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Committee: Youth Assembly

Issue: Action paper on maternal and child health

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INTRODUCTION

In our days, there have been a numerous of efforts both from a governmental level and an individual one to ensure that the basic goods and services and the social rights of all human beings irrespective of their origin, sex, religion etc., are covered. Despite this claim unfortunately there are some issues like health that seem to be kind of overlooked or are taken for granted.

Especially when we are referring to maternal and child health, it is important to mention that there are a lot of risks linked to pregnancy and child birth that lead to major problems to the hereafter of both the child itself but also the mother. In a research, published by the WHO (World Health Organization) in 2015, it is estimated that over eight hundred women



die daily, due to complications that may arise during the period of pregnancy such as infections, STD's, genetic condition, tobacco, alcohol and substance use etc. Unfortunately, the conditions of the health of the mother are possible to affect the health of the newborn too. A survey carried out by the United Nation's Fund (UNICEF), 20% of diseases in children under 5 years old related to problems in maternal health or to the quality and quantity of antenatal and postnatal care.

Additionally, with mothers strongly influencing the eating habits of the rest of the family, including children, focus must be placed on their good health. Based on a survey conducted by WHO, mothers are the main source which provides care, such as nutrition, oral health and psychological health. Furthermore, the results of

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another research by Kantar Health in 2015, indicate that the majority of decisions concerning health are made by women. Thus, the survey showed that 94% of women make their own decision about their healthcare and 59% make healthcare decisions about other members of her family.

DEFINITION OF KEY WORDS

Basic Goods and Services

It is a term which was coined by the International Labor Organization (ILO) and other agencies of the United Nations to clearly state the basic commodities like food, shelter, sanitation-health, education etc., which are essential for a minimum standard of life.

Social Rights

According to the UNHRC (the United Nations Refugee Agency), examples of such rights are adequate food, education, health, housing, security etc.

STD's

The initials STD stand for Sexually Transmitted Infections, encompassing all possible infections transmitted through sexual encounter.

Oral Health

Based on WHO, oral health is “ a state of being free from mouth and facial pain, oral and throat cancer, oral infection and sores, periodontal (gum) disease, tooth decay, tooth loss, and other diseases and disorders that limit an individual's capacity in biting, chewing, smiling, speaking, and psychosocial wellbeing”.*¹

Phycological Health

¹ http://www.who.int/oral_health/en/

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Psychological health is “ our ability to think, feel and behave in a manner that enables us to perform effectively in our work environments, our personal lives, and in society at large”.²

Poverty

Poverty is the condition where a person is in an economic situation where he/she doesn't have enough funds to cover the basic needs such as food, shelter, health etc.

Inequality

Inequality in general is the unfair condition where a person has more opportunities and goods, like money, than another.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity, is when a person hasn't consistent access to enough food for a healthy life.

Undernutrition

Undernutrition is either the lack of food or the inability of the body to absorb it or change it.

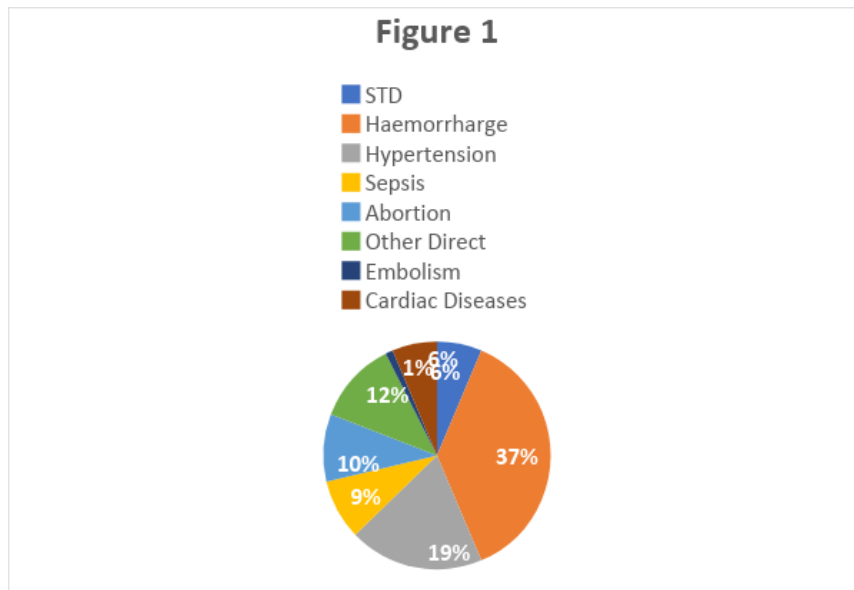
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Causes of maternal deaths

The term “maternal health” refers to the death of a woman, either during pregnancy or during the 42 days of termination of pregnancy, due to causes that may harsh or terminate the pregnancy. A survey conducted by WHO showed that the leading causes of mortality are hemorrhage (“an escape of blood from a ruptured blood vessel”³) and hypertension (high blood pressure). Moreover, other causes of maternal deaths are the STD's such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and cardiac diseases.

