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Foundation „Save Mothers“

## The construction of the new maternity ward in Burkina Faso is making good progress

By Werner Harlfinger, Ines Engelmoehr

The important work of the *Save Mothers* foundation continues: The construction of a maternity ward in Koudougou, West Africa (Burkina Faso), is making good progress.

To ensure that the new maternity ward can reliably provide care, the *Save Mothers* foundation has now purchased a new emergency generator. In Burkina Faso, power outages frequently occur without warning, lasting

for hours. The new generator will ensure that the power supply in the maternity ward remains stable and secure. The maternity ward is being established in a previously unused section of a former polyclinic at the Centre OASIS in Koudougou, the third-largest city in Burkina Faso. So far, there has been no maternity ward in this region.

Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world. To provide effective and targeted aid on the ground, the *Save Mothers* foundation has entered into a cooperation agreement with the *Freundeskreis Burkina Faso* (*fundraising association*) in Schifferstadt/Germany. This organization supports humanitarian projects in the West African country, such as the construction of the maternity ward. To help implement the aid project locally, the Association PIA, which is based in Koudougou, provides support.



**Fig1:** Women and their children benefit from the initiatives of the foundation and the *Freundeskreis Burkina Faso* for safe births (Photo: G. Schackert).

## In Burkina Faso, five out of every hundred women die during childbirth

The foundation, together with the *Freundeskreis Burkina Faso*, helps create good medical and humane conditions for women — especially those who have suffered genital mutilation — to give birth safely (Fig. 1). In Burkina Faso, there is no prenatal care, no medical support during childbirth, and no postnatal care.

The statistics, unfortunately, speak for themselves: every second woman has undergone genital mutilation; five out of every 100 women die during childbirth; maternal mortality stands at five percent. By comparison, in Germany, maternal mortality is in the per mille range. In Burkina Faso, 78 out of 1,000 children die. Child mortality is thus 30 times higher than in Europe. A local proverb highlights the risks of pregnancy and childbirth: “A pregnant woman has one foot in the grave.”

The foundation — together with the *Freundeskreis* — is ensuring that the maternity ward is equipped with a delivery room, an operating room, and a postnatal care unit. Most importantly, in the event of childbirth complications, a life-saving cesarean section must be possible. Many donated items have already been transported to Koudougou for the setup (Fig. 2). Beds, an examination chair, an ultrasound machine, and surgical instruments — sourced from closed hospital departments and medical practices — are already on site. The transport is managed by the *Convoy of Hope* (Fig. 3).

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**Fig. 2:** Surgical clothing – donated by the Fort Malakoff Clinic Mainz – for equipping the maternity ward (Photo: W. Hartfinger).



**Fig. 3:** *Konvoi der Hoffnung* transports the many donated goods to Koudougou (Photo: G. Schackert).

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### **A midwife is already on site**

The Association PIA, with the support of the Soroptimist Club Speyer, has already trained a woman as a midwife on site, who will work at the maternity ward. A doctor is ready to lead the new maternity ward; she was trained in Belgium and has since obtained the necessary certification for Burkina Faso. The foundation also considers it important to establish a vaccination station. As of now, the maternity ward is planned to start operating in the first half of 2025.

### **Criticism of the reversal of expert opinion in Germany**

Good medical maternity care is extremely important for women who have undergone genital mutilation. In Germany, more and more young women are seeking help in medical practices due to the consequences of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). FGM Grade 3 is recognized as a fundament for asylum. Gynecologists have previously written expert reports to help affected women secure a safe future in Germany. However, there are now isolated reports indicating that these reports are being distorted and misused, with the argument that if a woman has already been subjected to genital mutilation, she cannot be mutilated further, and therefore, deportation is justified. If this trend continues, gynecologists will no longer provide such expert reports. Gynecologists will not help deport women affected by FGM. The foundation will soon make a political statement on this issue.

Donations for the new maternity ward are warmly welcomed.

Donation account: <https://savemothers.de/spenden/>

*Authors:*

*Foundation founder and Chairman Dr. Werner Hartfinger, and Board Member Ines Engelmohr*



Foundation Board and Advisory Board (Photo: private)



Ines Engelmohr and Dr. Werner Harlfinger (Photo: private)