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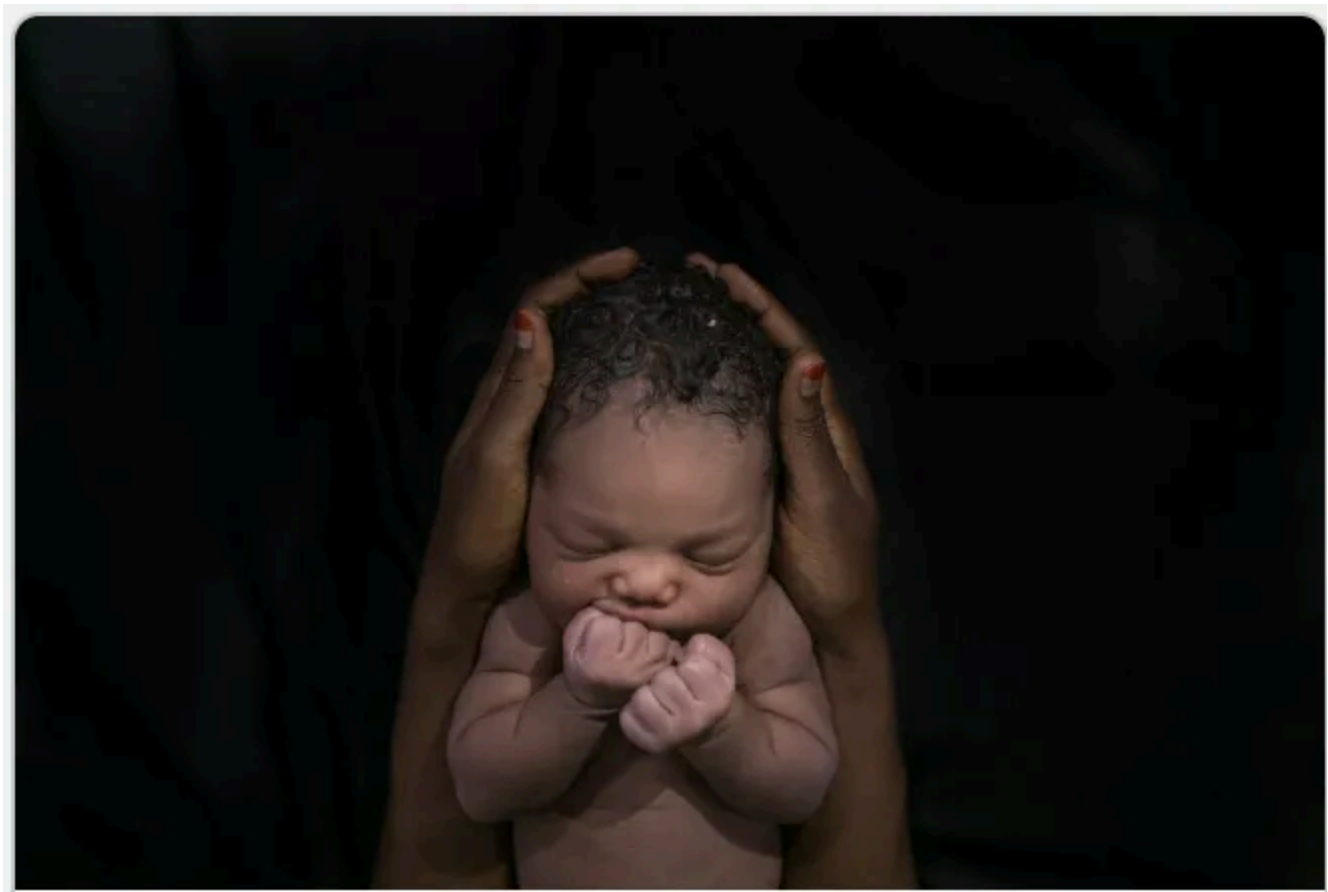


Maternity: A blessing or a death sentence?



