

Policy Brief | RIGHTS AND CHOICES FOR ALL MATERNAL HEALTH

Issue overview

According to the latest statistics (pre-COVID pandemic), approximately 810 women die globally every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

For every woman who dies, an estimated 20 or 30 suffer injuries, infections, or disabilities, which are often affecting a woman's health for the rest of her life. Most of these deaths and injuries are entirely preventable.

Making motherhood safer is a human rights imperative, and it is at the core of UNFPA's mandate and development priorities. UNFPA works around the world with governments, health experts and civil society to train health workers, improve the availability of essential medicines and reproductive health services, strengthen health systems, and promote international maternal health standards.

The global target as set in the Sustainable Development Goals is to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio (MMR) to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030, with each country encouraged to set their own ambitious goal. While the global MMR has fallen over the years given that many women have gained access to family planning, antenatal care, skilled birth attendance and obstetric emergency care, much more needs to be done to further reduce MMR and to strive to end preventable maternal deaths, which is one of three transformative results set by UNFPA as part of its support to the 2030 agenda.

However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is already threatening and reversing some of the progress made to date hence there is a need more than

ever to double the existing efforts to halt such a reversal and continue the trajectory of progress.

The best way to continue reducing MMR is to (a) make sure women with complications have timely access to quality emergency obstetric care; (b) provide all pregnant women with skilled and respectful care in a safe environment during delivery; and (c) ensure that all women of fertile age are given the choice to use contraception to avoid unintended pregnancies.

**GLOBALLY EVERY 2 MINUTES
A WOMAN DIES
GIVING LIFE**

FROM PREVENTABLE CAUSES RELATED TO PREGNANCY OR CHILDBIRTH

Maternal mortality ratio (MMR):



Number of maternal deaths x 100,000
—————
live births

**REDUCE
MMR**

**1 OBSTETRIC
EMERGENCY CARE**

Make sure women with complications have timely access to quality emergency obstetric care

**3 ACCESS TO FAMILY
PLANNING**

Ensure that all sexually-active women have given the choice to use contraception to avoid unintended pregnancies

**2 SKILLED BIRTH
ATTENDANCE**

Provide all pregnant women with skilled and respectful care in a safe environment during delivery

Trends in Turkmenistan

The Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan (MoHMI) funded the construction and equipment of modern perinatal health centers in every region and in Ashgabat. Based on UNFPA calculations and latest data from the MoHMI in 2019, 84 percent of maternities inherited from the past were renovated and improved their sanitary conditions during the last 8 years. 756 obstetricians and 368 midwives work in 142 maternity units and 98 antenatal care rooms in Turkmenistan, taking care of an average of 155,000 pregnant women every year. The number of maternity facilities providing emergency obstetric care increased 2.7 times since 2009.

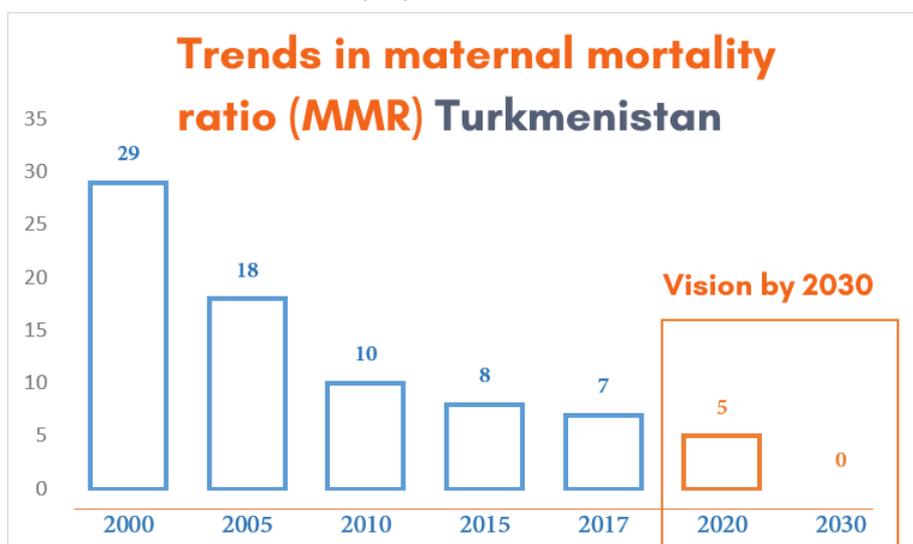
Basic and emergency obstetric care maternities are evenly distributed throughout the country and their number meets the WHO standards. The Maternal mortality ratio (MMR) as of 2017 was estimated at 7 every 100,000 live births, which is lower than the regional average in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Within the structure of MMR hemorrhage remains as the leading cause. Anemia is more prevalent among women in low-income families, which increases the risk of maternal mortality due to hemorrhage. That makes those women more vulnerable. Women with anemia and chronic diseases are prioritized for administration of free of charge contraceptives to avoid a possible deterioration of their health status due to unintended pregnancy. As of 2020, up to 64 percent of women with chronic diseases are registered and benefit from voluntary family planning (FP) services provided through 95 reproductive health rooms in every district across the country.

The National health care system offers women maternal health services at all 3 levels. Through rolling out of regionalization process with UNFPA support, 82% of the complicated deliveries took place at the 2nd or 3rd levels in 2020

which are better equipped and properly staffed in comparison with 2014 when only 40% of complicated deliveries were taking place at 2nd and 3rd levels and 60% of complicated cases were assisted at the primary level. The improved antenatal care and more effective referral pathways allowed to increase not only effectiveness of maternal health services but also cost efficiency of the state health expenditures through focusing on specialized care only on 2nd and 3rd levels.

