



MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- End Poverty and Hunger
- Universal Education
- Gender Equality
- Child Health
- Maternal Health
- Combat HIV/AIDS
- Environmental Sustainability
- Global Partnership

MDG #5

Improve Maternal Health

We often take it for granted in this day and age that pregnancy and giving birth is just a natural, normal, everyday thing. After all, there are women all over the world giving birth every minute. However the world statistics of maternal mortality show how dangerous child bearing can be in some parts of the world. This is why one of the key Millennium Development Goals is to 'Improve Maternal Health' across the globe.

MDG 5 consists of 6 key parts:

5a: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

- 5.1: Maternal mortality ratio
- 5.2: Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
- 5b: Achieve by 2015, universal access to reproductive health**
- 5.3: Contraceptive prevalence rate
- 5.4: Adolescent birth rate
- 5.5: Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit, versus the 'at least four visits' - recommend by WHO)
- 5.6: Unmet need for family planning (<http://www.mdgmonitor.org/goal5.cfm>)

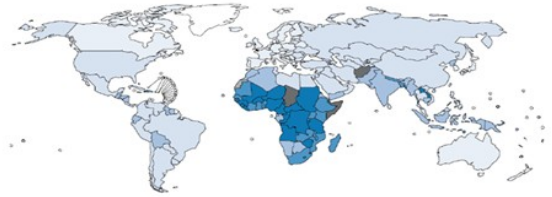
To many expectant mothers in the developed world, the number of possible health risks are high. However this risk factor more than triples in a developing nation. Just imagine pregnancy without the luxuries that many mother's take for granted; without a licensed doctor or midwife, no checkups, no option of drugs, no option for an elective or even emergency caesarean delivery. Sometimes there isn't even a sterile place to give birth. The developed world generally has all the creature comforts: antenatal, prenatal, and postnatal care. We have at our fingertips anything from ultrasounds, doctors, nurses, midwives, supplements, screening for abnormalities, to even knowing the sex of the baby early on in the pregnancy. This is a stark contrast to most of the developing world.



There are more than ½ million deaths in conjunction with pregnancy and childbirth every year. But what is so staggering is that 99% of those are in developing countries. To get a better grasp of this, in Africa the risk of dying during pregnancy or childbirth is 1 out of 22, whereas in Asia it decreases to 1 out of 120, but in developed countries such as Australia the risk is 1 out of 7300 (<http://www.endpoverty2015.org/goals/maternal-health>).

It is confounding to think that within the health sector maternal mortality has one of the greatest disparities between developed and developing countries. The following map shows this disparity as it stood in 2008. As you can see the higher death rates are centred around countries in Africa and other developing nations. (http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2010/2010_Addendum_Goal5.pdf).

Maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, 2008



Even worse, is that approximately 80% of maternal mortality has directly resulted from preventable and treatable medical

complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Many of these medical complications are left undiagnosed and untreated in the developing world but are usually treatable in the more developed nations. These complications can include: unsafe abortions, haemorrhaging, obstructed labour, sepsis, infections, and hypertensive diseases (http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG_FS_5_EN_new.pdf).

Global Development Group has a number of projects that specifically target the above areas and greatly contribute to the improvement of Maternal Health. Below are just a few examples of what we are doing to help achieve MDG5:

- One project we have operates a Post Natal Medical Clinic in the Cambodian village of Stung Meanchay. They facilitate education, family planning and healthcare activities. Mothers are counselled, babies are weighed, and their health is checked and monitored. Ongoing education is given in "women's classes" each fortnight, teaching about the care and feeding of young children, and in hygiene and health principles for the whole family. They also train and provide skilled midwives to improve the safety of childbirth for mothers and babies in the village. (J415)
- Another project located in Kenya has established a mobile clinic that provides prenatal and postnatal healthcare for mothers and their babies. The trained nurses in the clinics also support the surrounding community. (J564)
- In the Philippines there is a project which not only provides medical care, but also has a focus on family planning. They make available free medicines, contraceptives, training, as well as family planning and counselling. (J357)

With projects like these we are helping advance towards the goal of reducing maternal mortality and overall improving maternal health throughout the developing world.



■ For more information visit:
www.globaldevelopment.org.au/issue-2011-09

“There are more than 1/2 million deaths in conjunction with pregnancy and child birth every year.”

