



INITIATIVES OF WHO FOR REDUCTION OF MATERNAL MORTALITY

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ABSTRACT

In 2015, an estimated 303,000 women died as a result of pregnancy and childbirth-related complications. Significant progress has been made since 1990 in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with a reduction in the global MMR from 385 to 216 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an opportunity for governments and the International community to renew their commitment to improving health as a central component of development. The Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, 2016–2030 is fully aligned with the SDG targets, and is organized around the broad themes of "Survive – Thrive – Transform". Ending preventable maternal mortality (EPMM) is a priority under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda. Collaborative efforts from politicians, healthcare professionals and researchers are needed in the important arena of women's reproductive health issues.

KEYWORDS :

A maternal death is a devastating event, with consequences for the family and society. According to WHO in 2015, an estimated 303,000 women died as a result of pregnancy and childbirth-related complications. Most of these deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Sub-Saharan Africa had the highest maternal mortality ratio (MMR). The MMR for high-income countries (HICs) was an estimated 17 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. Although significant progress has been made since 1990 in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with a reduction in the global MMR from 385 to 216 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, this reduction falls short of the 2015 MDG 5 target of a 75 percent reduction. Seeing that it is possible to accelerate the decline, countries have now united behind a new target to reduce maternal mortality even further.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an opportunity for governments and the international community to renew their commitment to improving health as a central component of development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) define the priority areas of action. SDGs comprise of 17 goals and 169 targets that have evolved through an extensive global consultative process. Goal 3 of SDG is dedicated to health which aims to "ensure healthy lives and promote well being for all in all ages." It is underpinned by a set of 13 broad targets that cover a wide spectrum of health areas. Almost all of the other 16 goals are also directly related to health or contribute indirectly to health.

One target under Sustainable Development Goal 3 is to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 births, with no country having a maternal mortality rate of more than twice the global average. Improving maternal health is one of WHO's key priorities. WHO works to contribute to the reduction of maternal mortality by increasing research evidence, providing evidence-based clinical and programmatic guidance, setting global standards, and providing technical support to Member States. In addition, WHO advocates for more affordable and effective treatments, designs training materials and guidelines for health workers, and supports countries to implement policies and programmes and monitor progress.

During the United Nations General Assembly 2015, in New York, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health 2016-2030. The Strategy is a road map for the post-2015 agenda as described by the Sustainable Development Goals and seeks to end all preventable deaths of women, children and adolescents and create an environment in which these groups not

only survive, but thrive, and see their environments, health and wellbeing transformed. The Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, 2016–2030 is fully aligned with the SDG targets, and is organized around the broad themes of "Survive – Thrive – Transform". It is an example of how a range of health and health-related goals and targets must be addressed to improve health and well-being of women, children and adolescents.

Ending preventable maternal mortality (EPMM) is a priority under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda. The 2015 EPMM strategies report priority recommendations call for an increased focus on data-driven programming based on an understanding of causes of death in each country, improved measurement and data quality to make this possible, integrated maternal and newborn care, equitable access to and quality of care, health systems strengthening and adherence to a human rights framework. Ending preventable maternal mortality (EPMM) targets and strategies are grounded in a human rights approach to maternal and newborn health, and focus on eliminating significant inequities that lead to disparities in access, quality as well as outcomes of care within and between countries. Attention to maternal mortality must be accompanied by improvements along the continuum of care, including commitments to sexual and reproductive health, family planning, and newborn and child survival. High-functioning maternal health programmes must address the changing environment described in the "obstetric transition", in which the primary causes of maternal death shift toward indirect causes as fertility and maternal mortality ratios decline. Essential to understanding the immediate and underlying causes of maternal deaths and developing evidence-informed, context-specific programme interventions to avert future deaths, is the ability to count every maternal and newborn death.

As part of the Global Strategy and goal of Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality, WHO is working with partners towards:

addressing inequalities in access to and quality of reproductive, maternal, and newborn health care services;

ensuring universal health coverage for comprehensive reproductive, maternal, and newborn health care;

addressing all causes of maternal mortality, reproductive and maternal morbidities, and related disabilities;

strengthening health systems to collect high quality data in order to

respond to the needs and priorities of women and girls; and ensuring accountability in order to improve equality of care and equity.

Reducing maternal mortality requires strengthening of the health care system. This process takes time, and must be fueled by public commitment sustained by, for example, maternal death reviews. One valuable entry point is the improvement of care of obstetric emergencies, but skilled attendance at birth in general also demands long-term planning. Newer technical interventions need to be integrated into existing systems, while AIDS poses an increasing threat. The attention and care given to women before, during and after pregnancy, inside and outside the health system, reflects the relative value a society accords to women.

In conclusion, sustainable development of our world is dependent on young women having access to adequate health care, to education and to paid work. Collaborative efforts from politicians, healthcare professionals and researchers are needed in the important arena of women's reproductive health issues. The first step towards these efforts is ensuring the availability of continuous, reliable and comparable measures of maternal mortality. Thereafter, several targeted interventions, depending on different community needs, can prevent deaths related to pregnancy. Importantly, family planning and skilled care before, during, and after childbirth are essential steps towards saving mothers' lives.

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