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By: Iran and Arab Friendship Association

## Improving Mortality of Mothers in Iran and its Comparison with Arabic Countries

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### Summary:

1-Performance of health system of a country is an important index in socioeconomic development of that country and one of the most important indices is mothers mortality rate (MMR) which is general reflection of activities of governmental and private bodies in order to promote socioeconomic level and is one of the concerns of WHO. MMR is defined as the number of mortality of the pregnant mothers for every 100000 living births in a year. With regard to importance and role of mothers in the family and society, Iran and Arab Friendship Association studies MMR decrease in Iran in recent years by assessing articles, books and media through this report. In terms of pregnant mothers mortality conditions in Iran and Arabic countries, as UNICEF reported in 2002, UAE with MMR=3, Kuwait with MMR=5 and Iran with MMR=37 among the countries in the world were in position 92 which was relatively desirable. On the other hand, Algeria countries (MMR=220) and Yemen (MMR=350) were in undesirable position. Iran considers causes of the mortality in pregnant mothers as bleeding, hard delivery and high blood pressure and side effects of abortion. Fortunately, Iran with suitable effort and plan has promoted to better position so that Iran is in position 76 among 128 countries in the world (MMR=24) in accordance with the latest statistics reported by Global Assembly of Economy. Of reasons for decrease of this statistics, one can name establishment of wide health plan, increase in number of family physician and obstetrician in rural regions, equipping the therapeutic health centers and hospitals across the country and encouraging the women to natural delivery by the experienced persons. One can also take effective step in increase of awareness level of the society with use of mass media.

### Introduction of the organization:

2-Iran and Arab Friendship Association was established in 2001 in Iran-Tehran under registration No. 13032 and started its activity on 1 Jan. 2002. this association is non profit and has decided to establish this association with regard to historical and cultural records and long term friendship relations between Arabic countries and Iran. This association has taken action regarding holding conferences and social and cultural and artistic relationships in order to preserve goals and ideals of this organization and similarity of tradition and customs of Iran with Islamic Arabic countries and takes step on the basis of protection of human and civil rights in Iran and Arabic countries. This report has been prepared with emphasis on health of the family and focus of mother in the family and effort of Iran and Arabic countries to achieve final desirable result of this organization with philanthropic purpose.

### Problem statement:

3-Performance of health system in a country is studied by different indices which has been considered by the international organizations and is one of the most important indices of mortality in pregnant mothers which is defined as: death of a pregnant mother till 40 days after end of pregnancy (death resulting from accident or

mistake) which is displayed with MMR. Measurement of this index is usually between time intervals of 3 to 5 years and basis of its calculation is on the number of mortality of the pregnant mothers with regard to the above definition for each 100000 living births. In accordance with goals of the third millennium development , all countries such as Iran and Arabic countries were committed to decrease mortality of the pregnant mothers till 2015 to three fourth of the figure of 1990. On the basis of the last statistics of UNICEF regarding comparison between Iran and Arabic countries, the least mortality statistics (MMR) relates to UAE, Kuwait and Iran and the highest one relates to Yemen. Women comprise half of the world population and mothers are the main focuses in family and their mortality has direct and important effect on health of the family and finally on the society. On the basis of UNICEF report, in 2008, mortality rate of the pregnant mothers has been about 600,000 persons. This organization mentions the cases effective on the pregnancy in a meeting in Geneva in Sep. 2008 for example, nutrition condition , affliction with HIV, socioeconomic factors , poverty, general attitude toward women, traditional-cultural customs, literacy level and pregnancy in teen years are of these cases. But main reasons for mortality of mothers are bleeding, infection and high blood pressure. On the basis of report of UNICEF, one can prevent from mortality of mothers by health cares during pregnancy and delivery and after delivery and can improve health during pregnancy by some interventions such as cares before delivery, consulting services, performing HIV test and delivery by an experienced person, emergency care of delivery and after delivery, and family planning in accordance with national policies. In Iran, mothers mortality index has been equivalent to 91 cases in 100,000 living births in 1990 which has reached 24.6 cases in 2007. In fact, during the last 18 years, MMR in Iran has decreased by 73.6%. In years before Islamic Revolution, mortality rate has been 248 in 100,000 pregnant mothers which reached 24.7 persons in 100,000 living births in Sep. 2005 and reached less than 37 persons in 100,000 living births in 2006. It reached 22 persons for each 100,000 pregnant mothers in recent years. With regard to Iran population with variety of figures and cultures, relationships were established between different governmental organs, therapeutic and health deputy offices and faculties of Medical sciences and obstetricians for decrease of mortality in mothers. For this purpose, cooperation and support of other organizations especially governor's offices are also necessary. Another note is culture building and empowerment of the women. For example, index of women attendance in higher education in Iran is above 67%. Literacy statistics of women is increasing. In many provinces, women and men literacy statistics is close to each other and above 90% and Iran could have got closer to the third millennium development goals with decrease in mortality of pregnant mothers. In 2005, Iran obtained rank 1 among the region countries in terms of use of preventive methods and Afghanistan obtained the last rank. Another case is unwanted pregnancy which was referred previously. In accordance with IMES studies performed in 2005 in Iran, about 18.6% of the pregnancies are unwanted and (wife and husband) and generally 78.8% of the spouses use preventive methods leading to decrease of unwanted pregnancy compared to the previous years (year 1989=29.9). Population Fund of United Nations Organization considers family planning effective on one-third decrease of mortality and 20% decrease of death of the infants. Family planning relates directly to life and health of the women. Interval between pregnancies up to 36 months can prevent from death of one million children. For example, in study on Arabic countries and Iran, emergency methods of contraceptive pills (EC) among the discussed countries are permissible only in Iran, Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, and Libya and less than 1% of the women in Oman have used preventive methods before the first pregnancy . In study of sexual pregnancy health performed on the young of Arabic countries and Iran, other Arabic countries but Iran and Tunisia have limited national state plans which address the young. In socio-cultural view, some quality studies among the young with age of 20 and 24 years living in Jordan show that most of them consider pregnancy health equal to health cares of the mothers and believe that health centers are only for mothers and children.

