

Press Release

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South Africa makes strides in lowering child mortality rate – IRR report

The IRR has identified a marked decrease in child mortality rates in South Africa and says this is indicative of improved child health in the country. The IRR made this finding in its latest *South Africa Survey*, published this month.

The IRR found that the under-five mortality rate had declined from 77.2 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2002 to 45.1 deaths in 2015. The IRR also found that deaths of infants under one year of age declined from 51.2 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2002 to 34.4 deaths in 2015.

According to the IRR poor access to healthcare services (especially immunisation programmes), malnutrition, and poor living conditions were three of the leading contributors to child deaths.

It found that:

- Immunisation rates have steadily increased in South Africa. In 2001, 67.0% of children under one year of age were immunised. This increased to 89.8% in 2014.
- The rollout of social grants has probably contributed in preventing child deaths. Social grant beneficiaries as a percentage of the total national population increased from 9% in 2001 to 30% in 2015. This has undoubtedly contributed to raising living standards.
- From 2001 to 2014, severe malnutrition rates among under-fives dropped from 12.5 per 1 000 children to 4.5 per 1 000 children.

IRR analyst Gerbrandt van Heerden said: “Although these figures are encouraging, South Africa still has a high infant mortality rate especially compared to other emerging markets and the developed world.”

He went on to say that, “data from the World Bank shows that the under-five mortality rate in Germany was 3.9 deaths for every 1 000 live births while our BRICS partner, Brazil, had an under-five mortality rate of 13.7 per 1 000 children in 2013. Therefore, South African policymakers still have some way to go in ensuring that our child health indicators reach global norms. Better public healthcare services are part of the solution but rising economic growth and employment levels will do just as much, if not more, to improve the conditions of South Africa’s children”.

The South Africa Survey has been published annually by the IRR since 1948 in the interests of advancing fact-based policy making. Copies can be obtained exclusively through the IRR.

Ends.
