

Maternal mortality in Africa...a head cracking matter

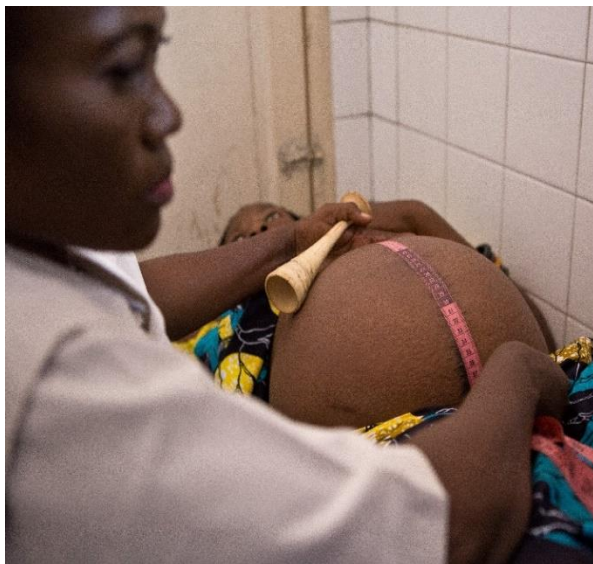
Blog article

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Maternal mortality is a public health problem in Africa

Maternal death is defined by WHO as *the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from unintentional or incidental cause.*

According to [the trends in maternal mortality 2000 to 2020](#), every two minutes, a woman dies during pregnancy or childbirth. The African Region has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world, with approximately 531 deaths per 100 000 live births. As per the recent [fact sheet](#) on maternal mortality, countries with high maternal mortality ratio in the Region are South Sudan with 1223, Chad 1063 deaths and Nigeria with 1047 deaths per 100 000 live births. Two countries, Seychelles [3 deaths per 100,000 live births](#) and Carbo Verde [42 deaths per 100,000 live births](#) in the region attained the SDG rate of less than 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 population. Countries which are nearly to attain the SDG rate are Algeria which accounts [78 deaths per 100,000 live births](#) and Mauritius with [84 deaths per 100,000 live births](#).



Women lives can be better protected

Since most maternal deaths are preventable, there is a high possibility of reducing maternal mortality for women in the African Region. According to the [maternal mortality fact sheet](#) produced in march 2023, leading causes of maternal death deaths is obstetric hemorrhage accounting 28.8% of maternal deaths in Africa. Hypertensive disorders are the second leading cause of death among women in the African Region with (22.10%), followed by non-obstetric complications (18.80%), pregnancy related infection (11.50%), pregnancy with abortive outcomes (7.20%), other obstetric complications (5.0%), unanticipated complications (4.0%) and unknown or undetermined causes with (2.5%).

To reduce maternal deaths, it is also vital [to prevent unwanted pregnancies](#). All women, including adolescents, need access to contraception, safe abortion services to the full



extent of the law, and quality post-abortion care. It is mostly vital that [all births are attended by skilled health professionals](#), thus appropriate management and treatment can make the difference between life and death for the women and newborn.



Furthermore, the availability of essential lifesaving medicine such as oxytocic can assist to control [Severe bleeding](#) after birth which can highly contribute to kill a healthy woman within hours if she is unattended. Furthermore, practicing good hygiene during service delivery, noticing the early signs of infection and treating the signs of infection on time can help to eliminate [infections](#) after child birth and save the lives of mother and newborn.

Moreover, maternal mortality in the African region is largely attributed to the [poor quality of maternal health services](#), inadequate infrastructure, limited access to emergency obstetric care, limited availability of essential drugs, medical supplies, and equipment. This increases the risk to the life of the mother.

Country efforts in eliminating maternal deaths

Despite the situation being still high, African countries have made several efforts on reducing maternal mortality rate. Efforts in [SDG indicator 3.1.2](#) through increasing the number of skilled care workforces as an important lifesaving intervention for both women and newborns. Countries like Burundi (98.5%), Benin (98.3%), Burkina Faso (95.6%) of births were attended by skilled health professionals.

Access to [Antenatal care services](#) has increased significantly in African countries. Countries like Sierra Leone (97%), Chad (96%), and Niger (93%) led the way with high availability of ANC services. This helps women to get appropriate care throughout pregnancy and reduce the possibility of maternal deaths.

Family planning services are widely [available](#) in many African countries, this helps to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies and the risks to women's lives. In general, although progress has been made, the African Region still has a long way to go in dipping maternal mortality. Continued efforts from governments, health workers, civil society, and other stakeholders is needed to ensure that all women have access to quality maternal health services and achieve the [SDG 3.1](#).

Learn more on maternal mortality in Africa

[Maternal mortality regional fact sheet 2023](#)

[Maternal mortality trends 2000 to 2020](#)

[Trends in maternal mortality 2000 to 2017](#)

[Strategies toward ending preventable maternal mortality \(EPMM\)](#)