

## **WHO launches maternal health campaign program aimed at reducing deaths from childbirth**

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Reuters

NAIROBI - The World Health Organization launched a training campaign on Wednesday to help reduce the number of maternal deaths during childbirth in developing countries.

The WHO estimates one woman in a developing country dies while giving birth every minute of the day.

Women in poor countries have a 1-in-16 chance of dying in childbirth, compared to a 1-in-2,800 chance for women in wealthier countries, the United Nations health agency said.

Sub-Saharan Africa and central south Asia suffer the worst rates of maternal death. Most are caused by bleeding, infection, obstructed labor and unsafe abortions.

The campaign's launch coincided with the release of a new manual which aims to teach health providers effective methods to prevent childbirth deaths in even the poorest conditions, and how to gather information to improve statistics on such deaths.

"It is time for all of us to turn technical knowledge into action to save the lives of the women who give life," said one of the authors, Dr. Luc de Bernis.

The WHO estimates maternal deaths are under-reported by as much as 50 percent. Sixty-two countries have no maternal mortality data at all.

"We have an invisible epidemic," Joy Phumaphi, the WHO's assistant director-general for family and community health, said in a statement.

The campaign involves more than a dozen international and regional agencies and will focus on 20 high-priority countries.

The WHO said \$10 million more was required to fund the initiative.

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