

19 May 2011 - International child-rights NGO Save the Children has recently released its 2011 'State of the World's Mothers' annual report analyzing 164 countries. Health, education and economic conditions were the main three categories against which the countries were assessed.

According to the report, Norway is the best place in the world for children and mothers to live. Afghanistan, with the worst conditions and the lack of opportunities, ranks last. In Norway virtually every birth is attended by skilled health personnel, while in Afghanistan professional care is provided to only 14 percent of women giving birth. An average Norwegian woman has received 18 years of formal/institutionalized education and is likely to live to be 83 years old. On the other side of the spectrum, in Afghanistan, a typical Afghan woman has less than 5 years of education and will die before reaching 45 years of age.

The report divides countries into the 'more developed' (43 states) and the 'less developed' ones (121 states). The contrast between the two groups turned out to be striking. Under-5 mortality rates illustrate it best. In the 'more developed' countries mortality rates do not go below 17 deaths/1000 births (Moldova performing worst in the group), while in the 'less developed' group Afghanistan, Congo, Mali, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau come close to 200 deaths/1000 births; Chad with shameful 209 death/1000 births leads in the group.

The conditions are particularly grim for mothers and their children living in the bottom ten countries, eight of which are located in Sub-Saharan Africa (Central African Republic, Sudan, Mali, Eritrea, DR Congo, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Niger). The remaining two are Afghanistan and Yemen. On average, in these countries:

- One woman in thirty will die from pregnancy-related causes
- One out of six children will not live to be five
- Nearly 50% of the population lacks access to safe water
- One child out of seven is not enrolled in primary school
- Four girls for every five boys are enrolled in primary school
- One in three children suffers from malnutrition

European countries – Norway, Australia, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France – along with New Zealand and Australia occupy the top positions. Mothers in these countries are likely to live over 80 years, child mortality is not higher than 6

death/1000 births and the education period lasts for an average women not less than 16 years for an average woman.

Worth noting is the progress made by the most populated country in the world - China. China has witnessed decline in child mortality rates from 21 to 19 deaths/1000 births. Regrettably, the second most-populated, country has not progressed in terms of child mortality rates. The mortality rates remain at the level of 48 deaths/1000 births.

John Agoglia, contributor to the report, points to the investment as the key element for the improvement:.. *'Investments in health and education can lead to the long-term transformation of impoverished countries. Just look at South Korea, which in 1953 looked a lot like Afghanistan does now'* he notes. *'It is clear these investments change lives and communities to the benefit of us all.'* he adds. Malawi's case proves, however, that positive change can be achieved without huge sums of money. Bingu Wa Muthakira, the president of the Republic of Malawi, explains that even low income country like Malawi is capable of making progress. *'Malawi has learned how to make the most of what we have by focusing on interventions that make the greatest impact while tackling underlying conditions such as malnutrition which continue to cripple the healthy development of children'* says the president.

The full 2011 [State of the World's Mothers](http://www.savethechildren.org/world-mothers) report can be found at www.savethechildren.org/world-mothers.

Every year, 50 million women in the developing world give birth with no professional help and 8.8 million children and newborns die from easily preventable or treatable causes. The current shortage of 4.3 million health workers remains a significant barrier to delivering interventions which can prevent maternal, newborn and child deaths.