

# Research report

Forum: Commission on the Status of Women  
Issue: Ensuring Access to maternal health-care in  
LEDCs  
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## **Table of Contents**

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>General overview</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Major parties involved</b>	<b>5</b>
South Sudan	5
United States of America	5
Afghanistan	5
<b>Timeline of Key Events</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Previous attempts to solve the issue</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Possible solutions</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>6</b>

## Introduction

Typically Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDC's) have worse maternal healthcare due to inadequate resources. Bad healthcare has a negative effect on the population as it contributes to higher death rates. The correlation with poverty and maternal health care is that the countries usually have poor infrastructure which affects the medical health care. Studies have found that maternal mortality rates are higher in developing countries due to inadequate facilities and doctors.

This issue is related to the Sustainable Development Goal #3: Good Health and Wellbeing, as Maternal healthcare falls under the category of improvements to healthcare. Good health is a key indicator of a country's development and capabilities, and the main goal of this SDG is to improve the health of a country's population. Factors that can affect the quality of healthcare include: cultural values, the geography of an area, and economic status.

Ensuring access to maternal healthcare in LEDC's is imperative in order to stop preventable deaths and improve the experience of pregnancy and childbirth. By identifying underlying determinants of the issue governments will be able to create solutions to overcome the problem.

## Definitions of key terms

### Maternal Health

Maternal health refers to the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period.

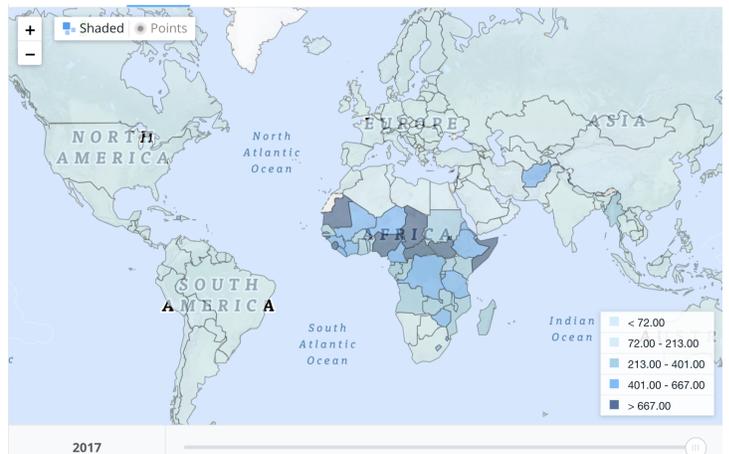
### Maternal mortality

deaths due to complications from pregnancy or childbirth.

## General overview

When looking at maternal health care in LEDCs, the main focus lies on Africa, as seen in the image on the right.<sup>1</sup>

According to the UNFPA “While the lifetime risk of dying from pregnancy-related complications is 1 in 4,700 in the industrialised world, the lifetime risk of an African woman dying from pregnancy related complications is 1 in 39.” This shows just how large the difference is between maternal health care in MEDCs than in LEDCs. It should also be



<sup>1</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.MMRT?type=shaded&view=map&year=2017>

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noted that there are disparities between women within the same country depending on their income and living situations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also taken a toll on the quality of maternal health care as well as the access to it. With travel restrictions heightened, women in places without access to good maternal health care, who otherwise could have travelled, have been unable to receive the proper care needed. This once again highlights the disparity between those who have immediate access to the required medical care and those who don't and the effects which this has on not only them but also future generations.

### **Major parties involved**

#### *South Sudan*

South Sudan has the highest maternal mortality ratio in the world coming in at 1150 deaths per 100,000 live births. This is a very large difference when compared to the US at 19 deaths per 100,000 live births.

#### *United States of America*

The United States is currently rated the worst of all MEDCs when it comes to maternal health care and maternal death rates, and this situation has been worsened. With the recent overturning of Roe V Wade, maternal death rates are expected to rise significantly.

#### *Afghanistan*

Afghanistan is another country with an incredibly high maternal mortality ratio, and is the number one in Asia. Also a good example of a country with regional disparities between those with higher income versus those with a lower income.

### **Timeline of Key Events**

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 1987          | emergence of The Safe Motherhood Initiative, a transnational network of policy makers, technocrats, and advocates, supported by United Nations (UN) agencies. |
| 2009          | Campaign on accelerated reduction of maternal mortality in Africa (CARMMA) launched by WHO, UNICEF, and UNFPA.  |
| 2015          | millenium development goals announced including goal 5 to improve maternal health.  |
| 2015          | The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are established   |
| June 24, 2022 | Roe Vs. Wade is overturned in the USA taking away the constitutional right to abortion  |

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## **Previous attempts to solve the issue**

A very obvious attempt to solve the issue is the establishment of the SDG programme in 2015. The most important SDG for this issue is #3: Good Health and Wellbeing. This goal aims to achieve universal health coverage for all, and for equitable access of health care services. It also includes reducing mortality rates for healthcare procedures and illness related deaths.

## **Possible solutions**

A very important aspect of tackling the issue of ensuring access to maternal health care in LEDC's is to improve the infrastructure of those countries. Currently many LEDC health facilities suffer limitations such as poor power supplies. Underlying causes for higher mortality rates in LDCs must be identified.

To solve this issue it is necessary to acquire funding, either from donations, charities, or support from other nations. Overall there should be more information provided through general education in schools and special programmes. Studies have found that a lack of information on healthcare results in less people wanting to use the services offered.

Women's autonomy should be endorsed by creating more educational health programmes to educate people on the importance of making their own health decisions. This will inform pregnant women of antenatal care and the benefits of maternal healthcare. This is an important step to tackling the issue as many women in LEDC culturally feel pressured to give birth at home without proper preparation and help, often putting the women in danger.

An important solution is to improve the infrastructure of the health facilities. Remote locations

Births should be attended by skilled health professionals to reduce risks of death. In healthcare settings there should be experienced and knowledgeable health professionals with adequate ethical and medical training. To do so it has been suggested that midwives are sent back to school to be trained and develop their knowledge.

Another solution is to increase the use of birth centres. Studies have shown that birth centres are an effective and safe cheaper alternative to hospitals for pregnancies.

Conditional cash transfer programme for women who deliver in health facilities is also a solution.

Another suggestion is to create accurate healthcare registries and databases to monitor the maternal healthcare among vulnerable populations and to check for credible documentation

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