

## 10 Top Facts about Maternal, Infant and Child Mortality

1. Worldwide an estimated 529,000 women die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth each year.<sup>1</sup> That translates into one a minute, 60 an hour, or some 1,450 women a day.
2. An estimated 20 million women a year suffer pregnancy-related illness after birth. At least 40 percent of women in developing countries experience complications, illnesses or permanent disability during pregnancy, childbirth or the six weeks after delivery, and 15 percent of women develop potentially life-threatening problems.<sup>2</sup>
3. Almost three-quarters of maternal deaths globally are due to five major complications of pregnancy and delivery—hemorrhage, infection/sepsis, complications from induced abortion, hypertensive disorders related to pregnancy, i.e. eclampsia, and prolonged or obstructed labor.<sup>3</sup>
4. It is estimated that up to 74 percent of these deaths could be averted using a combination of household, community and health system interventions that can be cost-effectively delivered, even in extremely resource-scarce settings.<sup>4</sup>
5. Globally, some 2.2 million women living with HIV/AIDS give birth each year.<sup>5</sup> Women with HIV/AIDS are at higher risk of pregnancy complications. Five to 10 percent of HIV-positive women succumb to HIV-related disease during pregnancy or the first six weeks after delivery.<sup>6</sup>
6. 95 percent of all maternal deaths occur in Asia and Africa. Less than one percent of maternal deaths occur in the developed regions, and only four percent in the Latin America and Caribbean region.<sup>7</sup>
7. Globally some 75 percent of all neonatal deaths, i.e. 3 million, occur within the first week of life, with the highest risk being on the first day of life. Another 3.3 million stillbirths occur each year during the last three months of pregnancy. Every year more than 4 million infants die during the first four weeks, i.e. 28 days, of life—the neonatal period. That represents 450 newborn deaths every hour, and 10,800 every day. Most of these neonatal deaths and stillbirths outcomes are closely linked to the mother's health and the care she received prior to, during, and immediately after delivery.<sup>8</sup>
8. Almost 8 million of all deaths of children under five years of age occur before an infant's first birthday. That represents some 15 infant deaths a minute, 900 an hour, and 22,000 a day.
9. Of the 136 million babies born globally each year, some 10.6 million die before their fifth birthday. More than half of all deaths among young children occur in six countries – China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria and Pakistan.
10. Similar to the geographic distribution of maternal deaths, 99 percent of stillbirths and neonatal deaths occur in the developing world. A newborn in the developing countries faces a six times greater risk of dying within his/her first four weeks of life than one in the developed countries. This risk increases to 8:1 in the least developed nations, with the highest likelihood of neonatal death being for those born in Eastern, Western and Central Africa (averaging 42 to 49 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births), and South Central Asia (45 per 1,000 live births).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> WHO estimates that 211 million women become pregnant each year. Accurate measurement of maternal mortality requires comprehensive death registration systems, largely lacking in much of the developing world. Hence, maternal mortality estimates are subject to large margins of uncertainty, with the actual range potentially falling between 277,000 and 817,000, according to the UN. (From WHO, 2003, *Maternal Mortality in 2000*.)

<sup>2</sup> WHO, *The World Health Report 2005 - Make Every Mother and Child Count*

<sup>3</sup> WHO, *The World Health Report 2005 - Make Every Mother and Child Count*

<sup>4</sup> WHO, 2004, *Beyond Numbers: Reviewing Maternal deaths and Complications to Make Pregnancy Safer*. WHO: Geneva.

<sup>5</sup> WHO, *The World Health Report 2005*.

<sup>6</sup> Per Berosjo, 2001, *What is the evidence for the role of antenatal care strategies in the reduction of maternal mortality and morbidity? Safe motherhood strategies: a review of the evidence*: Vincent De Brouwere and Wim van Lerberghe (eds). *Studies in Health Services Organization and Policy*, 17, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> WHO/UNICEF. *Maternal Mortality in 2000*. Estimates Developed by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA.

<sup>8</sup> All infant and child mortality data are from the World Health Report 2005 statistical annexes, and from the WHO Report *Neonatal and Perinatal Mortality: Country, Regional and Global Estimates*, 2006

<sup>9</sup> WHO, 2000. *Neonatal and Perinatal Mortality: country, regional and global estimates*. WHO: Geneva.