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*Taking Measures to Combat Child
Mortality in Central Africa*

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RESEARCH REPORT



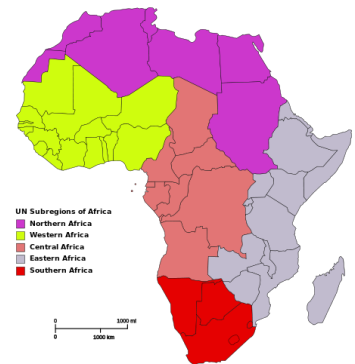
Forum: Advisory Panel on the Question of Central Africa (APQCA)

Issue: Taking Measures to Combat Child Mortality in Central Africa

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Introduction

Central Africa, is a subregion defined by the United Nations that consists of the following countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and São Tomé and Príncipe. It is estimated that half of the 10 million children (aged 0-5), who die every year in the world are in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), which includes the Central, Southern and Eastern African sub-regions. For the purpose of this forum we will be only focusing on Central Africa. To put this statistic into perspective, this accumulates to approximately 1000 child deaths per hour. Many reasons are attributed to the high child mortality rate in central Africa, but according to researchers amongst these root causes is the lack of access to basic sanitation due to the lack of clean water sources; around 1.5 million children die from consuming dangerous and unsafe water.



In order to reduce infant mortality rates across the world, health practitioners, governments, and non-governmental organizations have worked to create institutions, programs, and policies to generate better health outcomes. Current efforts focus on development of human resources, strengthening health information systems, health services delivery, etc. Improvements in such areas aim to increase regional health systems and aid in efforts to reduce mortality rates. The central African nations (highlighted in salmon in the figure above) have done some efforts to curb the high rates of child mortality, but to no avail.

Many Central African countries are ranked top 10, with Chad ranked 3rd with 113.8 deaths per 1000 births, in child mortality rates (2019), followed by the Central African Republic; with 110.1 deaths per 1000 births. Rankings here, however, do not matter, as the situation's graveness is severe. It is a duty of member states to act cohesively and combat child mortality, while also thinking the big picture and trying to combat social polarization.

Definition of Key Terms

Child Mortality: Child mortality is the mortality of children aged 0-5. The mortality rate generally refers to the number of deaths per 1000 given births per country.

Life expectancy: Life expectancy refers to the number of years that a person can be expected to live; this can change from geographical region to geographical region

Maternal Bond: A maternal bond is a bond between a mother and her child.

Paternal Bond: The bond between a father and his child.

Intervention Coverage: The proportion of the population with a health-care need who receive care.

Composition Coverage Index (CCI): The composite coverage index is the weighted average percentage of the coverage of eight treatments over 4 stages of the continuum of care: reproductive care; maternal care; childhood vaccination; and childhood disease control.

Antenatal Care: Antenatal care is a type of preventive care, It is provided in the form of Medical Checks, information of living a healthy lifestyle physically and mentally during pregnancy, and the provision of nutritional information including prenatal vitamins. Which prevents potential health problems during pregnancy for the mother and the child .

DPT Vaccine: The DTP vaccine is a combination of vaccines against 3 infectious diseases; diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus. In pregnancy, one dose of the vaccine is recommended to protect the infant from whooping cough.

BCG Immunization: The BCG vaccine is a vaccine used against the tuberculosis disease (A respiratory disease). In countries where TB or leprosy (A long term infection that can lead to damage in the nerves) is commonly seen , one dose is recommended in healthy babies as close to the time of birth as possible.

**** (The last 4 terms highlighted are necessary for experts to analyze the heat graph below)*

General Overview

Around the 1960s, Africa contributed 14 percent to the world's composite child mortality.

If the United Nations Millennium goal of reducing child mortality by two thirds is to be achieved, Africa in general has the overwhelming task of narrowing this gap. To prove this just in 2019, the Sub Saharan African Region contributed 50 percent of the child mortality rates. If the United Nations Millennium goal of reducing child mortality by two thirds is to be achieved, Africa in general has the overwhelming task of narrowing this gap. On average, the mortality of children under-five dropped from 188 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to only 171 in 2003. This corresponds to an overall decline of just 9 per cent (0.7% annually), and the Millenium Goal suggests that in order to achieve the goal, the annual rate has to be at the threshold of 4 percent.

Low Interventions and Coverage

A problem that is very much interconnected with child mortality rates is the ridiculously low *Intervention Coverage* for children in Africa. The Interconnection comes within the UN sustainability goals for 2030, as one of the main goals is to have equal health coverage all across the world. However as time passes and progress is fulfilled, this feat seems increasingly more achievable.

The chart below shows the highest and lowest coverage rates for health coverage (this is a heat map, and these are taken into consideration amongst mid to low level income countries).

