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Decline in under-five mortality too slow

South Africa's under-five mortality rate has fallen relatively slowly in the past two decades compared to much of the rest of the world, according to the South African Institute of Race Relations. Globally, child mortality has been declining due to advances in healthcare and general living conditions.

The country's under-five mortality rate bucked the global trend and increased from 62 deaths per 1 000 live births in 1990 to a peak of 78 in 2005, before declining to 47 in 2011. Thuthukani Ndebele, a researcher at the Institute, said this was insufficient progress towards achieving the United Nations' Millennium Development Goal target of 31 deaths per 1 000 live births by 2015.

The data is sourced from the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef).

Under-five mortality rate, selected countries, 1990 and 2011

| Country | 1990 | 2011 | Change |
|----------------|------|------|--------|
| Botswana | 53 | 26 | -50.9% |
| Brazil | 58 | 16 | -72.4% |
| China | 49 | 15 | -69.4% |
| Egypt | 86 | 21 | -75.6% |
| Germany | 9 | 4 | -55.6% |
| Ghana | 121 | 78 | -35.5% |
| India | 114 | 61 | -46.5% |
| Indonesia | 82 | 32 | -61.0% |
| Japan | 6 | 3 | -50.0% |
| Mexico | 49 | 16 | -67.3% |
| Nigeria | 214 | 124 | -42.1% |
| Russia | 27 | 12 | -55.6% |
| South Africa | 62 | 47 | -24.2% |
| United Kingdom | 9 | 5 | -44.4% |
| United States | 11 | 8 | -27.3% |

Source: United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), www.childinfo.org, accessed 17 September 2012

'Child mortality is an indicator of the performance of public health services, which includes access to clinics and hospitals, the quality of healthcare, education of mothers, and water and sanitation. HIV/AIDS has also played a role in overall mortality trends in South Africa. The delay in expanding access to treatment may, in part, explain the country's poor performance', said Mr Ndebele.

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