

Maternal Mortality in 2005

Estimates developed by
WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and The World Bank



World Health
Organization



unicef



UNFPA



The World Bank



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
CEMD	Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EUR	dummy variable identifying observations from Europe
GDP	gross domestic product per capita based on purchasing power parity conversion
GFR	general fertility rate
ICD-10	International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (10th Revision)
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MENA	dummy variable identifying observations from North Africa and the Middle East
MMR	maternal mortality ratio
MMRate	maternal mortality rate
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PMDf	proportion maternal among deaths of females of reproductive age
RAMOS	reproductive-age mortality studies
SKA	proportion of births with skilled attendants
TFR	total fertility rate
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNPD	United Nations Population Division
VRcomplete	dummy variable equal to 1 if registration of deaths is 90% or more complete
WHO	World Health Organization
WP	dummy variable identifying observations from Western Pacific



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Improving maternal health and reducing maternal mortality have been key concerns of several international summits and conferences since the late 1980s, including the Millennium Summit in 2000. One of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted at the Millennium Summit is improving maternal health (MDG5). Within the MDG monitoring framework, the international community committed itself to reducing the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) by three quarters between 1990 and 2015.

In this context, country estimates of maternal mortality over time are crucial to inform planning of sexual and reproductive health programmes and to guide advocacy efforts and research at the national level. These estimates are also needed at the international level, to inform decision-making concerning resource allocation by development partners and donors. However, assessing the extent of progress towards the MDG5 target has been challenging, due to the lack of reliable maternal mortality data – particularly in developing-country settings where maternal mortality is high.

The World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have made three previous attempts to develop internationally comparable estimates of maternal mortality (for the years 1990, 1995, and 2000) by using an approach that encompasses different sources of data. However, the exact methodology used by each agency differed. The development of a common

than half of the maternal deaths (270 000) occurred in the sub-Saharan Africa region alone, followed by South Asia (188 000). Thus, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia accounted for 86% of global maternal deaths.

By the broad MDG regions, MMR in 2005 was highest in developing regions (at 450 maternal deaths per 100 000 live births), in stark contrast to developed regions (at 9) and countries of the commonwealth of independent states (at 51). Among the developing regions, sub-Saharan Africa had the highest MMR (at 900) in 2005, followed by South Asia (490), Oceania (430), South-Eastern Asia (300), Western Asia (160), Northern Africa (160), Latin America and the Caribbean (130), and Eastern Asia (50).

A total of 14 countries had MMRs of at least 1000, of which 13 (excluding Afghanistan) were in the sub-Saharan African region. These countries are (listed in descending order): Sierra Leone (2100), Niger (1800), Afghanistan (1800), Chad (1500), Somalia (1400), Angola (1400), Rwanda (1300), Liberia (1200), Guinea Bissau (1100), Burundi (1100), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1100), Nigeria (1100), Malawi (1100), and Cameroon (1000). By contrast, Ireland had an MMR of 1.

The adult lifetime risk of maternal death (the probability that a 15-year-old female will die eventually from a maternal cause) is highest in Africa (at 1 in 26), followed by Oceania (1 in 62) and Asia (1 in 120), while the developed regions had the smallest

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