Glossary of Key Terms Related to Maternal Health

**Antenatal care:** Health care, including screening tests and counseling, provided to women during pregnancy. Also referred to as prenatal care.

**Antenatal care coverage:** The percentage of women who have given birth who received antenatal care from a skilled attendant at least once during their pregnancy.

**Antiretroviral therapy (ARV):** A classification of drugs used to treat HIV. Antiretroviral therapy often consists of a combination of medicines referred to as highly active antiretroviral therapy, or HAART, which are more effective than any single medication alone.

**Birth asphyxia:** A condition in which insufficient oxygen is delivered to the fetus during labor and childbirth, leading to risk of stillbirth, neonatal death, or lifelong disability in the surviving infant.

**Climate change:** The gradual changing of weather, temperature, and precipitation as the earth becomes warmer. Climate change has a number of important global public health implications, from changing the range and spread of infectious diseases, to changing crop growth, to increasing the frequency of hurricanes and other events, and women are often disproportionately affected.

**Continuum of care:** An approach to maternal, newborn, and child health that includes integrated service delivery for women and children from before pregnancy to delivery, the immediate postnatal period, and childhood.

**Contraception:** The intentional prevention of pregnancy or conception through hormones, technologies, sexual practices, or surgical procedures.

**Contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR):** The percentage of women of reproductive age (15-49) who are practicing, or whose sexual partners are practicing, any form of contraception.

**Emergency obstetric care (EmOC):** Skilled health care to address pregnancy and childbirth-related complications, including access to the blood supplies, antibiotics, and other equipment needed.

**Family planning:** The conscious effort of couples or individuals to plan the number of their children and to regulate the spacing and timing of their births through contraception, as well as the treatment of involuntary infertility.
**Female genital cutting:** All procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other deliberate injury to the female genital organs, whether for cultural, religious or other non-therapeutic reasons.

**Gender:** The cultural, social, and economic responsibilities, attributes, and opportunities associated with being male or female.

**Gender-based violence (GBV):** Any act threatened or actual act of aggression that targets a person based on their gender. Gender-based violence can occur on an individual, community, or societal level.

**Human Papillomavirus (HPV):** An extremely common sexually transmitted virus of numerous strains, some of which can cause genital warts. HPV is the virus most commonly linked with cervical cancer.

**Human rights:** Basic freedoms and rights that all people are entitled to, regardless of their gender, nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, or other factors. In an international context, “human rights” often refers to freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948. These rights include the right to life, liberty, and security; the right to live free of torture or cruel and inhumane treatment; and the right to live free of arbitrary arrest.

**Maternal death:** The death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of the termination of pregnancy, due to complications during pregnancy or childbirth.

**Maternal health:** The health of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period.

**Maternal morbidity:** Any injury, condition or symptom that results from, or is worsened by pregnancy.

**Maternal mortality rate:** The number of maternal deaths during a given time period per 100,000 women of reproductive age (15 to 49) during that same time period.

**Maternal mortality ratio:** The number of maternal deaths during a given time period per 100,000 live births during the same period.

**Medical abortion:** A safe option for terminating a pregnancy using medications (e.g., mifepristone and misoprostol or misoprostol alone).

**Microbicide:** Creams, gels, films, suppositories, and other products that a woman can apply to lower the risk of transmission of HIV or other sexually transmitted infections, or in some cases, prevent unintended pregnancy.

**Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):** A series of eight broad development goals established in 2000 and adopted by countries around the world, which encompass issues of poverty,
education, and health. They are set to be achieved by 2015 and status will be reviewed at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session in September 2010.

**Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5:** The goal to improve maternal health; targets for achieving this goal include the reduction of maternal mortality by 75% between 1990 and 2015, and the assurance of universal access to reproductive health by 2015.

**Newborn health:** The health during the first four weeks of a child’s life.

**Obstetric Fistula:** An opening or rupture that occurs as a result of complications during childbirth and prolonged or obstructed labor. It leaves women unable to control their bladder and bowel movements, and often stigmatized by their communities. Fistula occurs almost exclusively in the developing world. With proper medical treatment, it can almost always be repaired.

**Prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT):** Comprehensive efforts undertaken to prevent mother-to-child transmission before, during pregnancy and childbirth, and after delivery.

**Reproductive health:** The state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system, its functions and processes.

**Safe Motherhood Initiative:** A global initiative launched in 1987 aimed at reducing maternal and infant mortality, and improving women’s health in general.

**Sexual and reproductive rights:** A series of rights related to sexual and reproductive health, including the rights to freely and responsibly decide on the number, spacing, and timing of children; to receive the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health; to make decisions about reproduction free from discrimination, coercion, and violence; and to pursue a safe, satisfying, and consensual sex life.

**Skilled attendants:** Individuals with midwifery skills, such as doctors, nurses, and midwives, who have been trained to provide competent care during pregnancy and childbirth.

**Stock-outs:** Extreme shortage of contraceptive supplies due to dwindling aid budgets, lack of government allocation, or inaccessibility of commodities for any other reason.

**Unmet need for family planning:** The gap between women’s stated desire to avoid having children and their actual use of contraception. This need is generally expressed in demographic and health surveys as a percentage of currently married women aged 15-49 with unmet need.

**Unsafe abortion:** The termination of an unintended pregnancy, either by a person lacking the necessary skills, in an environment lacking minimal sanitary and medical standards, or both.

**Unwanted/unintended pregnancy:** A pregnancy that a woman or girl decides, of her own free will, is undesired.
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