

Millennium Development Goals

Millennium Development Goal 5 – To improve maternal health

Information and activities



Target – Reduce the maternal mortality rate by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015.

More than half a million women die during pregnancy or in childbirth each year, most of them in developing countries. Related to this are the deaths of three million children. In Ethiopia, 1 in 27 women die of complications or illnesses during pregnancy and childbirth. In the UK only 1 in 8,200 women die for this reason.

Most of these deaths are wholly preventable. If mothers had access to good health care and basic medicines, most of them would survive to look after their families and contribute to their communities. Access to health care, family planning, contraception and adequate education are some of the means by which maternal health can be improved.

The birth of a child should be something which people look forward to with joy, and not an event which poses a significant risk to the mother's life. We should put an end to this gross inequality in basic human health.

Activities for this goal include

Nepal case study

Information about a community health worker who assists mothers in remote areas.

Giving birth in different countries

Pupils examine statistics and make posters showing how unequal access to healthcare is during pregnancy and childbirth.

Celebrating mothers around the world

Pupils learn about the different ways mothers are acknowledged and celebrated in different cultures.

Millennium Development Goal 5 – To improve maternal health

Target – Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality rate.

More than half a million women die each year during pregnancy and childbirth, almost all of them in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. These deaths are often from treatable or preventable complications. In the developed world, a woman's risk of dying in pregnancy or childbirth over the course of her lifetime is one in 3,800. However, in sub-Saharan Africa the figure is one in 16.

A number of middle-income countries have made rapid progress in reducing maternal deaths. Nevertheless, maternal mortality levels remain unacceptably high across the developing world and the target is now the most severely off-track of all the MDGs.

Most deaths during pregnancy and childbirth are wholly preventable. If mothers had access to free, good-quality basic healthcare, contraception and affordable medicines, most of them would survive to look after their families and contribute to their communities. In poor countries, reducing the need to burn solid fuel indoors could have a significant impact on child and maternal health by cutting indoor air pollution. Dr Chan pointed out that the poorest countries were the most vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change.¹ However, over four million healthcare workers are needed in developing countries.² Richer countries need to support poorer countries by giving long-term, reliable aid to developing country governments so that they can provide healthcare for their citizens.

The birth of a child should be something which people look forward to with joy, and not an event which poses a significant risk to the mother's life. We must put an end to this gross inequality in basic human health.

1 World Health Organisation (WHO) director, Margaret Chan 2 Health and Education For All, Oxfam International 2008

Giving birth safely – Nepal

Hita Kumari Paudyal, the mother shown on this poster, lives in Parbat, in Nepal. Her family owns a small amount of land, on which they grow their food, doing all the work by hand. When Hita's mother had her children, she carried on working hard right through the pregnancies, with no special care, and gave birth at home. Three of her babies died. Now things have changed: when Hita became pregnant she went for regular check-ups, did less heavy work, ate more nutritious food and went to the hospital to give birth, knowing that if there were problems help would be available.



In the UK, a mother's death during childbirth is very rare, with only 13 cases per 1,000 live births. However, in Nepal it is far more common. In 1996 it was calculated that 539 women in Nepal were dying in childbirth for every 1,000 live births. Ten years later, though, the death rate had almost halved. This encouraging progress was due to more aid being given by rich countries to help the Nepali government to tackle the factors that cause mothers to die during pregnancy or childbirth. These include a lack of good health services (over 80 per cent of Nepali women give birth at home, most with no proper healthcare), a lack of knowledge about the right food and care during pregnancy, and difficulties in reaching hospitals and clinics, especially in areas where there are no roads.

Aid from richer countries helps the Nepali government to provide better medical equipment and essential medicines and to renovate hospitals and clinics. It also enables it to provide midwifery training for health workers. Women are encouraged either to go to a hospital or clinic for their delivery or to arrange for a trained midwife to come to their house.

Case study provided by the DfID-funded Support to the Safe Motherhood Programme in Nepal

Poster activity (ages 7–11)

You will need

- Speech bubble sticky notes
- Poster 5 displayed
- A copy of *Giving birth safely* on page 2

1. Ask pupils to think about what each person in the picture might be thinking.
2. Ask them to write their words on speech bubble sticky notes and stick them onto the picture.
3. Read *Giving birth safely – Nepal* to them, and answer any questions they might have.

