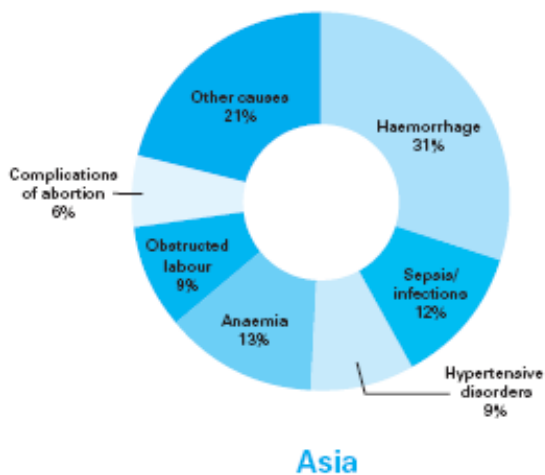


The Facts about Maternal Health

Every day, 1500 women die from pregnancy or from complications due to childbirth. Most of these deaths occur in developing countries, and most are avoidable.

Improving maternal health is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals adopted by the international community at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000. Countries have agreed to reduce the number of deaths from pregnancy by 2015.

What are the causes?



More than 80% of maternal deaths worldwide are due to five direct causes: haemorrhage, sepsis, unsafe abortion, obstructed labour and hypertensive disease of pregnancy (UNFPA 2005).

Maternal health is also an issue of global inequality. The health of women and girls is affected by different attitudes towards the status of women, and differences in wealth between developed and developing countries.

Source: Khan, Khalid S., et al., 'WHO Analysis of Causes of Maternal Death: A systematic review', The Lancet, vol. 367, no. 9516, 1 April 2006, p.1069.

Did you know?

- 536,000 women die each year from pregnancy complications – one every minute. (UNFPA 2009).
- More than 99 per cent of maternal deaths occur in developing countries. Half of these (265,000) take place in sub-Saharan Africa and another third (187,000) in South Asia. India alone accounts for 22 per cent of the global total. (UNICEF 2009)
- Motherless newborns are 3-10 times more likely to die than those with mothers who survive (UNFPA 2005).
- Among women aged 15–24, 48% were married before age 18 in South Asia (9.7 million girls)
- The children of adolescent mothers have a 50% higher risk of dying before the age of 1 (Save the Children 2004).
- A woman's lifetime risk of maternal death is 1 in 7,300 in developed countries versus 1 in 75 in developing countries (UNICEF 2009)