

## MEDIA QUERY

### Maternal Mortality in South Africa past 20,10 & 5 years (DHIS & MaMMas Data)

#### Questions

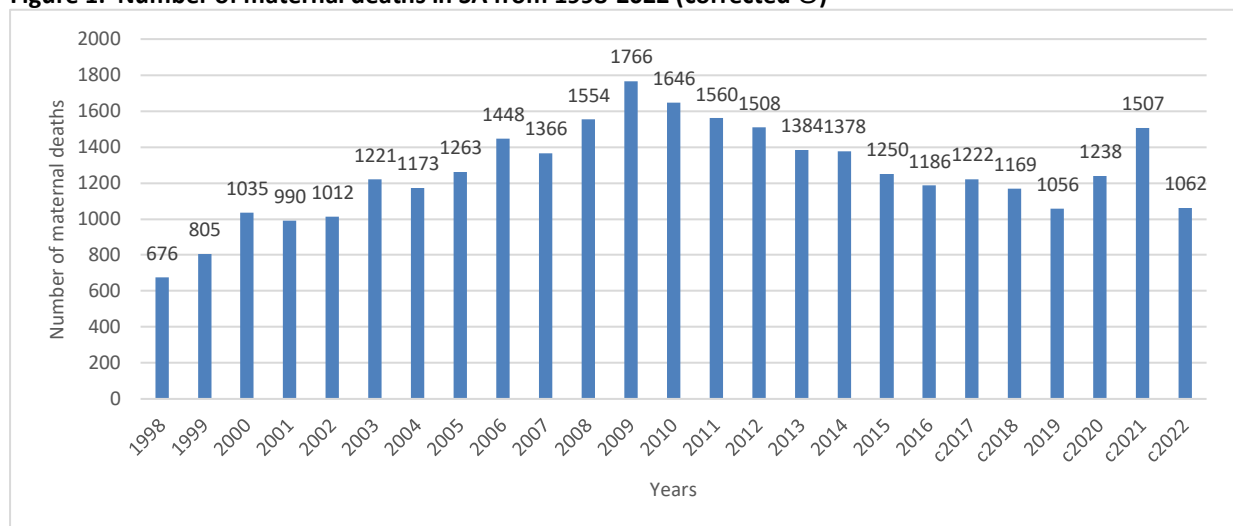
1. What the NDoH's latest stats are on maternal mortality. Ideally they should give us stats that cover several years (ideally the last 20).
2. What the NDoH's key policy documents are in relation to maternal mortality and whether they have any current or new plans that we should be aware of?
3. How the NDoH would respond to the suggestion that not all HCWs are sufficiently aware of monitoring for and preventing risk factors for maternal mortality.

#### REPLY:

**Question 1: What is the NDoH's latest stats are on maternal mortality. Ideally they should give us stats that cover several years (ideally the last 20).**

#### Number of maternal deaths

**Figure 1: Number of maternal deaths in SA from 1998-2022 (corrected ©)**



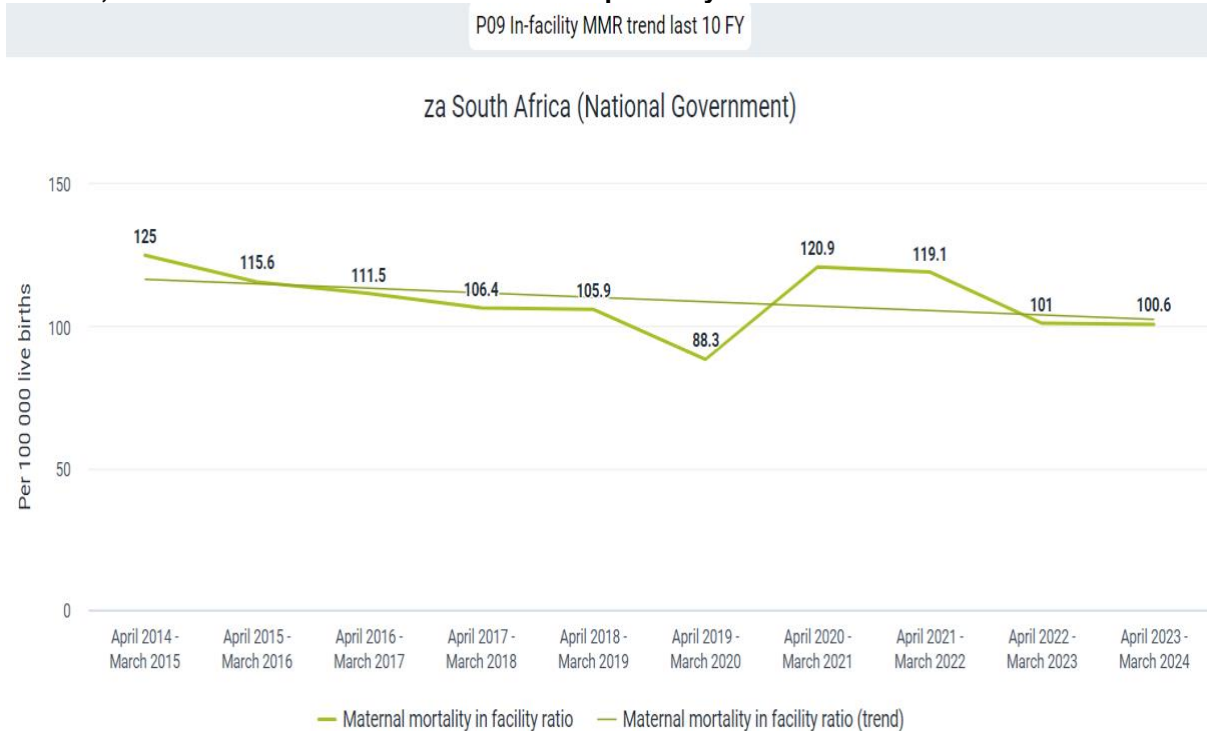
Source: Saving Mothers Report 2020-2022

- The graph shows the number of maternal deaths from 1998 to 2022.
- There is a noticeable increase in maternal deaths starting from the early 2000s, peaking around 2009. This was during the peak of the HIV pandemic prior to roll-out of ART.
- After 2012, there is a general decline in maternal deaths, with some fluctuations. This was as a result of strengthening of the PMTCT programme for pregnant women.
- The positive gains of the declining maternal mortality were disrupted by emergence of COVID-19 pandemic, hence the rise in 2020.
- It is encouraging that by 2022, post-COVID there is a gradual decline of the number of maternal deaths which has decreased to 1062.

## Maternal Mortality Ratio

- The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) aims to reduce the global MMR to below 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030<sup>1</sup>.

**Figure 2: DHIS, Maternal death rates and trend in the past 10 years 2014-2024**



Source: DHIS, 11 Sept. 2024 **Maternal mortality ratio** in facilities in South Africa from April 2014 to March 2024.

- The global maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in 2020 was 223 per 100,000 live births<sup>1</sup>. Globally, the highest MMRs are found in low-income countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where the MMR was 545 per 100,000 live births in 2020<sup>2</sup>.
- In comparison, South Africa's maternal mortality ratio (MMR) has fluctuated between 88.3 and 140 per 100,000 live births in April 2014 to March 2024 showing a decreasing trend, with the latest figure being around 100.6 per 100,000 live births for 2023/24.

The graphs below and tables indicates the provincial maternal mortality as well as the table showing the leading causes of maternal deaths

**Question 2: What the NDoH's key policy documents are in relation to maternal mortality and whether they have any current or new plans that we should be aware of?**

Key policy documents include:

1. The CARMMA Strategy from 2012

2. The strengthening of ESMOE Programme since 2012 and refresher modules in 2016
3. The PMTCT 2016 Guidelines with improved HIV testing programs and ART initiation for all pregnant women
4. The Introduction of Basic Antenatal Care Plus (BANC Plus) programme in 2017.
5. The updated Maternity Care Guidelines in 2016
6. The safe Caesarean Section Programme which mandates the accreditation of facilities especially Regional hospitals as safe Caesarean Section sites
7. The updated Management of Hypertension disorders of pregnancy Guidelines 2019
8. The introduction of the use of Non-pneumatic Anti-shock garments (NASG) for post-partum haemorrhage in 2018
9. The South African Maternal Perinatal and Neonatal Health Policy which was signed off in 2021
10. The strengthening of viral load monitoring and the switching of ART regimen' for pregnant women.

**Question 3: How the NDoH would respond to the suggestion that not all HCWs are sufficiently aware of monitoring for and preventing risk factors for maternal mortality**

- The following table indicates the causes of maternal deaths for 2000 through 2002 (total in the last column)

