

Egypt made positive advances in maternal and child health over the past twenty years, however recent evidence indicates that this progress is beginning to plateau, requiring significant efforts to prevent gains from being lost.

Egypt is close to meeting its MDG 4 target (reduce child mortality) with a 73% decline in under-five mortality between 1990 and 2011, largely due to high rates of immunization coverage, appropriate care seeking for sick children and improved socio economic conditions.

The MDG 5 (reduce maternal mortality) target of 58 deaths per 100 000 live births has been met, however the 2014 Demographic and Health Survey revealed that after years of decline the fertility rate is starting to increase, from 3 to 3.5 births per woman since 2008. This poses a major challenge for Egypt.

There is still wide disparity in maternal and child health across the country, with the areas such as Upper Egypt and other rural areas facing challenges of lack of access to services, increased childhood malnutrition and lack of access to hygiene and sanitation. The current period of political transition in Egypt also poses a risk to further reducing child and maternal mortality in the future.

In order to maintain previous gains made in maternal and child health, WHO supported the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) in the development of the Egypt National MCH acceleration plan (2013-2015), along with UNICEF and UNFPA. The plan targets the underserved and underprivileged by accelerating implementation in 1402 health facilities in 18 governorates. It aims to reach out to the underserved and underprivileged, by accelerating implementation in 18 governorates, including 1402 health facilities, while sustaining the achievements made for the rest of the population.

Key to this plan, which targets approximately 22 million people, is the improvement of the quality of obstetric and emergency care, increasing access to family planning, improving training and professionalizing midwifery and nursing.

In line with the acceleration plan, WHO is working with MoHP to:

- Update national maternal guidelines and protocols.
- Develop guidelines for reproductive health with linkages to HIV and STI's, adolescent health policies and strategies and adolescent health friendly clinics.
- Strengthen technical capacity of health providers in reproductive health and family planning at primary health care facilities.
- Build the capacity of public and private physicians on basic emergency obstetric and newborn care, and of health care providers at primary health care facilities in integrated management of childhood illnesses.
- Strengthen maternal mortality surveillance.
- Monitor the quality of implementation through supportive supervision.
- Independently monitor the progress towards MDGs 4 and 5 through the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women and Children's Health and provide strategies to address gaps.

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