Maternal mortality and morbidity is a global phenomenon that has seen a decrease in occurrence in the past two decades, declining globally by 38 percent from 2000 to 2017. However, it remains a significant issue in many areas of the world, and this persistence is marked by wide regional disparities, with West and Central, Sub-Saharan, and Eastern and Southern Africa experiencing the highest rates of maternal mortality globally, followed by South Asia (UNICEF Data 2019). The highest rates of maternal mortality are preventable and concentrated in less developed countries (LDCs), indicating that health care and family services infrastructure play an important role in determining maternal health outcomes. As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, maternal health has been tied into Goals 3 and 5, Good Health and Well Being and Gender Equality respectively.

Maternal morbidity refers to "any physical or mental illness or disability directly related to pregnancy and/or childbirth" (Koblinsky et al. 2012). Maternal mortality refers to when these negative health outcomes result in a mother's death, either during or after pregnancy and childbirth. See: Koblinsky et al. (2012) for more in-depth descriptions of terminology and their variations. The leading causes of maternal mortality are hemorrhage, indirect causes such as pre-existing conditions aggravated by pregnancy, hypertension, sepsis, unsafe abortion, and embolism (UNICEF Data 2019). Risk factors which may result in these negative health outcomes include child pregnancy, lack of access to contraception or safe abortion, a weak or fragmented medical system, lack of access to expertise or equipment, lack of financial resources
for proper nutrition and care, public health issues such as HIV/AIDS and water quality, and cultural attitudes towards pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood (Koblinsky et al. 2012; WHO 2019). To identify the conditions and risk factors of maternal mortality and morbidity in your country, reference the country profiles provided by the World Health Organization.

Questions to Consider:

What risk factors of maternal mortality and morbidity are most prevalent in your country?
What resources (financial, political, cultural) will you require to address these issues?
What role does your country play in international deliberation over maternal health issues?

Research Resources:

