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Emerging Social Issues Division

Social Policy and Population Section

Asia-Pacific Population Journal

Article **Potential for Reducing Child and Maternal Mortality through Reproductive and Child Health Intervention Programmes: An Illustrative Case Study from India**

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Abstract According to the assessment made in 2003 by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), UNDP and ADB, among 47 countries in the ESCAP region with data available, 60 per cent have already met or are expected to meet Goal 4 of the Millennium Development Goals. Progression towards Goal 5 has been slower: one third of the countries have already met the Goal or are expected to meet it. Country-level analysis of available data suggests that among poor countries, Indonesia and Bangladesh stand out as making good progresses in meeting Goals 4 and 5. In those countries, reduction of unwanted and high-risk births through high-level prevalence of contraceptive use seem to have played very important roles in reducing child and maternal mortality. India is classified as progressing slowly towards Goal 4 and regressing in achieving Goal 5 as of 2003. However, 12 out of 17 major states with data, including some poor states, show declines in under-five mortality exceeding the level required to achieve the Goal. The present analysis shows that early child mortality can be reduced substantially in India, beyond the level necessary to meet Goal 4 through increased utilization of reproductive and child health programmes even when poverty, women's education, and community-level sanitary conditions do not change. Under-five mortality rate and maternal mortality ratio are highly correlated, and they share common set of determinants. Thus, the intervention programmes that would bring about a reduction in under-five mortality rate are likely to reduce maternal mortality ratio as well.

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