

Maternal mortality ratio in the country drops to 130 from 167

The latest Sample Registration System (SRS) data indicating the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has brought glad tidings.

As per the data, the MMR (number of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births) has dropped from 167 (in 2011-2013, the last SRS period) to 130 for the country. This 28% drop is an achievement arising from painstakingly reducing the MMR in each of the States.

The SRS segments States into three groups: "Empowered Action Group" (EAG) — Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh/Uttarakhand and Assam; "Southern States" — Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu; and "Others" — the remaining States and union territories.

The highest reduction from the last SRS is with the EAG States at 23%, a drop from 246 (2011-2013) to 188, while the Other States have dropped by 19%, taking the MMR down from 115 in 2011-2013, to 93 now. Southern States, which are at a better average of 77, dropped 17%. Truly encouraging is the massive drop of 29% in Uttar Pradesh/Uttarakhand where the MMR has dropped from 285 to 201.

Kerala remains at the top with an MMR of 46 (down from 61). Maharashtra retains its second position with 61, but the pace of fall has been much lower, dropping from 68 during 2011-13. Tamil Nadu with 66 (79) is in the third position.

Manoj Jhalani, MD, National Health Mission (NHM), says: "India has bettered the MDG target of 139 for 2014-2016. It's a proud moment. This is the outcome of systematic work undertaken by the Centre and States under the NHM that has resulted in saving 12,000 more lives in 2015. Three States have already achieved the UN's Sustainable Development Goal of MMR 70."

Former Union Health Secretary Sujata Rao said that overall, it indicates impressive progress, particularly in the EAG States.

"I feel Kerala and Tamil Nadu should do better, they can; but I'm very disappointed with Karnataka, Gujarat, Punjab, and Haryana. Maharashtra seems to have lost the momentum shown in the last few years, that is a worry."

Fresh impetus is required to bring the MMR below 30 for all States except EAG, which might strive to bring it down to 140-120, she adds.

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At around 2 a.m. on May 17 morning, a grievously sick Mohammed Salih, a 28-year-old architect from Kerala's Perambra town, was rushed by his family to

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