4-High MMR in Yemen: on the basis of demographic estimation information of health of mother and child, in Yemen, about 48% of the 20 and 24 –year women have got married before age of 18. Yemen Ministry of Health estimates that 8 mothers die every day during delivery. Unequal distribution of physicians in Yemen health centers and complexity of its administrative system cause to decrease employment of the midwife. Studies of UNFPA showed that 84% of all births in Yemen have occurred in house and only in 20% of these deliveries, the educated persons have participated. Other effective factors of high MMR in this country are premature marriage, illiteracy, shortage of health services and poverty. Yemen Supreme Council presented a bill for

increase of health of mother and child and asked for increase of legal age of marriage to 18 years in order to fall high MMR in this country.

### **Methodology**

5-This research has been done in library, media and article method.

### **Weak and strong points**

6-In Iran, delivery promotion plan has contributed to satisfaction of the pregnant mothers and their health though providing personnel in delivery room and after delivery and during suckling and evaluation of all stages which has been one of the strategies of government for decrease of MMR in the country. Hygienic delivery index by educated personnel has reached from 92 to 97.5% during the last five years and is 2.5% different from the desirable rate. In many regions of Iran such as Sistan and Baloochestan of which mortality rate in pregnant mothers was higher in comparison with the state indices was decreased by 40% by implementation of health special care plan for mothers and commissioning of 52 units of delivery facilities as well as by advances in the field of insurance and support of people (free franchise), provision of health sources and improved health index and in recent years, due to coverage of 10 million persons, member family physician team in cities below 100000 persons in family physician plan as well as 4000 midwives in cities below 10000 persons have been admitted. In addition, equipping the delivery facilities in rural regions caused to decrease mortality of mothers in some rural regions to zero but in Western Azarbayejan, mortality rate of mothers is above the state average in 2007 in spite of considerable decrease of MMR and most of this mortality was in cities due to indifference, ignorance and lack of feeling of need of the urban women for care during pregnancy by the health centers. In Iran, 60 to 80% of cause of mortality was due to bleeding, and hard delivery and high pressure and side effects of abortion. Another important reason which constitutes 17% of the cases, delivery has been done by the uneducated persons, which is common in Western Azarbayejan. In Khuzestan province, MMR=28.6% which has been above state index and the most important problem in this province relates to tribes which have no access to hygienic equipment due to arduous road and cold and rainfall in different seasons and for solving this problem, Behvarz Mama plan is in progress. One of the other problems relating to mortality of pregnant mothers is cesarean delivery which increases mortality fourfold. Cesarean statistics in Iran has been about 40% in 2007 and on the basis of WHO report, rate of cesarean has been the highest in Iran and then in Egypt. With regard to high rate of cesarean in recent years, a plan was prepared on the pilot basis for decreasing cesarean including training the midwives, obstetricians and preparedness classes for explanation and justification of natural delivery with delivery pains and culture building among the women. In some hospitals, father has attended during delivery on the pilot basis to increase comfort of the mother during delivery and decrease cesarean. In other countries, effective actions have been taken such as in Tunisia, health clinics and puberty health clinics and schools health clinics have been established in main cities for consulting and giving information in the field of health issues especially fertility health to the clients.

### **Conclusion:**

7-With regard to the mentioned policies for achieving millennium development goals in each one of the eight goals of millenniums development, one can say that the fourth plan of development in Iran has paid high attention to health of the mothers by establishing effective relationship between society health sections, correct management in health section, prioritization of health intervention for correct planning, providing specialized personnel and promotion of natural delivery by the educated persons and increase of literacy level and empowerment of the women and continuing to train the young who are in age of fertility and Iran has had remarkable success in health of the society especially health of the pregnant mothers and children. But the main challenge is that there is fundamental relationship between these policies, developmental project and annual budgets of the country for improvement of millennium development indices which needs design of a national action plan with the above equipment and sanctions which have close relationship with life of the persons.

### **Strategies suggested to Iran government**

8-The strategies suggested by this organization to Ministry of Health and Medical Education are for achieving the minimum mortality rate in mothers, development of awareness level and promotion of health of the women. This purpose can be effective by establishing relationship with the society through mass media such as

advertisement and producing animations relating to hazardous factors in pregnancy with regard to culture and laws.

9-With regard to hazards of pregnancy in high ages and increase of marriage age in the society, possibility to apply effective methods for informing the society of its harms can be helpful.

**Strategies suggested to Council of Human Rights:**

10-Iran and Arab Friendship Association asks Council of Human Rights to take serious and effective actions for decrease of the imposed sanctions. These sanctions have been designed on the basis of political issues and the cases of which effects on health and life of the people in the society are considered harmful to people in the society. With regard to efforts of Iran such as to receive reward from United Nations Society in 2007, decreased sanctions can be helpful in expediting decrease of mortality in pregnant mothers in accordance with goals of development due to strategic design on which basis health indices were promoted in Iran population.