

Global Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health

Successes, Challenges, and Opportunities



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KEYWORDS

- Maternal health • Newborn health • Child health • Millennium Development Goals
- Sustainable development • Reproductive health

KEY POINTS

- Considerable progress has occurred in the Millennium Development Goals era with substantial reductions in the mortality of children younger than 5 years.
- Reduction in newborn mortality has consistently lagged behind maternal and child mortality, and progress is uneven between countries and regions.
- Reduction of maternal, newborn, and child mortality is achievable through effective implementation of many innovative, high-impact, cost-effective, evidence-based interventions.
- Rapid scale-up of effective interventions, innovative service delivery strategies, and smart integration and linkages across the continuum of care is vital to accelerate progress toward improving maternal, newborn, and child survival.
- The goal of ending preventable maternal, newborn, and child deaths worldwide is achievable with the convergence of reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health with multi-stakeholder partnerships, multi-sectoral collaboration, and strong political leadership.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, increased attention has been focused on global reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health (RMNCH).^{1–7} The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established in the year 2000 by leaders of 189 nations to achieve a set of targets by 2015 compared with the 1990 baseline level.⁸ (Box 1). Health-related MDG4

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was aimed at reducing child mortality by two-thirds, whereas MDG5 was aimed at reducing maternal mortality by three-quarters and achieving universal access to reproductive health by the year 2015; but other MDGs also impact the health of women and children.⁸ Although considerable progress has occurred in the MDG era with substantial reductions in child mortality for those younger than 5 years, MDG4 targets will not be met in 2015.^{9,10} In addition, decline in newborn mortality has consistently lagged behind the maternal mortality rate and the mortality rate of children younger than 5 years. Reduction of maternal, newborn, and child mortality is achievable through effective implementation of many innovative, evidence-based, cost-effective interventions.^{11–18} Targeted interventions aimed at the most vulnerable group results in maximal impact on mortality.⁴ However, maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) intervention coverage and scale-up remains low, inequitable, and uneven between low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) and regions because of numerous health-system bottlenecks, such as workforce, financing, and service delivery.^{19,20}

The MDGs that end in September 2015 will be followed by a new set of goals: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Leaders representing the MNCH global community have recommended inclusion of new goals and targets for ending preventable newborn deaths and stillbirths as well as preventable maternal and child deaths in the post-2015 agenda.^{21–23} More intensified and coordinated efforts will be needed by governments, multilateral organizations, and other stakeholders, including nongovernmental organizations, civil society, private sector, and policy makers from high-income countries (HIC), to accelerate progress and achieve sustainable, high-quality services to improve MNCH in the post-2015 era.^{21–23}

CURRENT SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Maternal Health and Global Mortality Trends

Maternal health is defined as the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and post partum (first 42 days after delivery). In 2010, the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in LMIC was estimated at 240 per 100,000 live births compared with 16 per 100,000 live births in HIC.²⁴ Between 1990 and 2013, maternal mortality rates declined by 45%; in 1990, an estimated 523,000 maternal deaths occurred compared with 289,000 deaths in 2013.²⁴ Although progress has been made, this decline in maternal

Box 1 **MDGs**

- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health
- Goal 6: Combat human immunodeficiency virus/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

From United Nations. Millennium Development Goals. New York: United Nations; 2014. Available at: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>. Accessed July 25 2015.

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