# Global maternal deaths rise amid funding cuts



A recent report from the World Health Organisation (WHO) highlights alarming statistics regarding maternal deaths worldwide, revealing that a woman dies every two minutes due to inadequacies in maternal healthcare systems. The report indicated that in 2023 alone, there were 260,000 maternal deaths globally, amounting to 712 women daily or 30 every hour, with a significant concentration of these deaths occurring in sub-Saharan Africa.

At a press conference, Dr Bruce Aylward, assistant director general of universal health coverage at the WHO, expressed concerns over recent reductions in international aid. He stated, “The funding cuts risk not only that progress, but we could have a shift backwards,” emphasising how these cuts have started to affect access to critical healthcare resources, including lifesaving supplies and medicines. “Countries are already laying off staff, or not hiring, or they’re slowing down that healthworker spend,” he further noted, highlighting the immediate impact of funding shortfalls.

Approximately 60 countries depend on US-funded maternal care and family planning services, particularly in Africa and South Asia. Reports suggest that the cessation of USAID contracts has resulted in financial hardships for midwives, causing disruptions in maternal care services.

In addition to the US cuts, the UK government has also announced significant reductions in its international aid budget, with plans to decrease aid spending from 0.5 per cent of national income to 0.3 per cent by 2027. This reduction could amount to a loss of around £6 billion, as stated by Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer. Labour MP Sarah Champion, chair of the International Development Committee, remarked on the issue's severity, highlighting that “the cuts to aid will hit women’s health hard and destroy all the hard-won progress around the world.”

The WHO's figures underscore stark disparities in maternal mortality risks between regions. In west Africa, one in 36 girls aged 15 faces the risk of maternal death, starkly contrasting with one in 16,000 in southern Europe. Despite a reported 40 per cent decline in global maternal mortality rates since 2000, the report noted that many regions are witnessing stagnation or decline in progress.

Dr Pascale Allotey, director of the Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health at the WHO, cautioned that complacency in tackling maternal health issues can lead to dire consequences, stating, “When women die because of where they live, what they earn, or what rights are denied, it is indefensible, and it is preventable.” The report identified Nigeria, India, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Pakistan as countries with the highest maternal death rates; Nigeria alone accounted for one-third of all maternal deaths worldwide.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) also expressed concerns regarding the implications of funding cuts, particularly from the US. Julia Bunting, programme director for UNFPA, noted, “While there has been progress in reducing maternal deaths globally, it is by no means fast enough”. Monica Ferro, director of UNFPA’s London office, highlighted the dangers posed by the combination of funding cuts and rising conflicts and climate change impacts, explaining that these factors restrict access to essential care and exacerbate gender-based violence.

In response to these concerns, a spokesperson from the Foreign Office asserted the UK's commitment to defending and promoting sexual and reproductive health rights, acknowledging the challenges posed by the need to protect national security and the resultant aid spending cuts. Similarly, a US state department spokesperson asserted that the US government continues to provide crucial support to maternal and child healthcare services in lower-income countries, where the majority of maternal deaths occur.

These developments signal a critical juncture in global maternal health, as organisations and experts warn of the potential reversal of progress made over the past two decades. The legacy of funding cuts, alongside ongoing humanitarian crises, could significantly jeopardise the gains achieved in ensuring safer childbirth across the globe.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.who.int/news/item/07-04-2025-aid-cuts-threaten-fragile-progress-in-ending-maternal-deaths-un-agencies-warn> - This URL supports the WHO report highlighting alarming statistics on maternal deaths worldwide, emphasizing the impact of aid cuts on maternal healthcare systems, and discusses the global decline in maternal mortality rates since 2000.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source article but does not directly provide corroborating evidence; it's the original text discussing global maternal health issues.
* <https://www.unfpa.org/> - While not specific, the UNFPA's general resources support concerns regarding maternal health and the impacts of funding cuts, reflecting statements from UNFPA representatives in the article.
* <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases> - USAID's official website provides updates on their maternal health programs and could offer context on the impact of contract cessations mentioned in the article.
* <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-and-a/detail/maternal-mortality> - This WHO Q&A page offers general insights into maternal mortality, aligning with the WHO's warnings about disparities in maternal health care across different regions.