

BENCHMARKING PROGRESS TO IMPROVE MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH

BACKGROUND

Global efforts to improve maternal and newborn health (MNH) have achieved substantial progress over the past few decades. Despite these gains, many countries continue to face challenges in ensuring equitable access to high-quality care and reducing preventable deaths. Turning data into actionable insights is essential to sustaining progress and achieving national and global goals. Applying a benchmarking approach to national and subnational performance can help countries identify areas for improvement and inform prioritization efforts. The Exemplars in Global Health (EGH) benchmarking tool can provide further insights, including learnings from countries or regions that have made exemplary progress to improve MNH outcomes.

What is MNH Benchmarking?

Based on analysis of data from over 150 countries and building on the well-known obstetric transition framework,¹ Exemplars in Global Health (EGH) and partners developed an integrated mortality transition framework that defines five phases of progress from highest to lowest rates of mortality and stillbirth.²

The transition framework provides a foundation for tracking national and subnational progress across key indicators linked to mortality reduction. The MNH benchmarking approach applies this framework to help countries assess MNH performance. By comparing a country's performance to its peers, the MNH benchmarking approach can identify gaps and highlight successful strategies from high-performing regions or countries that have made exemplary progress (Exemplar countries).

What Questions Can MNH Benchmarking Help Answer?

EGH has developed an interactive benchmarking tool, which can be used as an entry point to benchmarking MNH performance. The tool can be used to answer key questions by translating data into visual outputs and linking insights to relevant findings across Exemplars in Global Health research.

Key Questions

How do my country's maternal mortality, newborn mortality and stillbirth trends compare relative to other countries?

Which RMNCH indicators need to be prioritized to drive further mortality reductions?

How does RMNCH program performance vary at the subnational level and where could efforts be focused?

How have Exemplar countries achieved success for priority indicators?

Benchmarking Outputs

High-level view of performance across key indicators showing where a country is ahead, on track, or off track.

Visualizes changes over time and subnational trends to highlight geographic disparities.

Provides insights into strategies from countries that have made exemplary progress.

What Indicators Can Be Explored Through Benchmarking?

The MNH benchmarking approach leverages UN mortality estimates as well as data from DHS/MICS surveys, and WHO/UN/WB databases.

Our analysis identifies important patterns highlighting that indicators most strongly associated with progress differ between higher- and lower- mortality settings.

Currently includes indicators related to:



Fertility Decline



Health Service Uptake



Equity Gaps



Health Workforce



Socio-Political Factors



Health Financing and Economic Development

What Can MNH Benchmarking Help Inform?

The questions answered by the MNH benchmarking approach can help support a variety of processes and documents informing both **retrospective evaluations** and **prospective planning** including but not limited to:

National Strategies

The WHO team in one country used the approach to **review progress** under a previous **RMNCAH strategy** and **inform planning** for the next phase. Routine data were analyzed at the **district level** to identify target areas for intervention. Benchmarking outputs were incorporated into the updated strategy to support **data-driven prioritization and planning**.

Investment Cases

Midterm or Endline Reviews

The Ministry of Health in a second country used the benchmarking approach to develop a newborn health **situational analysis**. DHS data were analyzed at the **regional level** to identify priorities and draw on lessons from Exemplar countries. These findings informed **national operational guidelines and district-level microplans**.

Situational Analyses

How Can I Engage with the Benchmarking Tool?

The interactive benchmarking tool is one aspect of the MNH benchmarking approach, which is designed to be flexible and responsive to country needs.

Use the Benchmarking Tool

Use the interactive tool to generate a basic MNH benchmarking analysis. It can provide immediate insights on performance across MNH indicators, high-level insights from Exemplar countries, and a starting point for further exploration.

Request Tailored Analytics

EGH can provide additional support tailored to country needs. This includes customizing data sources (for included MNH indicators) and focusing on subnational regions. The output can help identify insights and set priorities, informing targeted policy and programmatic decisions to improve MNH outcomes.

Inform Follow on Assessments

Insights gained from the online tool can help refine research questions related to MNH outcomes. The tool can highlight underperforming MNH indicators, successful implementation strategies, and some subnational differences, which can guide further inquiry.

The benchmarking approach is designed to support both immediate insights and longer-term planning. It can be used to generate immediate, high-level analyses through the online tool or serve as a foundation for deeper, tailored work. Whether applied independently or in collaboration with EGH, the approach helps health system actors translate existing data into strategic decisions that improve MNH outcomes.



Explore the Benchmarking Tool: exemplars.health/tools/interactivetool

Interested in tailored support?

Contact Exemplars in Global Health to learn how the benchmarking can support your goals.



www.exemplars.health

The Exemplars in Global Health (EGH) program is a global coalition of partners including researchers, academics, experts, funders, country stakeholders, and implementers. Our mission is to identify positive global health outliers, analyze what makes countries successful, and disseminate core lessons so they can be adapted in comparable settings. We aim to help country-level decision makers, global partners, and funders make strategic decisions, allocate resources, and craft evidence-based policies. A small, core team supporting EGH is based at Gates Ventures, the private office of Bill Gates, and closely collaborates with the Gates Foundation.