Cuba	89	100	98	99	99	99	61	93	89	99	99	77	91	<div>80-100%</div> <div>60-79%</div> <div>40-59%</div> <div>20-39%</div> <div>0-19%</div>
North Korea	90	100	94	97	98	96	74	86	90	97	97	80	91	
Thailand	89	99	91	97	96	99	72	80	89	95	97	76	89	
Kazakhstan	79	99	95	98	99	95	62	81	79	97	98	72	86	
Belarus	74	100	100	97	97	98	45	93	74	100	97	69	85	
Equatorial Guinea	21	68	67	25	30	63	40	54	21	68	36	47	43	
Yemen	38	45	25	65	64	64	25	34	38	35	64	30	42	
Central African Republic	29	40	38	47	49	74	16	30	29	35	54	23	36	
South Sudan	6	19	17	49	51	52	39	48	6	18	50	43	29	
Chad	20	20	31	41	37	59	20	26	20	26	44	23	28	
	Demand for family planning satisfied with modern methods	Skilled attendant at delivery	Antenatal care (4+ visits)	DTP3 immunisation	Measles immunisation (first dose)	BCG immunisation	Diarrhoea: oral rehydration treatment	Careseeking for pneumonia symptoms	Component 1: Family planning	Component 2: Maternity care	Component 3: Child immunisation	Component 4: Case management	CCI score	

To analyze this chart, we have to take into consideration that the best performers (by the metrics mentioned in the graph above) in the graph are spread around different geographical regions, but apart from Yemen the lowest performers in the world are in Central Africa. This lays out that in order for any goal to be reached, greater attention has to be directed to region-specific actions. Comparing these regions' performances on the CCI heat map shows the importance of high intervention coverage when it comes to child mortality. The highest performers have all achieved considerable decreases in child and maternal mortality in the last decade. The worst performers have not made any improvements so far and there are many reasons why.

Sanitation Systems

To understand how important it is to have access to basic sanitation systems, here is a fact: according to a study done by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), a 1% increase in access to sanitation systems would reduce child mortality by 2 deaths per 1,000 births. Sanitation is key for human development. Governments and international organizations use hygienic facilities as a measuring stick for fighting against problems such as poverty, disease spread, and mortality. On July 28, 2010, the United Nations General Assembly recognized access to clean water and basic sanitation as a human right per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This clearly was a huge step towards fighting for developing countries whose citizens do not have access to clean water and sanitation. Basic and safely managed

sanitation services can reduce diarrheal disease, and it notably lessens the health impacts of other disorders that cause death and disease among millions of children. According to the WHO, in 2019 contaminated drinking water caused more than 485 thousand diarrheal deaths

Diarrhea and worm infections weaken children's immune systems and make them severely vulnerable to deadly and opportunistic diseases such as pneumonia and malaria, which are particularly prevalent in regions of Central Africa as well. The combined effect of inadequate sanitation systems, the lack of clean water, and poor personal hygiene systems are the main causes of child deaths. Every year, the failure to tackle these sanitation deficiencies results in high amounts of welfare losses, and a bump in child mortality rates. Countries that don't take urgent action to redress sanitation deficiencies will find their future development and prosperity impaired.

Diseases and treatment

Children do not have a fully developed immune system until they are 7 years old, so in the first 7 years of their lives they are highly prone to catch diseases and their possibility of unfortunately dying is higher

One of the main root causes of high child mortality rates are the inability to contain diseases, the worst part about is that lives can be saved with basic low tech and cheap measures such as antibiotics, improved nutrition supplements, anti-malaria nets and improved family care. The aforementioned CCI index shows the rate of healthcare coverage rates, that includes categories such as vaccination, medication coverage, and disease treatment. Now, to understand how big this situation is the lowest performers are all from Africa. Keep in mind that according to studies done, 6 million infant lives could be saved if these rates are bumped up just a bit. To back this claim up, later on in the report I will give examples of campaigns that were launched in the past helping toning down death rates caused by diseases.

Painting the Picture

The following are data collected from the World Health Organization from 2017, and have been provided as they can paint a clear picture of the lack of sanitation in Central African nations.

- In Gabon, only 47% of the people had access to sanitation systems. Gabon has a population of only 2 million people, which means more than a million people didn't have access to basic sanitation sources.
- The Island of Sao Tome and Principe, a poor island that has a population of only 218 thousand people. Only 47 percent of the population received access to proper sanitation systems, only 100 thousand people received access to basic sanitation.
- Cameroon, the population of the country is 26 million. Only 39% of the population received access to sanitation systems, only 10 million people received access, while more than 16 million people were deprived of their basic right.
- Only 26 percent of the citizens in the Central African Republic had access to clean water and basic sanitation, which leaves more than 3.5 million people without access.

- In the DRC, a country which has a population of 84 million people, more than 70 million people couldn't access sanitation systems.
- In Chad, only 8 percent of the population was able to access sanitation systems.
- Equatorial Guinea has a fairly adequate rate in comparison to the rest of the countries: 66 percent of the population gets access to sanitation systems.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Central African Republic: A common theme that contributes to child mortality is the inner conflict in the country. Politics are unfortunately contributing to the mortality rate, as the nation is going through a civil war with the Seleka Coalition and the anti-balaka militias.

