



Trends in Maternal Mortality: UN

Prelims: Issues Related to Women, Maternal Mortality Ratio, SDG.

Mains: Trends in Maternal Mortality: UN.

Why in News?

According to the [United Nations' \(UN\)](#) new report “**Trends in Maternal Mortality**”, of the estimated 287,000 maternal deaths recorded in 2020, 70 % took place in sub-Saharan Africa.

- The [Maternal Mortality Ratio \(MMR\)](#) — deaths per lakh live births — in the region was at a dangerous high of 545, many times greater than the world average of 223.

What are the Key Findings of the Report?

▪ Statistics:

- Every two minutes, a woman dies during pregnancy or childbirth, revealing **alarming setbacks for women's health over recent years**, as maternal deaths either increased or stagnated in nearly all regions of the world.
- There were an estimated 287,000 maternal deaths worldwide in 2020, which is a **slight decrease from 309,000 in 2016** when the [UN's Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) came into effect.
- Although there has been significant progress in **reducing maternal deaths between 2000 and 2015**, gains largely stalled, or in some cases even reversed, after this point.

▪ MMR:

- In 2020, about 70% of all maternal deaths were in sub-Saharan Africa.
- The **top three sub-regions in the world with a high or very high MMR** were found in **sub-Saharan Africa**,
 - Western Africa at 754, middle Africa at 539 and eastern Africa at 351.
 - On the country level, a similar trend was seen with South Sudan (1,223), Chad (1,063) and Nigeria (1,047) recording an extremely high — greater than 1,000 — MMR.
- With approximately 82,000 maternal deaths in 2020, **Nigeria accounted for over a quarter (28.5%) of all estimated global maternal deaths** in the pandemic year.
- From 2000 to 2020, declines in the MMR stagnated in sub-Saharan Africa, northern Africa, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and western Asia, and eastern and south-eastern Asia.

▪ Causes of Maternal Deaths:

- Severe bleeding, **high blood pressure, pregnancy-related infections**, complications from unsafe abortion, and underlying conditions that can be aggravated by pregnancy (such as [HIV/AIDS](#) and malaria) are the leading causes of maternal deaths.
 - Globally, 1,878 HIV-related indirect maternal deaths were recorded, of which 1,738 (around 92.5%) were in sub-Saharan Africa.

▪ Healthcare Gaps:

- Roughly a third of women do not have even **four of a recommended eight antenatal checks** or receive essential postnatal care, while some 270 million women lack access to modern family planning methods.
- **Risks:**
 - Inequities related to income, education, race or ethnicity further increase **risks for marginalized pregnant women**, who have the least access to essential maternity care but are most likely to experience underlying health problems in pregnancy.

What are the Findings Related to India?

- India recorded the **second highest number of maternal deaths** in 2020, coming second at 24,000 to only Nigeria.
- However, there has been **an overall reduction of 73.5% in MMR in India**, between 2000 and 2020.
- In 2020, India's MMR stood at 103, a vast improvement from 384 at the turn of the century.
 - In comparison, other developing countries like Argentina (45 in 2020), Bhutan (60), Brazil (72), Kyrgyzstan (50) and Philippines (78) **have performed better than India.**

What are the Recommendations?

- **More Resilient Health System:**
 - With immediate action, more investments in primary health care and stronger, **more resilient health systems**, we can save lives, improve health and well-being, and advance the rights of and opportunities for women and adolescents.
- **Community-centered Health Care:**
 - Community-centered primary health care can meet the needs of women, children and adolescents and enable equitable access to critical services such as assisted births and pre- and postnatal care, childhood vaccinations, nutrition and family planning.
- **Control over Reproductive Health:**
 - Exercising control over their reproductive health, particularly decisions about if and when to have children, is critical to ensure that women can plan and space childbearing and protect their health.
- **National and International Efforts:**
 - Ending preventable maternal deaths and providing universal access to quality maternal health care require **sustained national and international efforts** and unwavering commitments, particularly for the most vulnerable populations.
 - It is our collective responsibility to ensure that **every mother, everywhere, survives childbirth, so that she and her children can thrive.**
- **Meeting Global Targets:**
 - The world must significantly accelerate progress to meet global targets for reducing maternal deaths, or else risk the lives of over 1 million more women by 2030.
 - The SDG target for maternal deaths is for a global MMR of **less than 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030.**

[Source: DTE](#)