

The Best And Worst Places To Be A Mother

(NAPSA)—Where in the world are the odds against mothers—and how does the U.S. rank out of 117 countries?

According to the *2003 Mothers' Index*, released by Save the Children, Niger is the worst place in the world for mothers. In Niger, one out of every nine mothers dies in childbirth and one out of every 156 children dies before his or her first birthday.

In countries where mothers do well, it is far more likely that children do well.

"The index confirms what 70 years of experience have taught us. When mothers survive and thrive, children survive and thrive," said Charles MacCormack, Save the Children president. "With increased public and private funding for programs benefiting the poorest mothers, including access to education, small business loans and health care, including voluntary family planning, we can improve the lives of millions of mothers and children."

Of the factors studied, female education and use of family planning were most strongly associated with the well-being of children.

Women who are educated are more likely to postpone marriage and early childbirth, seek health care for themselves and their families and encourage all of their children, including girls, to go to school.

In top-ranked Sweden, 99 percent of women are literate, while in bottom-ranked Niger, only eight percent of women can read and write.

As contraceptive use rises and mothers are able to space births

The Mothers' Index

Top Countries

1. Sweden
2. Denmark/Norway
4. Switzerland
5. Finland
6. Canada, Netherlands
8. Australia
9. Austria, United Kingdom

Bottom Countries

109. Mali, Chad
110. Angola
111. Yemen, Sierra Leone, Guinea
114. Guinea-Bissau
115. Ethiopia
116. Burkina Faso
117. Niger

* The United States ranks at #11. T

at healthy intervals, death among mothers and children declines.

In the United Kingdom, where 82 percent of women use modern birth control, only 1 in 5,100 dies in childbirth and six out of 1,000 infants do not make it to their first birthday. Compare this to Guinea, where four percent of women use birth control, one in seven mothers dies in childbirth and more than one in 10 infants die before reaching age one.

In this year's index, Sweden, Denmark and Norway are at the top; Niger, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia are at the bottom. The U.S. ranks 11th.

To view the *Mothers' Index*, which can be found in the *2003 State of the World's Mothers* report, log on to www.savethechildren.org.