

The World's Forgotten Children

Aiko is safely delivered in Kumamoto, Japan, and can expect to live about 85 years. At the same time, Mariam comes into this world in one of the poorest areas of Freetown, Sierra Leone. She is underweight and vitamin-deficient, and has a 30% chance of dying before her fifth birthday.



Today, 35% of Africa's children are at higher risk of death than they were ten years ago.

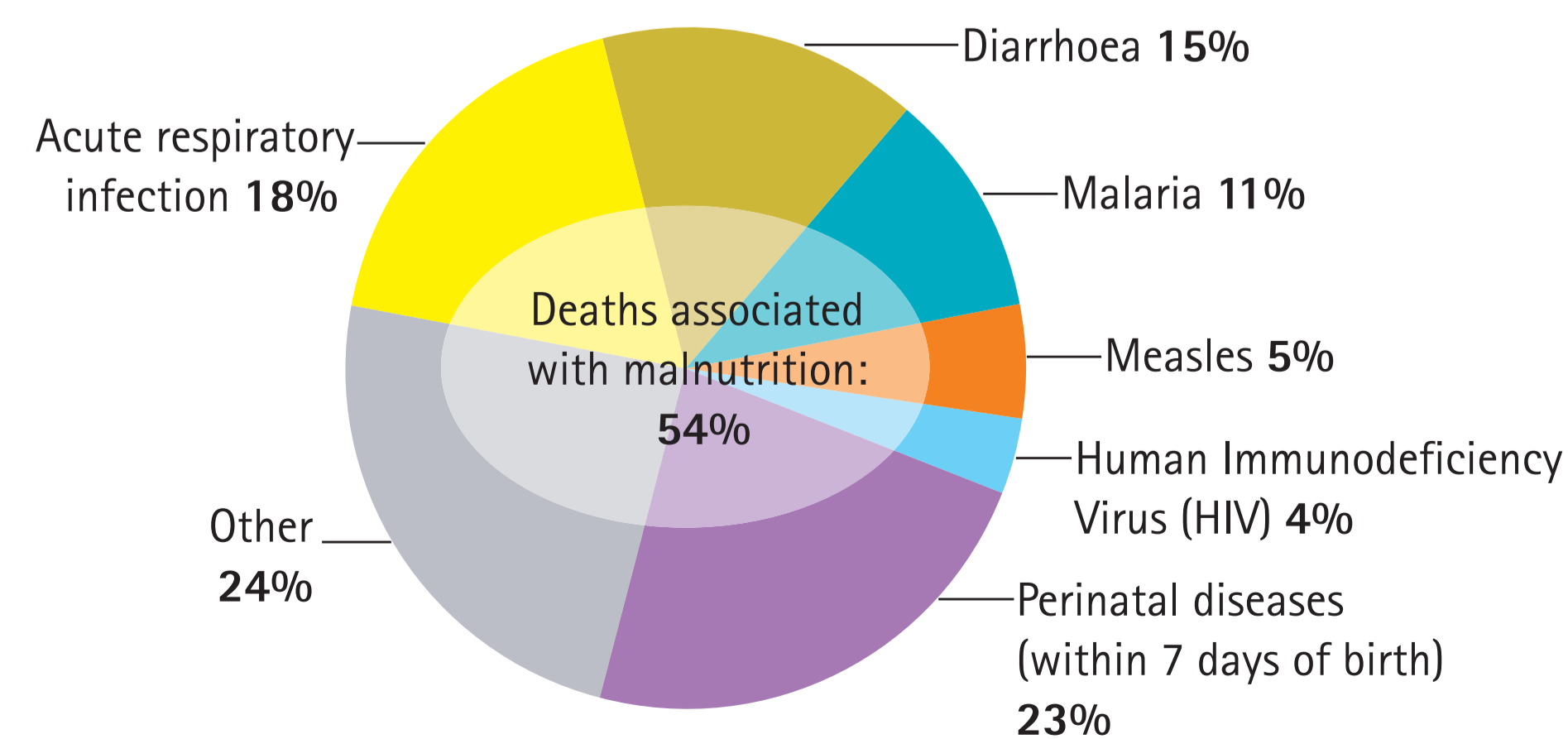
Over 10 million children under five die every year – 98 per cent of them in developing countries. Widespread malnutrition hampers children's growth and development, opening the door to the biggest killers of children under five: perinatal diseases, pneumonia, diarrhoea, and malaria. This presents a sharp contrast to the situation in the industrialized world, where junk food and a sedentary lifestyle have triggered an unprecedented epidemic of obesity in children, leading to diabetes and heart disease in adult life.