Grace Omotoso

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It was a calm normal day and what I could call “business as usual” working from home. Then a message came through my phone, a close friend had just lost his wife during child delivery. Questions kept flooding my mind. Should she have stopped giving birth after 2 children? Were Doctors negligent? Did she turn down the option of a C-section? Did she pass away during a C-section procedure? Growing up in Nigeria, I have heard countless cases of mothers who passed away during childbirth but this came so close. I was fortunate to have relocated to the United States before I decided to start a family. However, I know a lot of my sisters and friends and women generally who approach having babies with mixed feelings. Maternity is a lifetime experience every woman should go through joyfully but when it comes with a mixed feeling due to the fear of losing one’s life, then something has to be done. One of the reasons in my bucket list, I included getting trained as an OBGYN and paying back to Nigeria, my home country where Maternal Mortality Rate is very high.

Statistics show that women in less developed countries are more susceptible to maternal mortality than women in developed countries. While there have been improvements globally over the years, some countries are still lagging behind in reducing their maternal mortality rate.

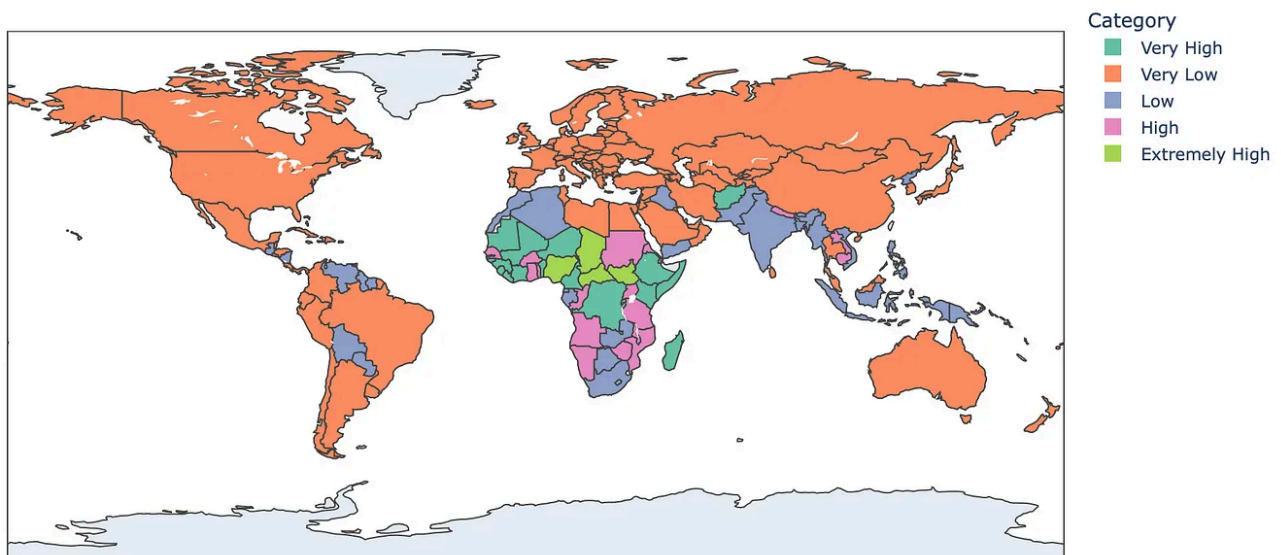
In this post, we will analyze maternal mortality among countries of the world based on UNICEF data. Our analysis is divided into four sections:

- Global Distribution of Maternal Mortality Rate
- Regional Trends in Maternal Mortality Rate
- Maternal Mortality Rate in Africa
- Impact of Income and Development on Maternal Mortality Rate

Global Distribution of Maternal Mortality Rate

Based on UNICEF categorization, there are five categories of Maternal Mortality Rate per 100,000 live birth

- Extremely High: ≥ 1000
- Very High: 500–999
- High: 200–499
- Very Low: 100–299
- Low: < 100

