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Global decrease in **maternal deaths**

There has been a significant drop in maternal deaths worldwide during the last 28 years. In a review conducted in 181 countries and published in a recent edition of *The Lancet*, researchers estimated there were 342,900 maternal deaths in 2008, compared with 526,300 in 1980. More than 50% of all maternal deaths in 2008 occurred in six countries – India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia and the Republic of Congo. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infections appear to be linked to the high numbers in most countries. If HIV infections were not in the picture, the estimated maternal death toll worldwide in 2008 would have been 281,500.