

Chapter 12

Sustainable Development Goal 3 and Maternal Health in Nigeria: Any Hope of Meeting the Target by 2030?

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ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses the feasibility of Nigeria achieving Target 3.1 of Sustainable Development Goal 3, which aims at reducing maternal deaths to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030. Maternal deaths occur due to lack of access to maternal healthcare, which encompasses the healthcare dimensions of family planning, preconception, prenatal, and postnatal care for women. Nigeria is presently the second largest contributor to maternal deaths globally, having a maternal mortality ratio of 814 per 100,000 live births. Will Nigeria achieve this goal by 2030? This chapter assesses the maternal health landscape of Nigeria and the measures taken by the government to address maternal health from the perspective of the feasibility of achieving SDG 3, Target 3.1 by 2030.

INTRODUCTION

Maternal morbidity and mortality have remained an endemic health issue for women through the ages. However, to stem the tide of maternal mortality, the United Nations had as its fifth Millennium Development Goal - a commitment to improve maternal health. The goal targeted a reduction in maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-6133-0.ch012

between 1990 and 2015, as well as the achievement of universal access to reproductive health by the same year (United Nations (UN), 2005). Subsequently, the goal spurred up commitments by various national governments to maternal healthcare. This led to a reduction in maternal deaths. Thus, maternal mortality ratio declined globally by about 44 per cent - from 385 deaths to 216 deaths per 100,000 live births. Similarly, the approximate global lifetime risk of maternal death fell considerably from 1 in 73 in 1990 to 1 in 180 in 2015 (WHO, 2015). Statistically, this meant a 2.3 per cent annual rate reduction - a remarkable progress, but it unfortunately failed to meet the estimated 5.5 per cent annual rate reduction that was needed to achieve the targeted three-quarters reduction in 2015 (WHO, 2015).

This progress in stemming maternal deaths is however, unevenly distributed among the different regions of the world. While the developed world has been freed from the shackles of maternal deaths, the developing world is still grappling with the challenge. A majority of the deaths still occurs in the developing world. For example, the developing world accounted for approximately 99% (302,000) of the deaths in 2015, and had a maternal mortality ratio of 239. This was 20 times higher than the 12 deaths per 100,000 live births that occurred in the developed world. Similarly, the estimated lifetime risk of maternal death in the developing world stands at 1 in 3,300, as compared with 1 in 41 in the developed world (WHO, 2015).

Regionally, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest maternal mortality ratio. It accounted for about 66% (201,000) of the deaths in 2015 with a maternal mortality ratio of 546. Equally, a woman's life time risk of dying during or following a pregnancy in sub-Saharan Africa, is estimated at 1 in 36 as compared to 1 in 4,900 for the developed world (WHO, 2015). At the country level, Nigeria and India are estimated to account for over one third of all maternal deaths globally. Nigeria accounted for 19% (58,000) with a maternal mortality ratio of 814 in 2015, while India accounted for 15% (45,000) of the deaths (WHO, 2015).

The Millennium Development Goal 5 has been rested, as the target year (2015) for its achievement had come and gone. Although, its targets of reducing maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters and the achievement of a universal access to reproductive health were not achieved, nevertheless, the progress made as a result of the goal is quite remarkable. Field findings reveal that all regions of the world that implemented the Millennium Development Goals have experienced considerable reductions in maternal mortality rate (UN, 2015). In view of this, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (which replaced the Millennium Development Goals), have established a transformative new agenda for maternal health, towards ending preventable maternal mortality. Thus, Target 3.1 of SDG 3 (Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote well-being for all at all Ages), aims at reducing the global Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030 (UN, 2016).

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