Women Deliver can clarify what it is trying to achieve and how it hopes to achieve its objectives over the next three to five years. The strategic planning effort provides the opportunity to articulate how Women Deliver will support translating political will into action and outcomes at the regional and national levels. The strategic plan ideally will clarify Women Deliver's scope and substantive priority areas, as well as incorporate clear and measurable objectives, milestones, and indicators to track Women Deliver's contributions to change and promote continuous learning and improvement.

**Conference Program, Results, and Follow Up:** Women Deliver has an opportunity to refine its approach to the global conferences, and consider introducing targeted, stand-alone regional conferences, given the cry for regional and national-level capacity building and translation of global messages and data. Regionally focused conferences would focus on regional priorities, to be distinguished from the regional conferences Women Deliver has held previously to provide input to the global Women Deliver conference and promote a post-2015 development agenda.

**Women Deliver's Work between Conferences:** Women Deliver can clarify its intended role and work between conferences and communicate these to its core constituencies. This may involve both highlighting the work that Women Deliver is already doing between conferences (e.g., with youth and the private sector; on promoting the post-2015 development agenda, etc.), and also refining and enhancing its work between conferences.

**Alliances with Other Organizations:** Women Deliver can bolster its collaboration with other organizations that have similar global missions. This could be done with two objectives in mind: to strengthen the base of support; and to identify strategic opportunities to respond to the need identified for more regional and national-level advocacy.

**Uniqueness of Role among Organizations:** Even though we find that Women Deliver has a unique role, given its position and core strengths, Women Deliver also has an opportunity to clarify for its constituencies how each of its current strategies relates to the work of other organizations in this space, and where there may be ways to enhance collaboration and efficiency across organizations. Women Deliver may also be able to share its core strengths, such as messaging, more broadly to help further strengthen the capacity of the maternal and reproductive health community.

**Women Deliver's Leadership:** Women Deliver can strengthen its leadership by continuing the leadership transition that is already under way, and by broadening its leadership to include a wider group of people, including its Board of Directors and other strategic advisors. Women Deliver could also build more internal staff capacity, clarify roles, build substantive expertise, if needed, and ensure that there is sufficient staffing at different levels of the organization.

**Women Deliver's Work with Youth:** Given its strong work with youth to date, Women Deliver could further facilitate the leadership of youth advocates by continuing to incorporate youth more into its work, further facilitating strategic engagement of youth in formal UN processes and other venues, and advancing the youth leadership network.

**Women Deliver's Work with Journalists:** Women Deliver could increase communication, information sharing, and general capacity building work with journalists, particularly in between conference years. This might include regionally based support that would focus on regional trends and needs, and bring in more context-specific examples and solutions.

## External Challenges and Opportunities

Women Deliver works within a changing landscape, and it must adapt to strategically face external trends and challenges. Some of the most significant external trends and challenges identified by interviewees included: conservative political forces, particularly in the US; traditional and religious arguments; uphill battles for a more equitable society; the global economic downturn leading to more national (Northern) focus and less international support; fickle funding priorities; and a post-2015 development agenda that may not prioritize maternal or reproductive health.

To address these external challenges, Women Deliver may want to consider opportunities such as linking maternal and reproductive health to other related issues, facilitating debate and consensus building on controversial issues that block progress, and integrating men's voices and issues more prominently. We believe that the strategic planning work will help Women Deliver to target and prioritize its scope and strategies.

## Conclusion

Women Deliver has made a difference in the global campaign for maternal and reproductive health. It has done so when strategic and targeted advocacy was needed to bring attention to fundamentally important issues and galvanize support for change. Women Deliver clearly

contributed to shifting the global agenda, as well as broadening it to be more inclusive of different stakeholders and issues which, ultimately, need to work as a complete system to facilitate sustainable transformation.

To build on Women Deliver's accomplishments and core capacities, while also recognizing changes in the landscape since 2007 and challenges that have surfaced since then, it is time for Women Deliver to shift gears to the next phase of its work.

This evaluation provides feedback and ideas for Women Deliver to consider in this light. We hope that it – coupled with the strategic planning work – will help to build a stronger and even more effective Women Deliver.