The last three decades have witnessed an impressive decline in child mortality, from 17 million a year in the 1970s. Yet these gains have not been enjoyed everywhere. In some countries of sub-Saharan Africa, child mortality is rising as wars and the ravage of the AIDS epidemic undermine the medical, social and economic structures of society.

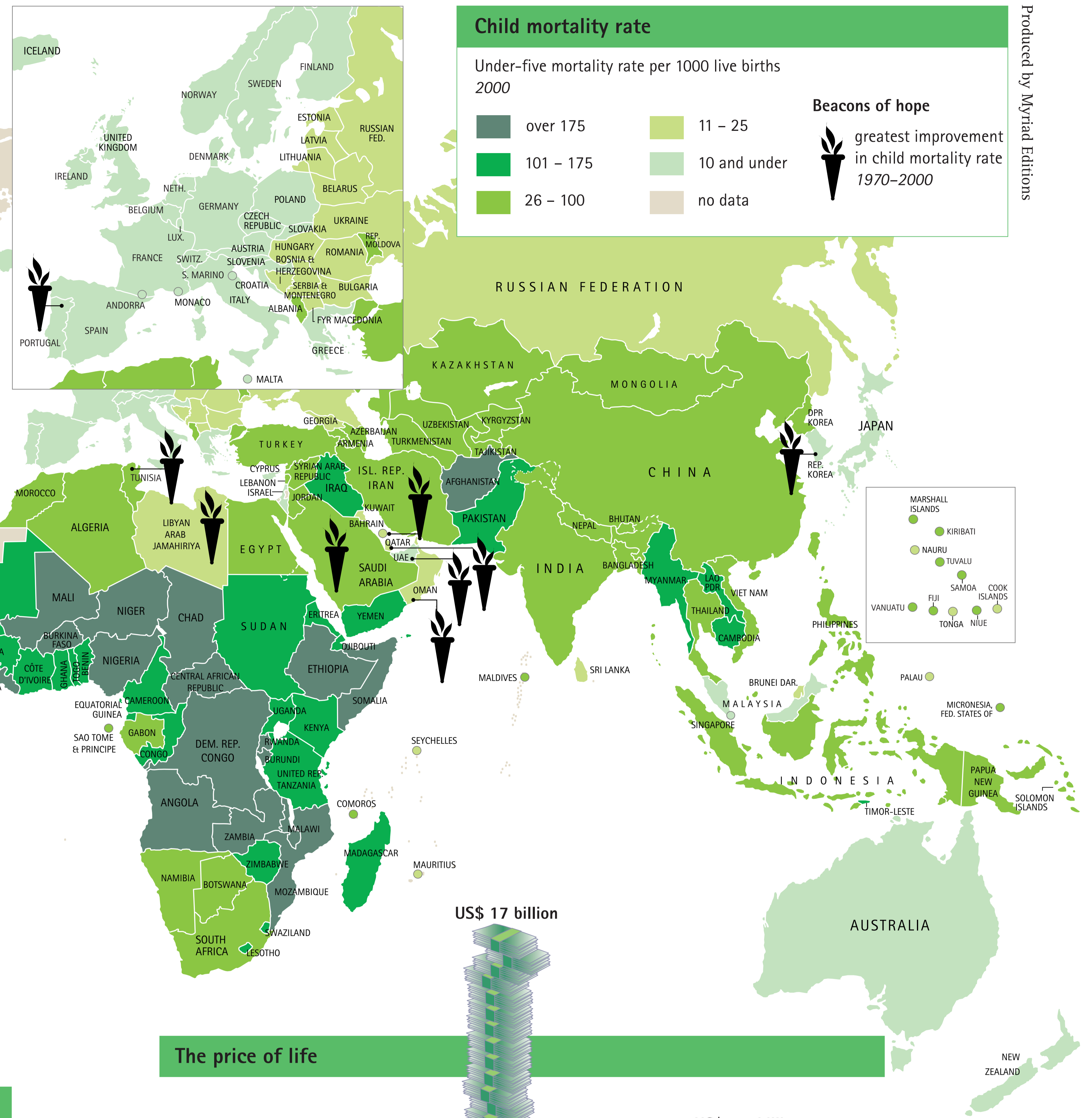
At the turn of the century, the world joined together in the fight against poverty, and committed itself to the Millennium Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations in 2000. "To reduce by two-thirds the under-five mortality rate between 1990 and 2015" may be the most ambitious of these goals.

