

Maternal and Child Health
Subcommittee Topic Briefing

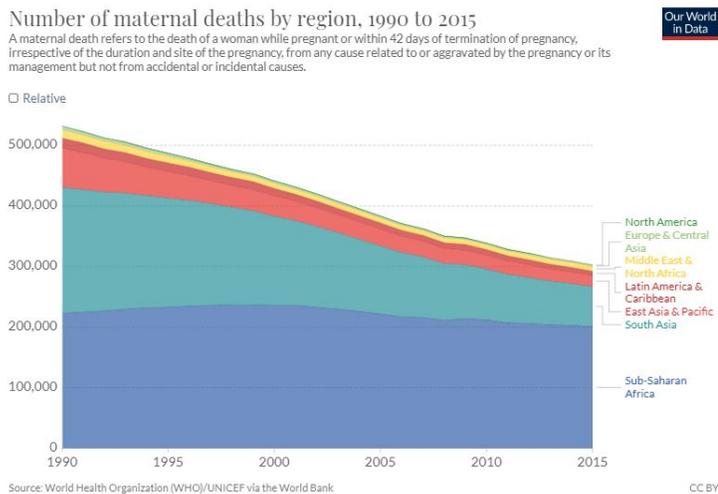
Topic Overview

Improving maternal and child health is one of the world’s greatest health issues, especially among developing countries. Over the past several decades, advances in medicine and efforts from international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO), and UNICEF have made pregnancy, childbirth, and early childhood significantly safer for mothers and children. These organizations work closely with governments, medical professionals, and local communities to combat common infectious childhood diseases and end preventable maternal, newborn, and child death. Yet, despite these efforts, a great deal of mothers and children around the world still lack access to the adequate healthcare facilities, doctors, medicines, nutritious foods, sanitary drinking water, and education needed to ensure they lead healthy lives. This subcommittee seeks to find global solutions that greatly reduce maternal and child mortality rates and improve the overall good health and well-being of mothers and children.

Targets 3.1 and 3.2 - Maternal and Child Health

SDG Targets 3.1 and 3.2 tackle the important issues of maternal and child health. Target 3.1 states “by 2030, to reduce the global **maternal mortality ratio (MMR)** to less than 70 per 100,000 live births,” and Target 3.2 aims to “by 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age.” As with most issues related to good health and well-being, maternal and child health are directly linked to social and economic inequalities and poverty, which contribute to inequalities in access to health care, the quality of health care available, the availability of skilled health workers, and the availability of accurate information and education.

For this reason, there exists a large gap in maternal and child health among developed and developing countries. For example, the MMR in developing countries is still fourteen times higher than in developed countries.¹ In addition, a staggering 94% of all maternal deaths that occur in low-income and lower-middle income countries are caused by a lack of medical resources. Fewer than half of all births in several low-income



¹Goal 3 Targets - United Nations Development Programme
<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-3-good-health-and-well-being/targets.html>

and lower-middle income countries are assisted by skilled health professionals, compared to more than 90% in upper-middle and high-income countries. In addition, nutrition-related factors and secure access to healthy food contribute to 45% of deaths in children under 5 around the world.²

Maternal and child health are closely linked to one another, therefore actions taken to improve one usually have a positive impact on the other as well. Rates of poverty and the level of the mother's education are key factors that affect the likelihood of a child making it past the age of five.³ This is highlighted in the fact that half of all worldwide preventable child deaths occurred in the first month of life. One of the most effective solutions found to improve both maternal and child health is increasing access to **prenatal** care for expectant mothers because a majority of the complications that cause maternal and child mortality in developing countries are preventable or treatable.

More than half of all under-5 child deaths are due to diseases that are preventable and treatable through simple, affordable interventions. **Immunization** is key in continuing to reduce the under-5 child mortality rate and is one of the least expensive solutions. Vaccines and other treatments exist for some of the leading causes of child mortality, such as measles, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, and pneumonia. Other simple, affordable solutions to prevent early childhood deaths include access to adequate nutrition, safe water and food, and the availability of appropriate care by a trained health professional when needed. Overall, the solutions needed to prevent or treat the leading causes of maternal and child mortality are well-known and are often simple and relatively affordable compared to other issues related to good health and well-being.⁴

Quick Facts

Find at least three quick facts on maternal and child health from this briefing paper. Quick facts should be about one sentence long and provide useful information on the subcommittee topic. A good example of a quick fact is a statistic related to the topic.

1. Quick Fact:
2. Quick Fact:
3. Quick Fact:

²Children: Improving Survival and Well-Being - World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/children-reducing-mortality>; Maternal Mortality - World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality>

³Healthy Lives and Well-being for Everyone: Why SDG 3 matters and how we can achieve it: IISD <https://www.iisd.org/articles/healthy-lives-and-well-being-everyone-why-sdg-3-matters-and-how-we-can-achieve-it>

⁴ Children: Improving Survival and Well-Being - World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/children-reducing-mortality>; Maternal Mortality - World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality>

Questions to Consider

Use the information provided in the briefing paper above, as well as your own research on your assigned country, to answer the questions below.

1. Why is maternal and child health critical in achieving the overall goal of Ensuring Good Health and Promoting Well-Being for All?
2. Why are there large gaps in maternal and child health among developing and developed countries?
3. What is your assigned country's relationship with maternal and child health? How successful is your assigned country in providing adequate healthcare for mothers and children?

Glossary

Term	Description
Immunization	The process whereby a person is made immune or resistant to an infectious disease, typically by the administration of a vaccine.
Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)	The number of maternal deaths during a given time period per 100,000 live births during the same time period.
Prenatal	Of, relating to, or affecting the newborn and especially the human infant during the first month after birth. Occurring, existing, performed, or used before birth. Sometimes also referred to as neonatal