During labour and childbirth, many women want to be accompanied by a partner, friend, family member, or another community member. There is evidence that having a labour companion improves outcomes not only for women, but also for newborns. This practice helps to increase the number of women giving birth in health-care facilities and can also help to reduce the number of women who choose to give birth at home. Women who have a birth companion have been shown to experience less fear and distress during labour, which also appeared to act as a buffer against adverse aspects of medical interventions.

**Background**

Efforts to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity have focused on improving provision of and access to facility-based childbirth and, as a result, institutional births are increasing throughout many low- and middle-income countries. With this increase, emphasis is shifting to improving the quality of care provided in these facilities. Allowing and supporting a birth companion of choice can be an effective intervention to promote an autonomous and agentic environment. One important aspect is the role of a birth companion who can be with her during labour and childbirth for improved quality of care.

**Evidence-to-action brief**

Allowing women to have a companion of choice during labour and childbirth can be a low-cost and effective intervention to improve the quality of maternity care.