Precaution measures and travel restrictions during the global pandemic of COV SARS2 implied additional barriers on access of women to timely provision of specialized reproductive health services. UNFPA supported the Ministry of Health in updating the guidelines with regards to emergency obstetric care, infection prevention and control.

A shortage in the midwifery workforce in rural areas with a low number of admissions in midwifery schools and the growing population in certain districts is additionally stretching the capacity of local maternity units there. Maternal health care services for women with disabilities need improvement in terms of making these services more accessible, affordable and timely. Addressing these challenges would accelerate the progress on maternal health and contribute to the elimination of preventable maternal mortality by 2030 in Turkmenistan.



Source: *Trends in maternal mortality 2000 to 2017*: estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019.

UNFPA in Action

UNFPA has supported the MoHMI in standardizing the medical practice of maternal health services based on international evidence, research findings in the country, and WHO/UNFPA recommendations. Forty-four clinical protocols in the area of obstetrics were introduced to every maternity followed by monitoring of their implementation. All obstetricians employed in maternities were trained by regional health department specialists on providing maternal care in line with the introduced protocols. The training was covered by the state budget funds.

Starting from 2015, UNFPA has supported the MoHMI in setting the three levels of maternal health care with a defined set of human resources, equipment, and services. Such a system increases the effectiveness and efficiency of maternal health services and along with standardized clinical practice has contributed to a significant MMR drop in comparison to the 2007 figures. Most interventions outlined were carried out as part of South-to-South cooperation between specialists in the Republic of Moldova and Turkmenistan with support from UNFPA.

Obstetricians in maternities throughout the country benefited from analytical tools presented by UNFPA and WHO on conducting the review/self-audit of near miss cases with the purpose of identifying shortcomings and learning from them so as not to repeat them again. That was a mind shift in management with the emphasis on finding solutions to improve the quality through internal analyses conducted in an honest and ethical manner. Besides, UNFPA's support to the MoHMI was also welcomed in monitoring quality service provision by using a database on all maternities and registry of human resources in the area of maternal health. These tools give managers the opportunity to monitor the real-time situation at every maternity with regards to numbers, skills, infrastructure, etc.

UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO supported the development of a National Strategy on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent health services for the period 2021-2030. The strategy and action plan will help to maintain the gains made in the reduction of MMR and also apply new strategies and means of implementation to continue addressing the impact of the global pandemic.

National health care system equipped to offer

3 levels of maternal health services:



3rd level: national facility
Advanced specialized care

9%



2nd level: velayat/ regional facility
Specialized care for women with warning signs during pregnancy to prevent complications

18%



Primary level: etrap /local facility
Healthy pregnancy, normal delivery

75%

New priorities of partnership in 2021-2025

UNFPA Turkmenistan has committed to support the MoHMI on these interventions within its fifth Country Programme cycle for the period of 2021-2025. The outlined interventions are also included in the abovementioned National strategy on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Children and Adolescent Health for 2021-2030 with its action plan for 2021-2030, which is planned to be costed in 2021.

The Family Planning Investment Case conducted in 2020 serves as the basis for the cost-benefit analysis of investments made in FP contributing to improved maternal health outcomes. In 2021 UNFPA supports the MoH in finding most tailored solutions in the area of health financing of maternal health services with focus on socially vulnerable women. Findings of that research contribute to making informed decisions on health financing modalities in the area of maternal health and advance the

national agenda on financing for development. With regards to anemia decrease interventions, UNFPA partners with UNICEF on strengthening laboratory testing and treatment. This synergizes the effectiveness of UNFPA interventions and contributes to decreasing vulnerabilities among women in need.

UNFPA continues its advisory and technical support in strengthening institutional capacity of health care system in preventing the spread of infectious diseases with a focus on global SARS2 pandemic.

Within the framework of the Co-Financing Agreement with the Government of Turkmenistan, UNFPA will partner to improve the midwifery education and midwifery workforce regulations, as well as the infrastructure of maternities, including modern medical equipment and contraceptives supplies.

In order to end preventable maternal mortality, there is a need to accelerate progress on:

- 1 improving the **health financing system** that is better fit to address the needs of those who are in need to be supported. (*Universal access to reproductive health services, SDG target 3.7*);
- 2 further strengthening the capacity of institutions in compliance with clinical protocols on **emergency obstetric care** services;
- 3 **decreasing the anemia rate** among women of reproductive age;
- 4 taking proactive preventive measures to continue decreasing the **adolescent birth rate** through formal and informal **reproductive health education** in schools and communities,
- 5 improving access of at high at-risk women to **modern contraceptives**;
- 6 strengthening institutional capacity in preparedness of health care system to **prevent the spread of infectious diseases** and raising awareness of women on self-protective measures.

Partners

Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan, the Turkmenistan Scientific-Clinical Center of Oncology, the National Reproductive Health Center, UN agencies (World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNDP), private sector, women, men and young people, women with disabilities, parliamentary regional networks, the Paralympics Committee, and other relevant stakeholders.



Sources:

1. United Nations Population Fund (2019). Costing the Three Transformative Results. New York, New York.
2. Trends in maternal mortality 2000 to 2017: estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019.



United Nations Population Fund in Turkmenistan

**Policy Brief | RIGHTS AND CHOICES FOR ALL
MATERNAL HEALTH**

**Delivering a world where
Every pregnancy is wanted
Every childbirth is safe and
Every young person's potential is fulfilled.**

Contact us:

**UN Building, Archabil, 21
Ashgabat, Turkmenistan**

**<http://turkmenistan.unfpa.org>
www.facebook.com/unfpatkm
www.instagram.com/unfpa_turkmenistan
imo: +99362 833158
www.yashlyk.info**

UNFPA: Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.