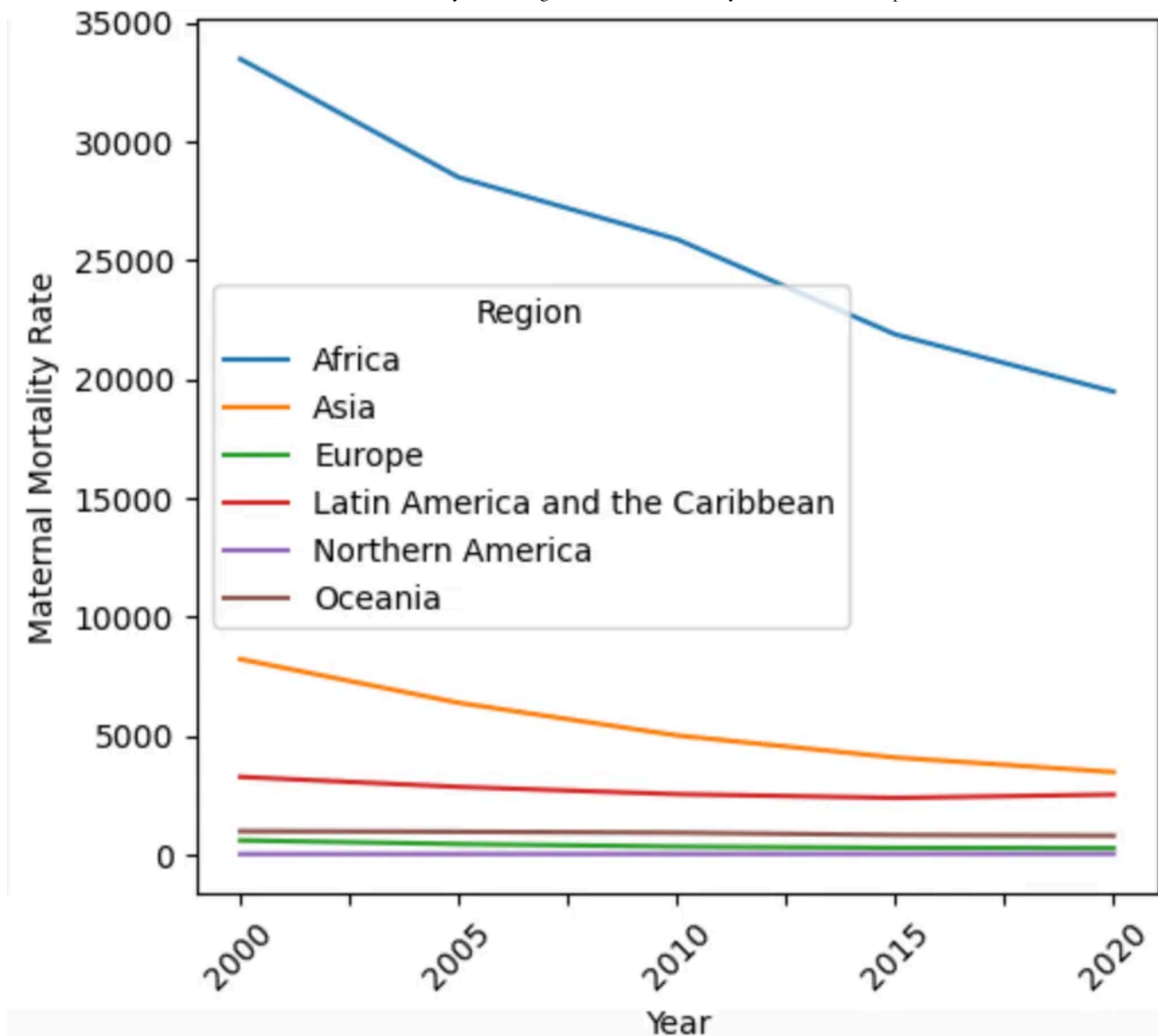


Maternal Mortality Rate Global Distribution

The map shows some regions in Africa have extremely high and very high Maternal Mortality rates. We will drill further into these regions in later sections

Regional Trends in Maternal Mortality Rate

In this section, we will discuss how Maternal Mortality rates have declined over the years across various regions of the World.