Activity 5.1

Aims

- To inform pupils about the risks involved in giving birth in developing countries and the inequalities in access to healthcare for mothers worldwide.
- To inspire pupils to think about this problem and take interest in the lives people in different countries.

You will need

- Poster 5 displayed
- A copy of *Giving birth safely – Nepal* on page 2

Giving birth in different countries (ages 10–14)

Note: This is a disturbing subject for pupils. Teachers should judge carefully whether their class is ready to tackle it.

1. Ask pupils what mothers need when they give birth. They might say, for example, 'to go to hospital' or 'someone to hold their hand'. Give them some ideas such as 'clean sheets'.
2. Read the pupils the story of Hita Kumari Paudyal, the mother in Nepal pictured on the front of this poster. Answer any questions they might have. Try and connect the story with the suggestions pupils made earlier. Does Hita mention anything they mentioned?
3. Tell pupils that people like Hita need skilled helpers like nurses, doctors and midwives when they become pregnant and then when they give birth. Ask them how many women they think die during childbirth. Tell them that the figure is about half a million women per year in the whole world, but that 495,000 (or 99 per cent) of these live in developing countries. Why could this be? Take suggestions. Reasons include the lack of hospitals and doctors in many developing countries. Is it fair that some women have such a high risk of dying in childbirth?
4. Give pupils some of the statistics and facts below, and ask them to make posters to illustrate them. The posters could show the fact that world leaders have pledged to change this unfair situation by 2015 in Millennium Development Goal 5.

The cost of childbirth

- Every year 500,000 women die worldwide from complications of pregnancy and childbirth. 495,000 of them live in developing countries.
- In Ethiopia, 1 in 27 women die of complications or illnesses during pregnancy and childbirth. In the UK, only 1 in 8,200 women die for this reason.
- In 2000, world leaders pledged to change this situation by 2015 by achieving Millennium Development Goal 5, 'Improve maternal health'.

Activity 5.2

Celebrating mothers around the world (ages 7–11)

Aim

- To help pupils learn about how people in other cultures celebrate mothers.

1. Mothers are celebrated throughout the world. Ask pupils to read through the ways in which mothers are celebrated and choose one to investigate further using the school library or the internet.
2. Ask the pupils to create a display of different ways in which mothers are celebrated.

You will need

- Photocopies of *Celebrating mothers around the world* below
- Access to the school library or the internet
- Materials for making a display

Celebrating mothers around the world

Mother's Day is now celebrated in many countries around the world. Australia, Mexico, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Turkey, Belgium, Russia, China and Thailand all have special celebrations to honour mothers.

The ancient Greeks celebrated Mother's Day in spring, like we do in the UK. They used to honour Rhea, mother of the gods', at dawn with honey cakes, special drinks and flowers.

Japan's Imperial Family traces its descent from Omikami Amaterasu, the Mother of the World.

Hindu scripture credits the Great Mother, Kali Ma, with the invention of writing.

Native American women have long been honoured with the name 'Life of the Nation' for their gift of motherhood to the people.

The Buddha honoured mothers when he said, 'As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, loves and protects her child, so let a man cultivate love without measure toward the whole world.'

Mother's Day in England originated during the 1600s. Servants would go home to see their families, bringing cakes and sweets to their mothers. This custom was called 'going a-mothering'. Each mother would receive a simnel cake and mothers would give a blessing to their children.

Adapted from www.mothers.net

Activity 5.3

Mothers' health around the world (ages 11–14)

Aim

- To introduce pupils to facts about maternal health in developing countries.

You will need

- A photocopy of the table below for each pupil

- Give each pupil a photocopy of the table below and ask them to match the beginnings of the sentences to the endings so that they have a sentence that makes sense.
- Ask them to use the internet to do some research into the fifth Millennium Development Goal. What kind of improvements does the United Nations want governments to make? How easy would it be to make these changes? Ask pupils to write a summary of their findings.

