



It's incredibly inspiring to see the growing global movement to educate, empower, and advocate for the well-being and rights of women and girls gain forceful momentum – *it's about time!* It is not an overnight process to change generations of cultural practices and beliefs, but a shift is definitely happening. Conversations are taking place at all levels and among various partners and funders because women and girls are the largest untapped resource in ensuring thriving families, communities, and national economies. When a woman is educated, healthy, informed, and has access to services, opportunities and support, it is not only her gain but the gain of everyone within her network, starting with her family. *Everyone gains when women and girls are educated and empowered!*

[Childbirth Survival International](#) (CSI) an international nonprofit based in Baltimore, Maryland is committed to advocate, strengthen, and improve the quality, access, and delivery of health services and information for pregnant women, newborns, children under five years old, and adolescents/youth in underserved communities. With this primary goal, CSI is reaching the unreached in Tanzania and Uganda, and is working to expand in South Africa and Nigeria. CSI's current portfolio of interventions include: [Saving Lives at Birth](#); [Girl Talk, Girl Power](#); [Keeping Youth Healthy Alive & Informed](#); [Men for Women & Girls](#); and [Midwifery Professional Development](#).

CSI focuses on these areas because it is unacceptable that:

1. 830 women die every day due to pregnancy or childbirth related preventable and/or treatable causes;
2. 473,000 children under five years old die each year due to preventable causes – pneumonia, diarrhea, and malaria;
3. 62 million school age girls are not in school due to menstruation and cultural practices;
4. Each year at least 50,000 women's lives are affected by obstetric fistula; and
5. Every day an estimated 1,000 girls get infected with HIV.

CSI collaborates with international partners such as Rotary International, White Ribbon Alliance, and local partners such as Jakaya Kikwete Youth Park, and most importantly the community – after all, they are the direct recipients of services and information, and they must be part of the conversation. CSI has an amazing team of skilled and talented individuals without whom it would not be the organization it is today: our team of Staff and Volunteers are my daily inspiration.

With today's wealth of technology, information and resources, it's disturbing to know in some parts of the world, women and children are still dying from preventable conditions such as postpartum hemorrhage and diarrhea respectively. How can one not be compelled to act, even if only one life will be saved or changed for the better?



As a girl child, I had access to opportunities, networks, and resources, guidance from my parents and elders, the ability to identify early on my inherent passion for global health and public service, and the encouragement and support to pursue my dreams. All girls deserve the opportunity to grow, learn, live productive lives, to become the best they can be, and to contribute to the well-being of their families and communities.

Through my work and establishment of [Childbirth Survival International](#), I hope to leave behind a legacy of caring, giving, and service above self – for those who have, to help those who don't. In 2016, in recognition of my leadership and work, I was humbled to receive two awards: the “**Outstanding Philanthropist Award**,” from H.E Hon. Ambassador Wilson Masilingi, and Rotary International’s “**Paul Harris Fellow**” recognition, from District Governor-Elect Dr. Anna Mae Kobbe. On July 1, 2016, I shall commence my one-year Presidency term at Rotary Club of Pikesville-Owings Mills. By all means, I know an *even better version of my story is possible for any girl – if we just invest in girls!*



Imagine a world where no mother dies because she couldn't get medicine, no girl is denied an education because she's a girl, no woman is abused and beaten; where health is prioritized and systems benefit everyone not just the “elite” – that world is possible without leaving women and girls behind.

In order to accelerate gender parity and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, a concerted effort is needed on all fronts to make a difference for women and girls, especially in rural areas. Quality education is a necessity and opportunities to learn must be made available. If what we seek is a better world for our children and grandchildren, investing in women and girls paves the way to achieving that vision – a big piece of the puzzle we have been missing for quite some time. Wheels are continuously in motion to raise awareness to break the barriers for women and girls by applying state-of-the-art technical expertise, culturally acceptable evidence-based practices to overcome them, and creating space for women and girls to realize their full potential.

We have the plan, so, let's do it!