Distribution of Maternal Mortality Rate among Continents and Regions

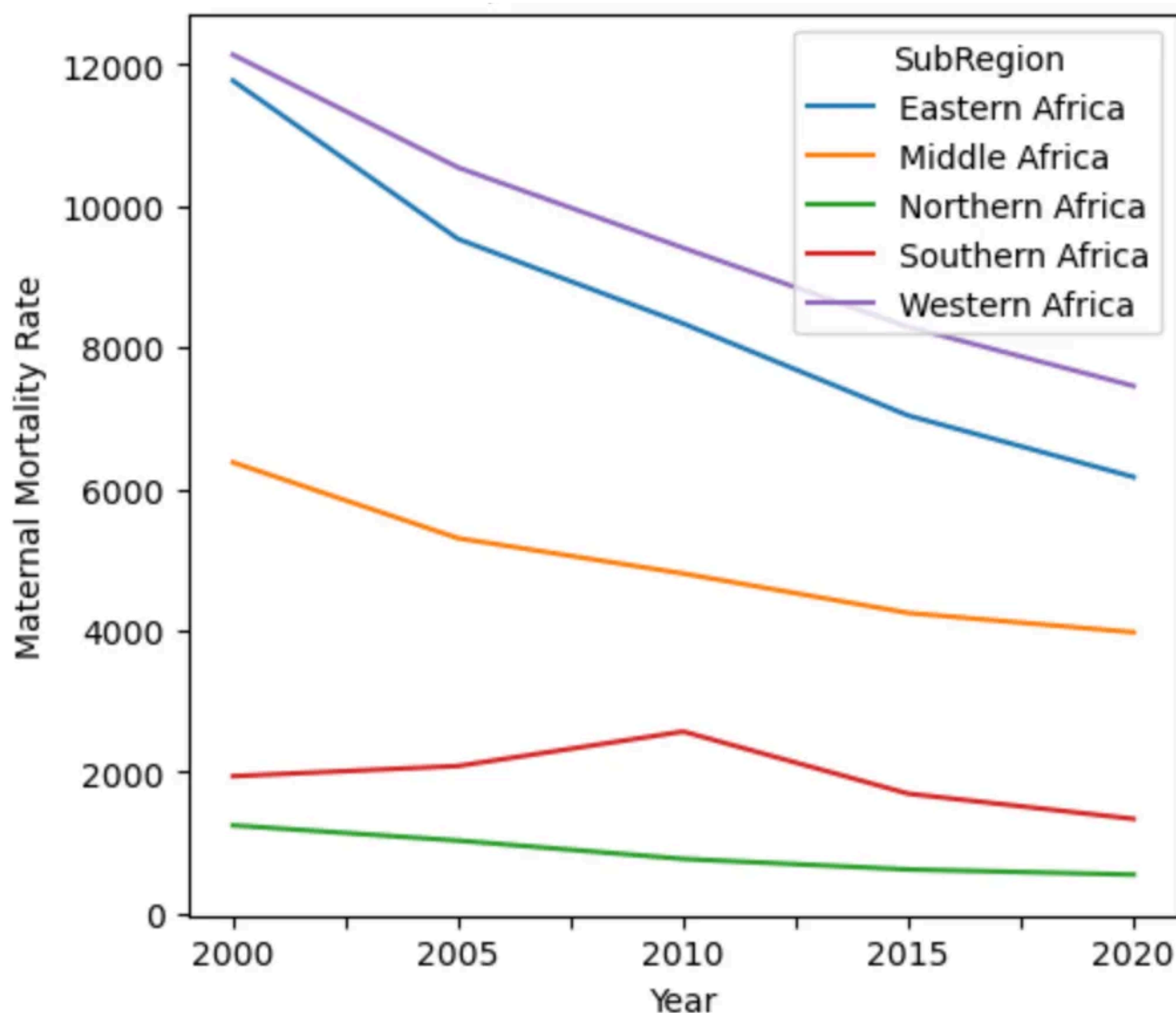
Northern America still has a steady MMR. It appears as of the year 2000, they have a very low MMR which has been maintained over the years. That is why the line appears very flat. Europe too has a low MMR which declines very slowly with the passage of years. Oceania seems to have a steady MMR over the years like North America.

Despite how noticeable the improvements in MMR in Africa are, there is still a huge difference when compared to the next region with the highest MMR which is Asia. Africa still has a lot of improvement to do as it looks like where Africa was as of 2020, the other 5 regions had passed it as of the year

2000. In the next section, we will drill further into African data and see regions and countries that are lagging in Africa.

