

S.Africa pregnancy deaths 'unacceptably' high: Amnesty

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Rights watchdog Amnesty International said Thursday that Africa's most developed country, South Africa, still has "unacceptably" high numbers of women dying from largely avoidable deaths during pregnancy.

Out of every 100,000 [women](#) giving birth in South Africa, 269 of them die, a figure that is way above a target of 38 that the government had set to reach by 2015.

"In 2012, 60 percent of [maternal deaths](#) in South Africa were avoidable," the report launched on Thursday found.

A major reason for the high number of deaths is the lack of regular antenatal treatment.

While antenatal care is free in South Africa, many women must travel [long distances](#) to clinics.

"Even when it is dry, ambulances will not go beyond a certain point," said Amnesty of some of the areas its researchers visited.

The women in the study conducted in southeastern KwaZulu-Natal and eastern Mpumalanga province, also complained of lack of patient privacy and confidentiality during visits to the government clinics.

"One of the key problems is that women and girls are scared that their HIV status will become known because of lack of privacy at clinics."

Around six million South Africans - roughly ten percent of the population - live with HIV or AIDS, according to the government.

More than a third of deaths during or just after pregnancy are linked to HIV.

Amnesty polled more than 200 women and girls spread across 15 communities.

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