The biggest killers of children under five

Main causes of child mortality 2002

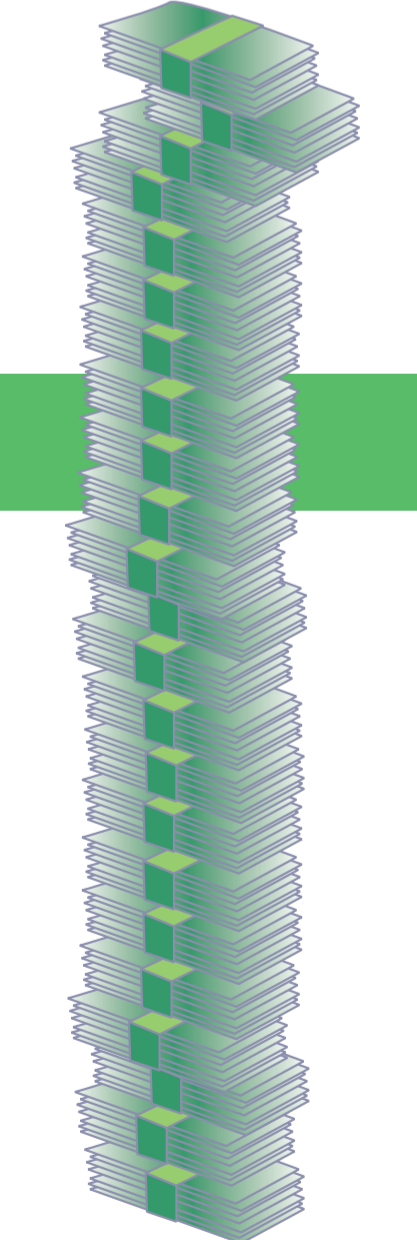


"It is not enough to prepare our children for the world; we must also prepare the world for our children."
Luis J. Rodriguez (1954-)



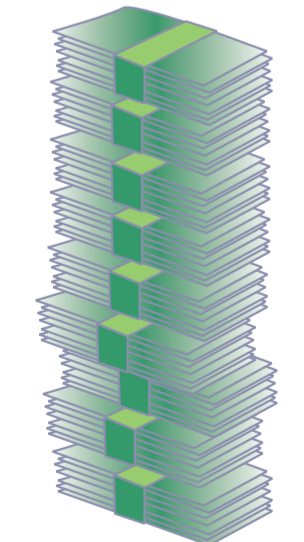
The price of life

US\$ 17 billion



Annual expenditure on pet food in North America and Europe 1998

US\$ 7.5 billion



Annual cost of scaling-up vaccination, malaria prevention and essential treatment to reach every child in the developing world 2001