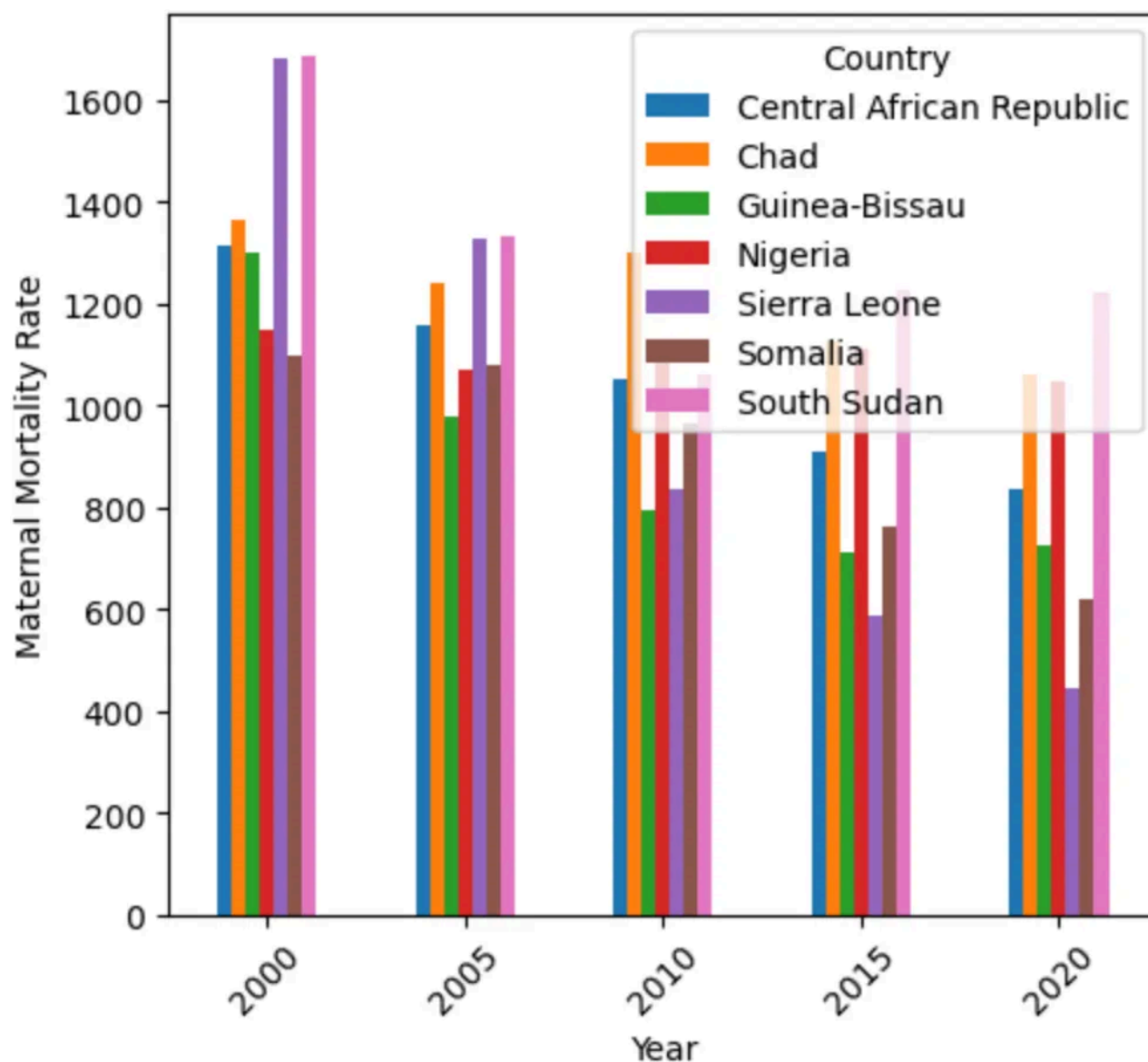
Maternal Mortality rate in Africa

In this section, we will see which regions in Africa have the highest Maternal Mortality Rate and we would narrow down to countries with highest Maternal Mortality Rate.



MMR per 100,000 live birth in Regions of Africa

Northern Africa has the least MMR in Africa followed by Southern Africa and Middle Africa. Eastern African and Western Africa seems to have a high MMR between year 2000 and 2020. As at year 2020, these two regions (Middle African and Eastern Africa) were not were Southern and Northern Africa were in year 2000.



