



2009 Helen Rodriguez-Trias Award



Theresa Shaver, Nurse Midwife, president and executive director of the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood, is being honored with the 2009 Helen Rodriguez-Trias Social Justice Award.

The award, first given in 2005, honors public health workers who have worked toward social justice for under-served and disadvantaged populations.

Shaver is a founding member of the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood and has helped the group become a recognized global leader in holding governments and institutions accountable for the tragedy of maternal mortality. The group is an international coalition of individuals and organizations formed to promote increased public awareness of the need to make pregnancy and childbirth safe for all women and newborns worldwide.

Shaver's career in maternal and child health began in 1980 when she was a community health worker for three years with the U.S. Peace Corps in Mauritania. She established a program for 900 malnourished children, supervised construction and operation of a birthing center, performed more than 100 deliveries "in a nomadic setting," trained Mauritian midwives and provided health care and birthing assistance. She worked as a labor and delivery nurse at Riverside Community Hospital in California, a registered nurse providing comprehensive maternity services at the inner-city San Francisco General Hospital, a nurse-midwife at North Central Bronx Hospital in New York and organized emergency relief for 20,000 war-affected refugees and displaced people in Gondar, Ethiopia as a medical consultant/nurse-midwife for the American Joint Distribution Committee.

Shaver worked as a maternal child health officer for CARE International in Cambodia and as health advisor in Vietnam. Her commitment to international maternal and child health has also led her to serve as a health consultant for the United Nations Children's Fund and DKT International in Vietnam and as a medical consultant for Save the Children in Ethiopia. Among her publications, Shaver has written about health education planning, guidelines for maternal and neonatal survival, birth attendants and newborn health and midwife training on pregnancy, birth and women's health.

As executive director and president of the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood, Shaver steers the grassroots organization in its mission to empower women and communities around the world to advocate in their own countries for better maternal and newborn care and to identify creative local solutions to overcome barriers to safe maternity services. Among its many projects, the alliance led the effort after Hurricane Katrina to draft U.S. guidelines for the management of pregnant women and new mothers in the aftermath of natural disasters.

Under Shaver's leadership, the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood has grown to 4,800 members in 114 countries, with National Alliances established in 13 of those countries. The social networking organization works to amplify the voices of people suffering from the burden of morbidity and mortality of complications due to pregnancy and childbirth.

Funding for this award is made possible through the generosity of The California Endowment – A Partner for Healthier Communities


