

The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013



UNITED NATIONS

Addendum

Goal 4

Reduce child mortality

Quick facts

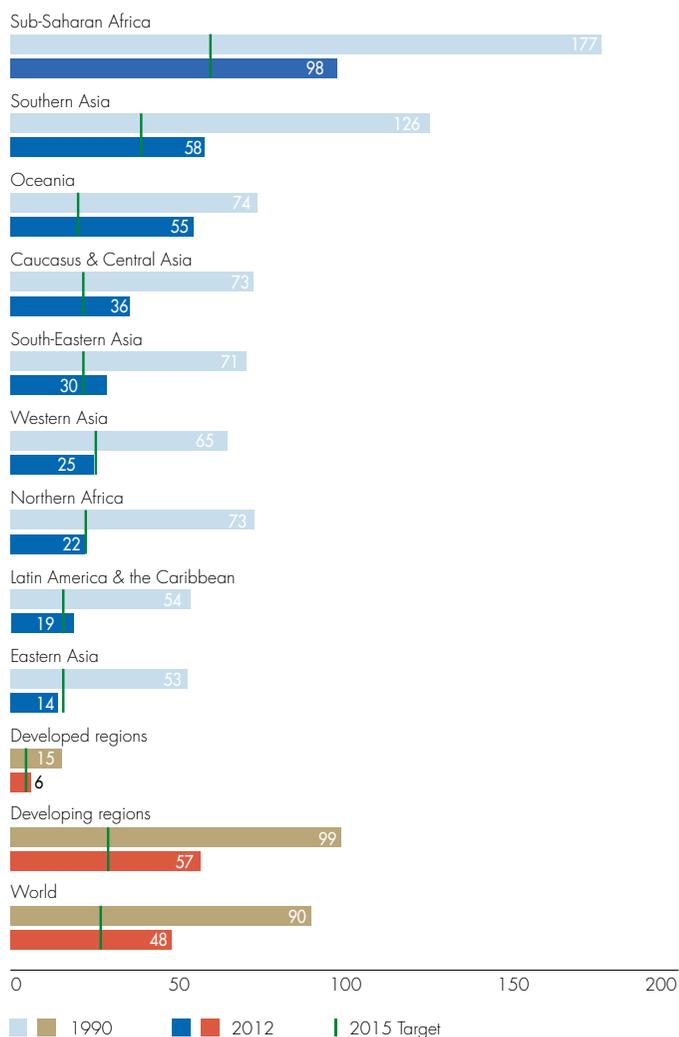
- ▶ Since 1990, the child mortality rate has dropped by 47 per cent; 17,000 fewer children are dying each day.
- ▶ Still, 6.6 million children under age five died in 2012—mostly from preventable diseases.
- ▶ In sub-Saharan Africa, one in ten children die before age five, more than 15 times the average for developed regions.

TARGET 4.A

Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate

Reducing child mortality remains unfinished business despite accelerated progress

Under-five mortality rate, 1990 and 2012 (Deaths per 1,000 live births)



The latest estimates of under-five mortality¹ show that under-five mortality declined by 47 per cent globally, from 90 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 48 in 2012. As a result, the total number of under-five deaths in the world has fallen from 12.6 million in 1990 to 6.6 million in 2012. About 17,000 fewer children died every day in 2012 than in 1990.

All regions, except Sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania, have reduced the under-five mortality rate by more than half since 1990. Eastern Asia, with a reduction of 74 per cent, and Northern Africa, 69 per cent, have already reduced the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds since 1990—the required reduction to achieve MDG 4. Latin America and the Caribbean, with a reduction of 65 per cent, and Western Asia, 62 per cent, are also on track to meet the MDG 4 target.

The average annual rate of reduction in under-five mortality has accelerated globally—from 1.2 per cent a year over 1990–1995 to 3.9 per cent over 2005–2012. However, the rate of decline remains insufficient to reach MDG 4, particularly in Oceania, Sub-Saharan Africa, Caucasus and Central Asia, and Southern Asia.

More than eighty per cent of under-five deaths happen in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia.

