

More children are surviving in the world, but the number could increase

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The highest numbers of deaths of the youngest children are recorded in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

By Roberto Morejón

According to the latest available statistics, infant mortality in the world continued to fall in 2022, undoubtedly good news, although dissatisfactions persist.

Deaths in the under-five age range reached an all-time low of 4.9 million two years ago, a result that merited the qualification of a milestone by specialized organizations.

Figures published by the United Nations Interagency Group for Child Mortality Estimation show a 51 percent drop in this indicator since 2000.

Experts attribute the progress to the increased commitment of governments, communities and individuals to caring for children and to the support of the UN.

It would be a mistake to celebrate progress and immediately forget the reality that still persists in vast regions of the world.

The report notes that the highest numbers of child deaths are in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

There, social and economic inequalities prevent the provision of assistance and care for children born into low-income families.

The same is true in Latin America, where mortality in the 0-5 age group fell 71 percent between 1990 and 2022, but the region still remains below the global average of 37 deaths per 1,000 births.

It is no coincidence that experts predict that almost six dozen countries will not reach the under-five mortality target set in the Sustainable Development Goals.

In other words, by 2030 more than 35 million children will not survive because the place where they are born still determines whether they live or die, to paraphrase a phrase of Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World Health Organization.

With assistance from the industrialized North to the global South falling short of health requirements and with marked economic and social setbacks in the latter area, it is still a luxury for many residents of vulnerable areas to have access to health care.

While it is legitimate to celebrate the decline in child mortality globally, it is imperative to urge greater investment in progress toward ending preventable child deaths.

The intensification of international conflicts and their consequences for the economy must not stifle plans to provide care for families currently socially disadvantaged in bringing into the world and caring for their offspring.

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