

**Abstract:**

At the close of the last century, Sub-Saharan Africa still had high maternal morbidity and mortality rates, with the goals of safe motherhood eluding many governments. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development of 1994 and the Fourth World Conference on Women of 1995 were created in an attempt to tackle these issues and drew unprecedented attention to reproductive health and rights as well as to gender equity and equality. The scourge of the human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) has ravaged the region's population and has left in its wake untold destruction in the demographic, economic, and social spheres (UN 2003). Demographic events of the last decade are a sharp contrast to those in the 1980s, when decreasing infant, child, and adult mortality rates and maternal mortality ratios (MMRs) were leading to steadily increasing life expectancy and improved health status for women in the region. Data sets assembled since the 1990s are the basis for the analysis of maternal mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa in this chapter. Beginning with an examination of measurement approaches and data sources of maternal mortality, the chapter continues with a description of the levels and trends in maternal mortality in the decade 1990–2000. The causes and correlates of maternal mortality, as well as priority interventions, are examined. The last section of the chapter points to what Sub-Saharan African countries could do to meet the maternal health component of the Millennium Development Goals