Suggested websites include:

<http://endpoverty2015.org/>

www.un.org/millenniumgoals

Mothers' health around the world

Every minute of every day, somewhere in the world and most often in a developing country it represents an enormous cost to her nation, her community, and her family.
A woman's death is more than a personal tragedy, can significantly reduce the health risks that women face when they become pregnant.
Most maternal deaths could be prevented if women had a woman dies from complications related to pregnancy or childbirth.
More than a decade of research has shown that small and affordable measures children lose their primary caregiver, communities are denied her paid and unpaid labour, and countries forego her contributions to economic and social development.
When a mother dies, making maternal mortality the health statistic with the largest disparity between developed and developing countries.
Nearly all maternal deaths (99 per cent) occur in the developing world, access to appropriate healthcare during pregnancy and childbirth, and immediately afterwards.

Improving maternal health in Cambodia¹

In recent years, the Government of Cambodia has worked with four development partners; the UN Population Fund, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and DFID; on a programme designed to address some of the country's most pressing health problems. The programme hires international medical groups to help manage health facilities, and sets specific goals to work towards. Effective donor coordination has meant that its efforts have been spread widely over the country, covering 12 districts and serving 1.4 million people, a tenth of the population.

One major achievement of the programme has been to increase the number of children born either in a clinic, or at home with a professionally trained midwife. Between 2000 and 2005, the proportion of deliveries attended by skilled health personnel rose from 31.8 to 43.8 per cent.

Co-ordination of donors to Cambodia's health remains a serious issue as less than 25% of health sector assistance provided by donors in Cambodia is classified as supporting a coordinated programme. An entire floor of the Ministry of Health in Cambodia is set aside for separate donor project offices, and much time is taken up here, rather than on core jobs elsewhere. The International Health Partnership (IHP) launched in September 2007, aims to coordinate the efforts of donors, get them behind national priorities and free the Ministry of Health to go about its key business of providing better healthcare to Cambodians rather than reporting to each of its donors separately.

How To Take Action

The success story in Cambodia can about because donor countries (like the UK) worked with the Cambodian government to find solutions to their Maternal Health problems. Highlighting the issues to others is a good way of helping to ensure that this target is met in 2015.

Actions

- Make Mother's Day cards (14th March 2010) with messages about MDG 5 and send to well known mothers (MPs/celebrities/local businesswomen).
- Visit a maternity ward in your town and compare with facilities for mothers in developing countries, write about your experiences and make a school display.
- Send a mother's day card to Sarah Brown/Samantha Cameron highlighting issues.
- Interview you mum and Gran – how have things changed? – highlight conditions women still have to deal with today and share your findings with your class or year group.

Fundraisers

- Sell home-made mother's day cards in the weeks running up to Mother's Day.

NB Please remember to pass on stories of any actions you or your pupils take. education@oxfam.org.uk

Key Messages for Actions

- Ensure that all mothers have access to good health care and basic medicines
- Donor countries like the UK to work with developing countries to co-ordinate efforts to ensure a fair distribution of help
- Donor countries to stick to commitments made in 2000 to provide aid to achieve the Millennium Development Goals
- All countries to commit to reducing carbon emissions in order to slow down climate change and reduce its effects on people from developing countries

For more resources on Maternal Health try:

www.oxfam.org.uk/poverty & women

Oxfam is committed to providing the best possible support to schools and youth groups and we wish to assess the impact of our work with young people.

Please use the slip below to tell us about your MDG lessons and projects or e-mail us at education@oxfam.org.uk

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Name of Teacher:

Age of pupils:

Name & Address of School:

Description of MDG learning:

Postcode:

Please return this slip to:

Email*

Oxfam Youth & Schools Team

Oxfam House

Number of pupils taught about the MDGs:

John Smith Drive

Oxford OX4 2JY

*Please provide your email address to receive messages from us about our projects and activities. You can unsubscribe at any time.

We would like to keep you informed about our projects and activities. However, if you'd rather not receive such information, please either email us at changes@oxfam.org.uk, phone 0300 200 1300 or write to Supporter Relations, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Oxford OX4 2JY