Two days ago another woman came into my life: our first granddaughter. She doesn't have a name yet. Her parents say that they're waiting to see what name she looks like. But she is lovely.

I met her in a eight year old hospital in East London. It is squeaky clean with friendly staff and secure wards. Apparently the hospital had something of a shaky reputation as it worked through its teething problems but from my brief first visit it felt like maternal health had come a very long way since I had to pace the corridors for the birth of my own kids over 30 years ago. So as we boys retreated to the reception coffee bar - complete with piano player - to talk about music and take our minds off the labour talk, I couldn't help feeling that we were in another world altogether.

I didn't say it, but I couldn't help reflecting on the fact that all around the world women are giving birth to other beautiful babies in unimaginable conditions. And millions of them will give birth to children they know will not make it beyond their fifth birthday. Over eight million children die before the age of five every year. And I thought too about the fact that every year some 350,000 women die in child birth - especially in places like sub-Saharan Africa.

None of this takes the shine off having a new girl in the family. She is already on my screen saver. But personally it has given a new meaning to *International Women Day* today. Around the world today people will pause and remember that in war and peace women still suffer the brunt of discrimination, poverty and abuse despite the fact that women are proportionally more productive and add more powerfully to community and family cohesion than men do.

But in all of that I am grateful for our new girl who has reminded me how blessed we are and how much responsibility we have to be a blessing.