
What steps has your Government or organization taken to implement the recommendations in the report of the High Commissioner concerning the application of the technical guidance on a human rights based approach to preventable maternal mortality and morbidity?

In Finland, the maternal mortality rate is very low. In 2015 the rate was 3/100,000 live births which is slightly lower than the EU average.

In the 2000s, the Government has steered family planning more efficiently by national norms and information. In 2007, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health published the first national action programme for the promotion of sexual and reproductive health (2007–2011). The action programme has been updated by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) in 2014. In 2013, THL published an extensive guide book for maternity clinics. The action programme and guide book are both right-based.

The Health Care Act (1326/2010), which entered into force in 2011, obligates all municipalities to provide their residents with contraception counselling and other services promoting sexual and reproductive health. In addition, the decree on welfare clinic services and school and student health services (338/2011) provides that school and student health services must include counselling on sexual health and contraception to support school pupils and students' sexual maturation and development.

Overall chronic diseases during pregnancy have slightly increased. In 2011, 12.5 percent of pregnant women had gestational diabetes. A considerable proportion of mothers with disorder of glucose metabolism are overweight. Altogether, one third of parturients were overweight in 2011. Pre-eclampsia occurs in about 5 per cent. Some 15 per cent have mental health problems during the early stages of pregnancy. Depression is reported to be 8-10 per cent, postpartum depression 10-15 cent. Smoking during pregnancy has remained stable: some 16 per cent of pregnant women reported smoking during pregnancy in 2011.

In implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescent's Health, both of which are grounded in international human rights obligations, how can the technical guidance aid your Government or organization design policies and programmes to prevent maternal mortality and morbidity? Please specify and plans in place to utilize the technical guidance in this matter.
The right-based approach has been explicitly adopted in one of the Governments key project namely the reform of child and family services in Finland. The project includes the reorganization and improvement of maternity and sexual health services and is actively monitored based on the chosen indicators and evaluated. In addition, birth register and other statistics provide feed-back on the success of the project.

Promotion of health, participation and empowerment of children, young people and their parents are main principles guiding the reform. Evidence-based tools and methods will be used. The reform will be implemented in the context of national social welfare and health care reform.

**What challenges does your Government or organization face in implementing the technical guidance? Please elaborate on the nature of these challenges and steps taken to address them.**

The guidance is very ambitious. The operational environment in Finland is facing tremendous changes in coming years as the administrative structures and the social and health care systems will be reformed. They will provide many new opportunities. However, at the same time substantial savings should be made in social and health care. These facts will constitute challenges in implementing the technical guidance. The maternity mortality and morbidity rates have improved especially compared to many countries. Nevertheless, there is still much room for improvement.

The Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurance of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 10 February 2016

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
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