<b>Medical and surgical disorders</b>	<b>183 (15.3)</b>	<b>190 (12.8)</b>	<b>(140 (14.4)</b>	<b>513 (14.0)</b>
<b>Non-pregnancy-related infections*</b>	<b>322** (27)</b>	<b>561 (37.7)***</b>	<b>180(18.6)****</b>	<b>1063 (29.1)</b>
Ectopic pregnancy	36 (3)	33 (2.2)	34 (3.5)	103 (2.8)
Miscarriage	49 (4.1)	54 (3.6)	63 (6.5)	166 (4.5)
<b>Pregnancy-related sepsis</b>	<b>63 (5.3)</b>	<b>68 (4.6)</b>	<b>56 (5.8)</b>	<b>187 (5.1)</b>
<b>Obstetric haemorrhage</b>	<b>200 (16.7)</b>	<b>237 (15.9)</b>	<b>162 (16.7)</b>	<b>599 (16.4)</b>
<b>Hypertensive disorders of pregnancy</b>	<b>185 (15.5)</b>	<b>188 (12.6)</b>	<b>166 (17.1)</b>	<b>539 (14.7)</b>
Anaesthetic complications	21 (1.8)	17 (1.1)	39 (4.0)	77 (2.1)
Adverse drug reactions	13 (1.1)	6 (0.4)	7 (0.7)	26 (0.7)
Embolism	33 (2.8)	43 (2.9)	40 (4.1)	116 (3.1)
Acute collapse - cause unknown	15 (1.3)	36 (2.4)	21 (2.2)	72 (2)
Miscellaneous	4 (0.3)	3 (0.2)	8 (0.8)	15 (0.4)
Unknown	73 (6.1)	53 (3.6)	53 (5.5)	179 (4.9)

\*Includes Covid 19 deaths \*\*Includes 124 Covid 19 deaths in 2020

\*\*\*Includes 369 deaths in 2021 \*\*\*\* Includes 12 Covid 19 deaths in 2022

Source: Saving Mothers Report ,2020-2022

- The five leading causes as follows:
  - non-pregnancy related infections related to HIV infections,
  - obstetric haemorrhage
  - hypertensive disorders of pregnancy,
  - puerperal sepsis and
  - medical and surgical conditions.
- Whilst poor health care workers knowledge and skills contribute towards maternal deaths, many other factors are at play.

- Non Pregnancy-related infections (NPRI) are the leading cause of deaths over the past years – this primarily late presentation and/or non-adherence to ART (with associated lack of viral suppression).
- Non-attendance of Antenatal care, delays in seeking health by patients and health systems challenges of transportation issues also lead to delay in diagnosis and care. Of the 3673 maternal deaths in the past triennium, 812 mothers had not attended ANC and ANC attendance was not known in an additional 277 cases.

## **NDoH ACTIONS AND PLANS FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS KNOWLEDGE**

- The NDoH Maternity Care guidelines have recently been updated by a group of experts and specialists and were launched online in February 2024 via the Department’s Knowledge Hub platform. The guidelines provide updates on the management of some of the leading causes of maternal deaths.
  - Plans are well underway to create online training modules for health care workers.
  - The guidelines will again be printed for the hard-to-reach areas which lack connectivity to network for the online
- All maternity facilities are expected to ensure that health care workers are trained on the Emergency Steps in Managing Obstetric Emergencies (ESMOE) including and that regular fire drills are conducted. This is especially so at primary care level as the rarity of conditions makes doing emergency drills essential to maintain skills.

## **RESOURCES**

- (1) Maternal mortality rates and statistics - UNICEF DATA.  
<https://data.unicef.org/topic/maternal-health/maternal-mortality/>.
- (2) A woman dies every two minutes due to pregnancy or childbirth: UN agencies.  
<https://www.who.int/news/item/23-02-2023-a-woman-dies-every-two-minutes-due-to-pregnancy-or-childbirth--un-agencies>.
- (3) Analytical Fact Sheet - World Health Organization.  
[https://files.aho.afro.who.int/afahobckpcontainer/production/files/iAHO\\_Maternal\\_Mortality\\_Regional\\_Factsheet.pdf](https://files.aho.afro.who.int/afahobckpcontainer/production/files/iAHO_Maternal_Mortality_Regional_Factsheet.pdf).
- (4) Key Findings on Maternal Mortality for 2022 - Department of Health.  
<https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Fact-sheet-Saving-Mothers-2022.pdf>.
- (5) Maternal mortality ratio (modeled estimate, per 100,000 live births ....  
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.MMRT?locations=ZA>.
- (6) Saving Mothers 2017-2019 8th Report on confidential enquiries into ....  
[https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/system/files/2024-02/Executive%20%20Report%20%202020-2022%20Presentation%20Dr%20Sylvia%20Cebekulu\\_.pdf](https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/system/files/2024-02/Executive%20%20Report%20%202020-2022%20Presentation%20Dr%20Sylvia%20Cebekulu_.pdf).
- (7) Number of maternal deaths - South Africa | Data - World Bank Data.  
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.MMR.DTHS?locations=ZA>.

- (8) Lack of Access to Maternal Healthcare in Sub-Saharan Africa.  
<https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/lack-of-access-to-maternal-healthcare-in-sub-saharan-africa>.
- (9) <https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Saving-Mothers-2017-2019-Technical-Report-FINAL-2-1.pdf>