

# Child's life is the best Mother's Day gift

Age 6/5/11

PETER SINGER

Eight million deaths a year  
can be prevented – we only  
have to learn how to give.

**R**IGHT now, mothers and their children in developing countries are dying because they can't get safe drinking water, immunisation against common diseases, or basic healthcare. It doesn't have to be like that. It would not be difficult for us to save them.

If you live in Australia and are middle class or above, you are almost certainly spending money on things you do not need. Maybe it is something big, like renovating your home, which is adequate but could be nicer. Maybe it is something small, like buying bottled water when safe water flows out of the tap.

Whatever it is, if you have more money than you require to satisfy your basic needs, then you have the ability to help. The cost of that bottle of water is more than the world's poor have to live on for an entire day.

You can help to stop these unnecessary deaths, and it doesn't cost all that much. Is it worth \$1000 to you to save a child's life? Because that is a rough estimate of what it costs when you give to an effective organisation working to extend immunisation, safe water, or basic healthcare to the world's poorest people.

Think of what it would mean to you if your child died. Then you will realise how big a difference you can make for a small financial sacrifice.

Many charities seek your donation. You could give to the arts, your school or university, or to a thousand other charities. These are worthwhile causes.

But more than 8 million children under five years old are dying unnecessarily every year. That's about 22,000 children every day. We should think of that as an emergency that takes precedence over things that are merely desirable, such as funding for the arts.

Some people think the underlying problem is population growth, but helping more children to survive does not necessarily increase population.

If child survival programs lead parents to see that more of their children survive their early years, when child mortality is highest, they will know that they have enough surviving children to look after them.

If the same healthcare workers who provide children with basic healthcare also offer the parents modern contraception, family sizes will decline. Reducing poverty also makes it possible for families to send their sons and daughters to school, and if they do that the next generation is likely to have smaller families.

We need to develop a culture of giving, in which giving to help those in great need becomes part of our understanding of what it is to live an ethical life.

To promote that change, I've set up a website, [thelifeyoucansave.com](http://thelifeyoucansave.com). You can't donate through the site but you can make a pledge. You can then go to an organisation such as Save the Children, which has a global campaign to reduce child mortality, or to Oxfam Australia or any other effective anti-poverty group, and begin fulfilling your pledge.

Try it. Many give for a simple reason: it makes them feel more fulfilled and content because they know that they are playing their part in overcoming one of the great ethical challenges of our time.

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