²https://www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/assets/pdfs/What_is_Psychological_Health_and_Safety.pdf

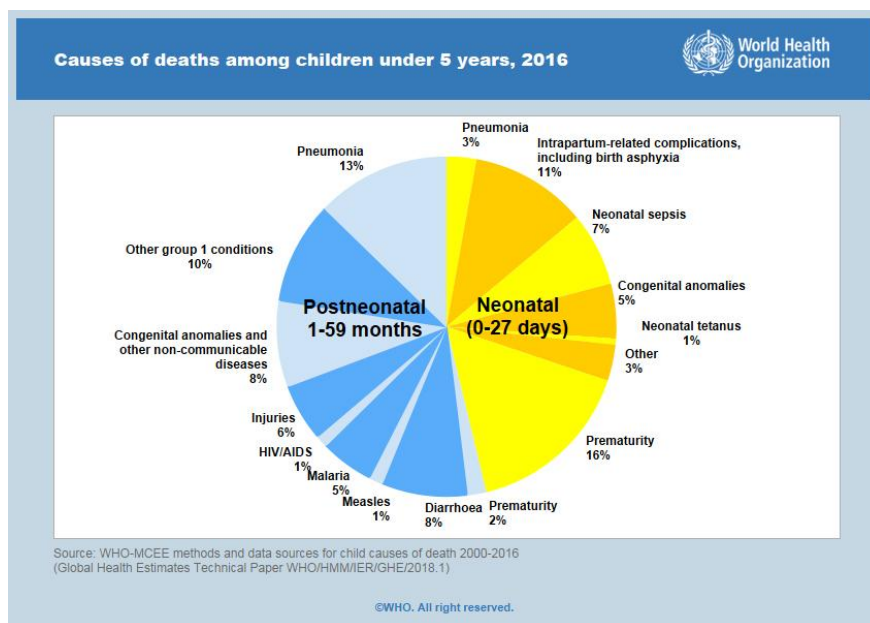
³ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/haemorrhage>



The figure indicates the results of the survey of WHO

Causes of child deaths

In 2016, 46% of children deaths related to children during the neonatal period. According to a research by Global Health Observatory (GHO), the leading causes of child mortality, for children under 5 years old, were birth complications, respiratory infections, innate anomalies, pneumonia and diarrhea.



This figure depicts the causes of death for children deaths, under 5 years old.

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External factors that affect maternal health

Some of the basic factors which influence the pregnancy and the childbirth are the predetermined health status, the age, inadequate health care facilities, economic status, environmental and social factors such as access to healthcare, education, employment, social support etc.

Features that affect child health

Within the very young years of the child (usually until 5 years old), there is high probability that children's health problems are linked to their mother's health. Thus, the intellectual and physical development of infants and children are affected by the nutrition and general behavior of their mother during the pregnancy and the early childhood.

Social determinants of maternal and child health

In accordance with the WHO Commission, the social determinants "are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, including the health system. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels, which are themselves influenced by policy choices. The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities—the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries." ⁴

Surprisingly as it may seem, poverty and inequality, are associated to many maternal and child deaths. A lot of researches display that the risk of mortality in LEDC households, is almost the double, than a wealthier one.

Poverty significantly influences the health of both the mother and the child through a lot of mechanisms. Firstly, diets which do not include foods high in protein and carbohydrate and or other useful nutrients and food insecurity, boost the risk for a possible sickness and under nutrition. Environmental conditions, as it has been previously mentioned, may also contribute to incompetent housing water and

⁴ <file:///C:/Users/User/Desktop/who.pdf>

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sanitation. Finally, the family's economic situation may automatically eliminate the access to information and health care services.



MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

CHINA

The government of China having discovered the high ratio of maternal and child deaths, has reformed the health system by the following:

- Raise public awareness for this major issue
- Program to control and prevent sexual transmitted infections like HIV/AIDS, syphilis and hepatitis B
- Improvement of health facilities especially in the rural areas

GLOBAL NUTRITION

The Global Nutrition for Growth Compact is an action which aim is to reduce the stability in physical development and eliminate the inadequacy of nutrients in women and children. It was approved in 2013 by more than 40 countries and it commits them to follow this plan until 2020.

It has managed to:

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- Save 1,7million children under 5 years old by increasing and promoting breastfeeding
- Ensure that 500 million pregnant women and children under two are been provided with diets wealthy in nutrients
- It has provided treatments at almost 1.5 million children who were suffering from severe malnutrition

USA

The us seems to have history in the global MCH efforts as it deals and is involves with them for the last 50 years. The first effort was made in 1960 and was focused on researches for the survival of children, including a pioneering research which was conducted by the us military the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). A past action was promoting the disposition of food aid with vitamin A, as its lack can cause even blindness and the efforts to deal with malaria. In 1985 the Congress of the US provides 85 million dollars for child and mothers survival activities. After 2005 The Congress has increased its funding and the US government has adopted a new program about eliminations of maternal and child health.