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to confront significant challenges, as the region with the highest child mortality rates in the world—98 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2012. All 16 countries with an under-five mortality rate above 100 deaths per 1,000 live births are in sub-Saharan Africa. With a reduction of only 45 per cent since 1990 in this region, progress has been slower than any other region except Oceania. As the rest of the world reduces child mortality, under-five deaths are becoming ever-more concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa—3.2 million deaths (nearly half the global under-five deaths) occurred in this region in 2012.

Southern Asia also continues to have both a high rate of under-five mortality (58 deaths per 1,000 live births) and a large number of total deaths, at 2.1 million.

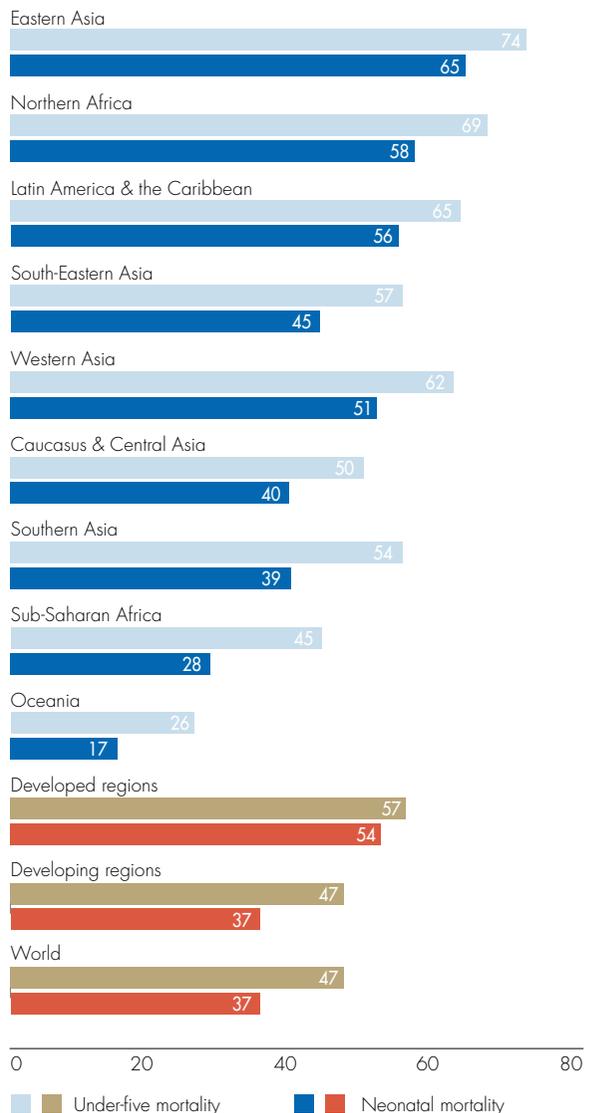
Child survival efforts must increasingly focus on newborns—who account for a growing share of child deaths

While the reduction in under-five mortality has been significant, progress in reducing deaths that occur within the first month of

life (the neonatal period) has been slower. As a result, the share of neonatal deaths among under-five mortality worldwide has increased from 37 per cent in 1990 to 44 per cent in 2012.

There is a consistent pattern of faster decline in the under-five mortality rate compared with the neonatal mortality rate across all regions. In five developing regions more than half of under-five deaths took place in the neonatal period in 2012. Eastern Asia, for instance, has moved so quickly in cutting under-five mortality rates overall, that neonatal deaths constituted a 60 per cent share in 2012. The other four regions are Northern Africa, Southern Asia, Western Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Sub-Saharan Africa—where about a third of under-five deaths occurred during the neonatal period—has the highest neonatal mortality rate (32 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2012) and accounts for 38 per cent of global neonatal deaths. Together with Oceania, the region has recorded the least improvement over the last two decades.

Decline in under-five and neonatal mortality rates, 1990–2012 (Percentage)



¹ The latest estimates on child mortality were released on September 12, 2013 by the United Nations Interagency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (IGME) and are presented in Levels and Trends in Child Mortality – Report 2013, available at http://www.childmortality.org/files_v14/download/UNICEF%202013%20IGME%20child%20mortality%20Report_Final.pdf. The underlying data are available at www.childmortality.org.