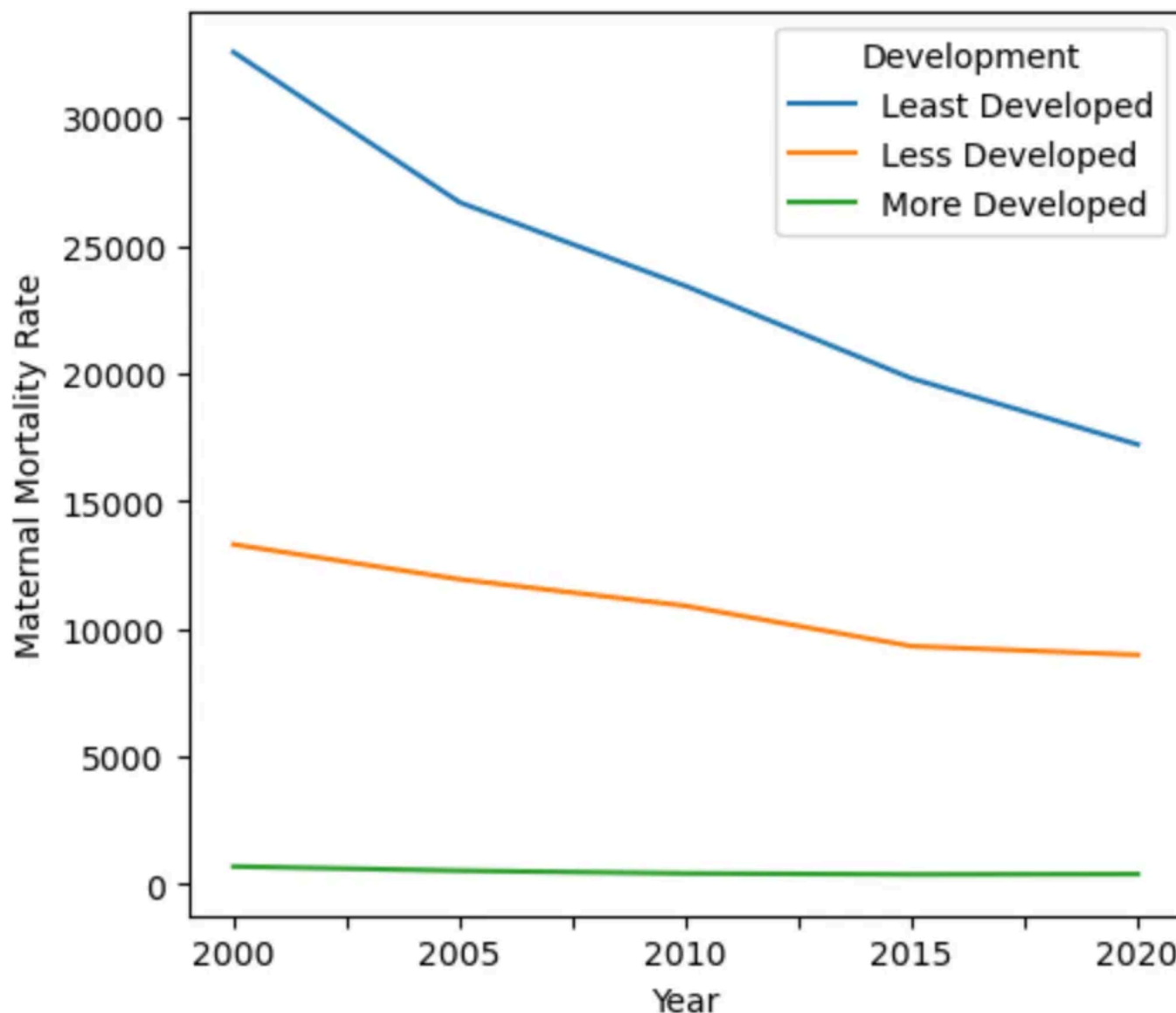
Top Seven Countries in Africa with highest MMR

The chart above shows the top seven countries in Africa with the highest MMR. These countries are in Eastern Africa(South Sudan, Somalia), Middle Africa (Chad, Central African Republic) and Western Africa(Nigeria, Sierra

Leone, Guinea Bissau) which were the three regions with the highest MMR in the previous chart.

