

## Maternal mortality remains high in much of the developing world

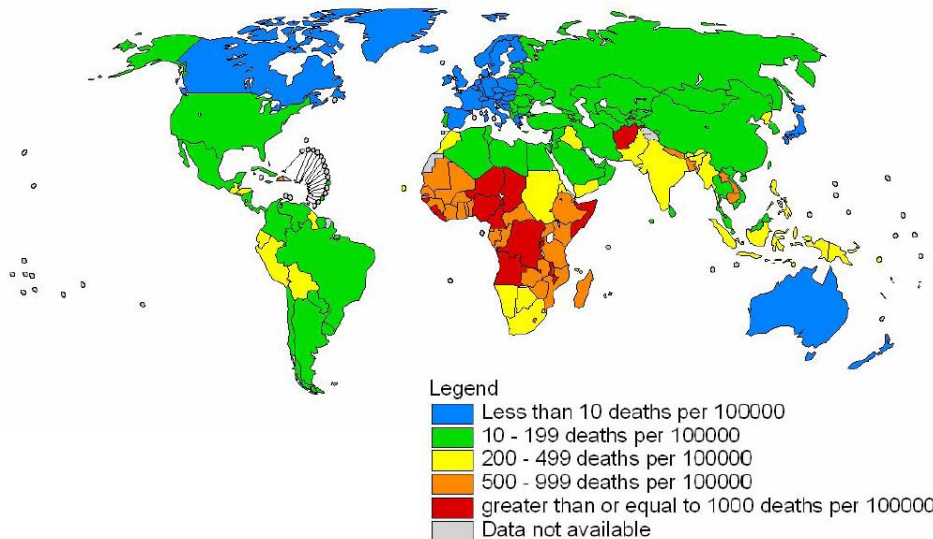
Improving maternal health and reducing maternal mortality remain at the centre of national, regional and global health initiatives. One of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000 reflects the global commitment to reduce the maternal mortality ratio in all countries by three quarters in 2015 from its 1990 level. A recent estimate by WHO and collaborators indicates that despite such global commitment, and continued action by national governments, supported by development partners, the current rate of decline of about less than 0.4% per annum observed at the global level falls far short of the 5.5% required to achieve the international target.

The new estimate shows that worldwide, in 2005 alone, close to half a million women died of maternal causes. About 99% of the fatality took place in developing countries, and slightly more than half occurred in the sub-Saharan African region alone, followed by South Asia. Maternal

deaths in the two regions accounted for 88% of global maternal deaths.

The global and regional picture masks the wide variation in the level and rate of decline in maternal mortality that exists between Member States. As can be seen from the map, a total of 14 countries had a maternal mortality ratio (MMR) of at least 1000, and in an additional 20 the ratio is between 500 and 1000 per 100 000 live births. In contrast, in the developed regions, which include Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, the ratio is about 10 per 100 000 live births or less. Presently, with an MMR of about 1 per 100 000 live births, Ireland represents one of the safest places for mothers, while in Sierra Leone, a country with the highest recorded level of MMR in the world, every 100 live births is associated with 2 maternal deaths. Click on the link below to access the full report: [http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/publications/maternal\\_mortality\\_2005/index.html](http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/publications/maternal_mortality_2005/index.html)

Maternal mortality ratio per 100 000 live births



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.