

Reply of Slovenia to the enquiry of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

relating to the implementation of Technical Guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce preventable maternal morbidity and mortality

All women in Slovenia are enabled access to health care and prevention programmes during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period. Slovenia has also a long tradition of in-depth monitoring of maternal morbidity and mortality. A special multidisciplinary working group for studying maternal mortality is operating within the National Institute of Public Health (NIJZ), which actively finds and analyses all cases of death during pregnancy and one year after completed pregnancy, whereby it defines causes of death, possible associated factors and assesses preventability. In their work, the group observes the aspect of human rights to the greatest degree possible, since it dedicates special attention to vulnerable groups of women and factors which could contribute to a tragic result of pregnancy, such as poor social and economic situation, migrant status, mental disorders and similar. On the basis of its findings, the group drafts proposals of recommendations for taking action. Furthermore, the NIJZ also prepares regular analyses of inequality in the field of maternal health and perinatal results within the framework of which it analyses differences in using health-care services and differences in perinatal results regarding the social and economic situation of a mother.

The NIJZ informs the expert public about the findings deriving from the analysis of maternal morbidity and mortality, and observes them when preparing prevention programmes for pregnant women and women after giving birth. The main obstacles that are encountered are primarily of financial nature (lack of funds for programme development), since this is not among the state's public health priorities due to relatively good results in the field of perinatal health. Nevertheless, a lot has been done in recent years particularly in regard to mental health in the perinatal period, because suicide is one of the most significant causes of maternal mortality in Slovenia. Activities of raising awareness of the expert and general public have been taking place, including activities for the establishment of a network of experts from the field of mental health of pregnant women and women after giving birth. Activities for promoting participation of women with lower social and economic status into programmes for preparing for birth and parenthood are also being implemented. Special attention is dedicated to migrant women in the fertility period. Special material was prepared for this group of women in several languages with key information about the organisation of reproductive health care in Slovenia, healthy lifestyle during pregnancy and emergency situations during pregnancy.