UNICEF

At the global level, UNICEF is a co-chair of the “Every New-born Partnership” and a key member of the “Partnership for Maternal New-born and Child Health” . UNICEF is collaborating with other UN agencies through the H6 Partnership (UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, World Bank, UNAIDS and UN Women), the Global Financing Facility (World Bank), Safe Motherhood (UNFPA) and the Making Pregnancy Safer Initiative (WHO), rendering UNICEF’s efforts UNICEF for the creation of a safe environment for every mother and child very important.

Additionally, UNICEF is working closely with governments all around the world to ensure the quality of children and mothers in hospitals and in general in the community. UNICEF is also a supporter of the creation of specialized programs based on models, which include CHW’s (Community health workers) and groups,

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while improving health facilities. Different actions are made based on the needs of each country.

WHO (WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION)

WHO is a key organization in regards to maternal and child health, with several campaigns to ensure that the health of every mother and newborn are/ will be protected. More specifically, it created the "Quality of Care Network" with the main goal to provide every woman and child quality healthcare during the pregnancy period and the postnatal one. Through its learning platform, it gathers experts on health issues to raise awareness across all countries, share experiences and shape ideas. As part of this goal, The Quality Care Network, organizes some seminars in the internet for specific topics to educate people across all around the world of the importance of the improvement of health care system, as well as ways to improve it both in governmental and individual level.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1985	First research on maternal mortality, published by WHO
2000	The Millennium Development goals are launched
2005	The Partnership for maternal, newborn and child health is created by WHO
2010	First Global Maternal Health Conference
2013	Second Global Maternal Health Conference

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

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Despite the issue not being fully resolved, the UN has made an enormous effort by creating new programs and organs, in order to help eradicate any problems relating to maternal and child health.

One of these, is the Millennium Development Goals. The MDGs is an agreement between all the 193 members of the United Nations. Within its provisions, the Treaty calls on all member states to significantly attempt to achieve the 8 goals of this agreement, which are mainly focused on issues such as hunger, poverty, diseases, health, sex discrimination etc. The 4th goal calls for reducing child mortality and the 5th one for improving maternal health.

Although this deal has proven to be of paramount importance, with child and maternal mortality rates decreasing, one more UN body has been created to enhance progress towards the 4th and 5th goal of the MDGs, namely the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH). More specifically the aim of this partnership was:

- 1) To reduce the 1990's rate of mortality by two thirds for children under-five years' old
- 2) To reduce the maternal mortality rate between 1990 and 2015 by three - quarters.

Furthermore, there was created another UN organ named Countdown to 2015-Tracking Progress in Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. This was a program devoted to gather and analyses data from more than 60 countries, which accounts for more than 95% of maternal and child deaths, so that there can be a holistic view of the progress of the MDGs, especially the 4th and 5th.

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PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Taking into consideration that this problem is one of the most important and complex issues facing the world today, there have been made a numerous of significant attempts to avoid and reduce the high ration of maternal and child mortality.

One of the most fundamental attempts is the application of the Human Rights Law for the right to live, with the duty to protect the life of the child and women during pregnancy often incorporated within Law. That is why, the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has decided to recognize maternal and as a consequence child mortality as a violation of the human rights to life. Moreover, The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Art. 6(1), states, “Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.” As a consequence of all the above, a lot of countries and especially the less economically developed ones and a lot of individuals have motivated and taking actions to help as much as possible to decrease the ratio of mortality.

A lot of programs/agencies have also offered their services to this aim, such as the USAID (United States Agency For International Development). USAID’s aim is to save the lives of women and children regardless their origin, social status etc. In the past 10 years, they have saved more than 5 million children and 20.000 women from a certain demise.

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In general, the last years we can definitely say that a lot of people all around the world are more eager to help with this problem and to be further informed about it. We see that everyday more and more people are involved by either doing voluntary work as individuals or becoming part of local or bigger organizations, like the Global Organization for Maternal and Child health (Go-MCH), the "ARROW" others, which try to help the overall situation.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

In order to tackle this crucial issue, which exists for a lot of years now and which will continue existing and creating problems not only to the present generation but also for the generations which are to follow, we should definitely take into consideration all possible solutions and acts, with the long-lasting aim to make the world a better place.

Thus, we should definitely mention that raising public awareness is one of the most important solutions for this issue. More specifically, there are many NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and local programs, which can come into contact and collaborate with local government, creating campaigns with both volunteers along with some experts, advertisements through the TV, radio, the Internet etc., posters and leaflets.

Furthermore, it would be of vital importance to create a center, where all pregnant women who are struggling with the pregnancy or they believe that they will not be able to deal with all the expenses of the birth have access, so that experts (defined by the UN) could help them solve any problem they might have. That way we will reduce the percentages of women who either do an unhealthy abortion or give birth to unhealthy and unqualified babies.

Moreover, skilled and qualified birth attendants by the government should be placed to centers in remote areas.

It would also be effective if the health care system was strengthened and health centers and clinics had surgical facilities to deal with complications. More generally, taking into account the significant impact of external and social factors on

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maternal and child health, it is important that steps are taken to provide solutions for mothers at a disadvantage, including poverty, lack of proper nutrition etc.

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