

Press Release

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South Africa sees policy successes in improved mother and child healthcare – IRR

The still birth rate in South Africa has been falling sharply according to the *South Africa Survey 2016* released by the IRR this month. The IRR says this is evidence of improved mother and child health in the country and is something to be celebrated.

The still birth rate measures the number of babies born dead out of every 1 000 births. It is seen as good measure of the both living standards and the quality of healthcare services in a country.

The IRR *Survey* shows that for South Africa, the rate fell from 27 in 2001 to 21 in 2014 or by 22%. As far as the provinces are concerned the rate in the Eastern Cape fell by 39%, it fell by 29% in the Free State, 31% in Gauteng, 22% KwaZulu-Natal, in Limpopo it remained unchanged, in Mpumalanga it fell by 19%, in North West by 10%, in the Northern Cape by 23%, and in the Western Cape by 19%.

According to IRR analyst Tawanda Makombo, “the figures must be seen as a success story for the beleaguered and much criticised public healthcare sector. A key reason for the improvement can probably be found in better HIV/Aids policies. Other reasons would include rising living standards and improved nutrition. The successes could probably not have been recorded without some measure of improvement in the care available to pregnant women in the public healthcare sector”.

Makombo also warned that, “despite a fall in the still birth rate, South Africa’s numbers remain high when compared to developed countries and other emerging markets. Data shows that in 2015, Australia’s rate was three out of every 1 000 births and in China the number was nine. There is still a great deal more to be done in improving access to healthcare in poor communities”.

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.