Cameroon : Cameroon, according to the Corruption Perception Index in 2019 they ranked 153. Out of 183 countries. Which proves that bad leadership and a poor overall healthcare system due to the lack of political will by the Biya administration is a big reason for the increased child mortality rates.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): The Democratic Republic of Congo has been in the center of many inner conflicts that have contributed to their mortality. The corruption and the Congo wars, didn't do them any favors in their mortality rates. Some notable conflicts include; the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency that has been going on since 1987, the destructive Congo wars, the Kivu conflict and the Kinshasa attacks.

Nigeria: In 2012 the Nigerian government launched the project Save One Million Lives by 2015, a project to expand access to essential sanitation and primary health services to women and children, which also includes telephone lines for essential health workers, to prevent maternal HIV transmission, and other first aid life saving tools.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): They have been looking into measures that can help combat the high Child Mortality Rates all around the world. Like many other NGOs and countries, their main stance is to solve this issue by having a Human Rights Based approach.

Timeline of Events

1998	The second Congo war breaks out. The genocide over in Rwanda gets out of hand. The European Union accepts the Drinking Water Directive 98/83/EC guideline, a framework of quality demands for drinking water. The guidelines include parameters that must be checked to determine quality. The countries of the European Union can add their own demands to this guideline
2000	The first conjugate pneumonia vaccine, more than 1.2 million people worldwide practice open defecation. The second signs of Ebola virus shows in Uganda, killing 120+ people with 30 percent of them being children

2001	The Anthrax outbreak kills 5 people, central africa has a child mortality rate of 109.8 per 1000 live births
2003	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS reported that the leading cause of mortality in Central Africa is the HIV virus
2003	The United Nations Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) establishes the Gender and Water Task Force. The Task Force would since become a UN-Water Task Force and take responsibility for the gender component of International Water for Life Decade (2005-1015).
2004	Child Mortality rates in Central African Nations are floating around 20 percent.
2006	According to a study done by the World Bank, the third highest water tariffs in any developing region was in sub-saharan africa.
2010	The Human Right to Water and Sanitation is recognized as a human right by the United Nations General Assembly.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The Treaty of the UN General Assembly

The measures taken in the globe resulted in positive contributions in the child mortality charts. Even though it may seem dark, since 1990 the child mortality rates have been reduced by more than 50% in regions such as Northern Africa, and most of the Middle East. Simple actions such as Immunizations, improving vitamin A supplements save over 250 thousand lives each year. Immunization is a key part in reducing the mortality rates, to give an example let's look at Egypt . Through the increased vaccination programme in Egypt, they have managed to pass their MDG i target. Breastfeeding also helps a lot, countries such as India, Cambodia, Iran, Ireland (all which have low breastfeeding rates) have launched breastfeeding campaigns. Specifically a campaign in Cambodia to promote breastfeeding through the Cambodian Ministry of Health's Baby-Friendly Community Initiative increased the rate of breast-fed babies from 13 to 60 percent. Breastfeeding is critical because it strengthens children's immune systems. Speaking about diseases, Malaria which took more than 375 thousand lives in Africa just in 2018 has been an issue that every nation has made efforts to solve. The Nothing but Nets Campaign has distributed over 3 million anti-malaria nets since its beginning in the Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Mali, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe.

Human rights are constant to every person on earth. It Includes the right to live, live in liberty, freedom of opinion and expression and having the right career path. In the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64/292, every single human being has the right to access clean water and sanitation. The resolution states that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to all human rights. According to the WHO, people need between 50 and 100 liters of water per day just to satisfy their basic needs. The

UNDP also stated that the water should not be more than 3% of the annual income of the household. Despite these strong measures, it should be well documented that more than 780 million people take a risk of getting a life threatening disease every time they take a sip of water.

Other than sanitation and water disparities, we have to look at poor leadership and Inner Conflict going on in the Central African Nations and the poor leadership and corruption could be attributed to the high mortality rates.

Possible Solutions

For the experts to write efficient clauses, the most important thing that they can do is divide this topic while doing their research. This report covered merely the surface of what countries are dealing with, inner conflicts, bad healthcare systems, corruption etc. Since focusing on many ongoing inner conflicts might be a bit of a struggle, experts should focus more on maternal and infant health; it is also critical that the clauses that are going to be written go over access to resources such as vaccines, anti malaria nets, clean water, toilets, and to better nutrition. Building on the previously launched campaigns to provide resources might be a starting point, as well as calling upon member states to increase their effort on an international level. Thus, the only way to find possible solutions to curbing rates of child mortality, is by solving it in an Humanitarian way. The world does not have any problems scientifically, when given the effort, the progress is observed. Thousands of children are dying every day because they can not get access to a simple toilet or drink from a clean water source, it is that simple. The building blocks are there, it is up to the experts to capitalize on it

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