**UNWomen**

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**The question of reducing child mortality in sub-Saharan Africa**

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**General Overview:**

**Child mortality** in Sub-Saharan Africa has been a significant issue in the region for a long time. To make it a bit more understandable, child mortality is when children die at a very young age, in this case, specifically when they die at a young age from easily preventable diseases that are caused mainly by poverty, lack of education, and lack of hygiene. Over the years the UN has made noticeable efforts in aiding Africa to lower child mortality rates.

Child mortality rates are usually measured by a term called “Under Five Mortality” This indicates the number of children who die before reaching the age of 5.

In 1960, 50% of child mortality cases all over the world were recorded in Africa, keeping in mind that Africa only counts as 11% of the world population.

**Neonatal Mortality** is a term used to address an issue, which is when newborns die before reaching one month of living. It is scientifically proven that the first 28 days of life are the most crucial in a newborns life, and in those 28 days newborns should be taken care of very well as they are in critical condition, and unfortunately in underprivileged countries, newborns are not handled critically and taken care of very well, which causes regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa to have high neonatal mortality rates.

In Africa, 25% of all under-five deaths, happen in the first month of a newborn’s life and the leading cause of these deaths are lack of prenatal care.

What makes these issues alarming is that they could be easily prevented by giving the region developed healthcare, better education and more sanitary living situations.

In Sub-Saharan Africa Socioeconomic factors are very highly correlated with the risk factors of the under-five mortality rates.

Socioeconomic inequality is a leading cause to this issue, unfortunately rural areas like Sub-Saharan Africa do not have socioeconomical factors nearly as close as other countries in the UN, they lack social support, education, community safety, healthcare, wealth, residence and so much more. This is very threatening as they face large inequalities in these factors, compared to other developed countries

**Timeline**:

In the 1990’s, 1 in 11 children died before the age of 5, since then the world has made progress in increasing child mortality, so in 2021 only 1 in 26 children died before the age of 5. This is called the under-five mortality rate, which is used to calculate the number of children who die before reaching the age of 5.

The annual rate of the under-five mortality in the 1990’s was 1.8%, increasing to 4% in between 2000-2009, and finally decreasing to 2.7% in the years 2010-2021, so even though the rate has drastically decreased lately, reducing child mortality especially in sub-Saharan Africa is crucial.

The first 28 days of a newborn’s life is called the neonatal period, and it’s the most vulnerable time for a child’s survival.

In 2021 almost 13,800 under-five deaths occurred on a daily basis, and 18 neonatal deaths occurred per 1000 live births.

In 2015 a global response to this issue, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015 were developed to promote healthy lives and well-being for all children. It had 2 main targets which were reducing newborn mortality to atleast 12 per 1000 live births in each country, and to reduce the under-five mortality rate to 25 per 1000 children in each country, the goal was to have this done by the year 2030, and unfortunately, we are far away from reaching these goals.

**Causes:**

**Child mortality** rates could be lowered, if the right medical assistance was provided. Unfortunately in underprivileged areas like sub-Saharan Africa, medicine isn’t as developed as other countries, and the main diseases affecting children are as malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malnutrition or even diarrhea are the leading cause of death in the Sub-Saharan Africa region . These diseases could be avoided if the area wasn’t underdeveloped, uneducated and poor.

Healthcare in the region is very undeveloped to the point where families can not have access to essential medical services such as vaccines. The region also lacks access to clean food and water which causes malnutrition which is also considered a leading cause of the deaths, this mostly happens in rural areas where they do not have access to clean drinking water or food, so the food and water are usually infected with diseases that threaten their lives, especially since they have zero access to healthcare.

**Neonatal Mortality** is mostly caused by Lack of prenatal care, this causes the newborn to be born with undetected health issues and complications, which could be avoided if the correct healthcare was provided pre-birth.

Low birth weight could lead to a newborn’s death, this usually happens when the mother does not have enough nutrition during the pregnancy, so the baby gets born with a very low weight which could cause death. Again, this could be easily prevented if the mother is provided with healthy, nutritious, clean food, which is very hard in areas like Sub-Saharan Africa. When the mother does not have access to clean food and water, it could even cause the mother to not be able to breastfeed, or could cause the baby to be born preterm, which causes babies t be born with undeveloped organs and systems. When newborns aren’t breastfed, it could cause malnutrition to the, which is another cause of neonatal mortality.

To sum up, prenatal care, maternal health and giving access to prenatal healthcare could significantly lower prenatal mortality rates.

**Graphs:**

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