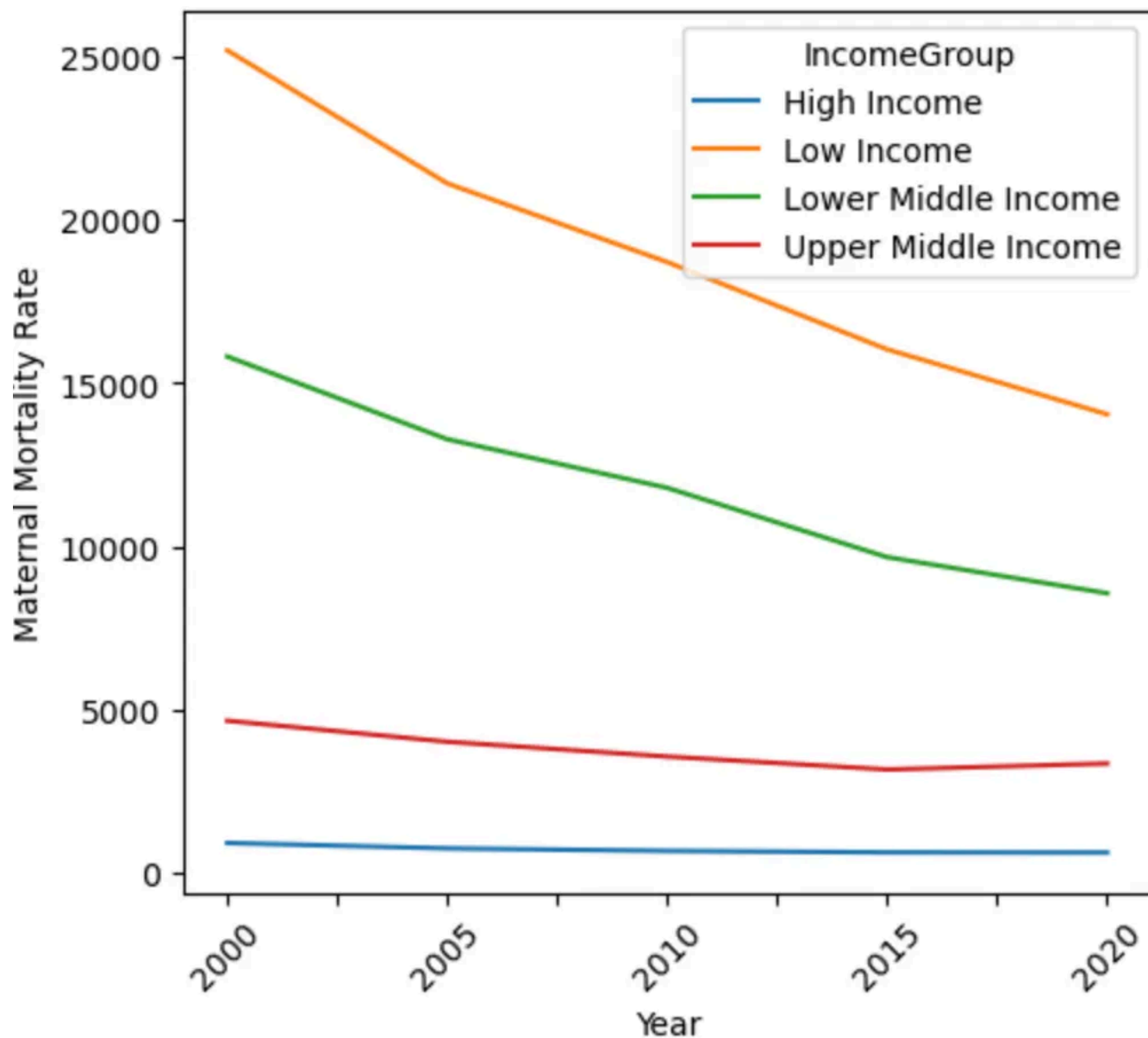
Impact of Income and Development on Maternal Mortality Rate

In this section, we will see how the development level and income of a country affects its Maternal Mortality Rate.



Maternal Mortality Rate by Development

The chart shows the impact of development on MMR. More developed countries have low MMR and least developed countries have the highest MMR. One noticeable insight is the margin between developed and less developed countries. Even though both less developed and least developed countries have reduced their MMR rates over the years, there is still a wide gap when compared with developed countries.



Maternal Mortality Rate by IncomeGroup

High income groups has the lowest MMR, followed by upper middle income. Low income group has the highest MMR. What the chart shows fits into a usual assumption that countries with higher income rate have better healthcare and are thus able to reduce their MMR.

Conclusion

It is commendable to see the decline in Maternal Mortality Rate over the years, however, Africa still needs a lot of help. Our analysis revealed that as of year 2020, Africa had not reached where the rest of the world was as of year 2000. We can assume that development level in Africa is causing this lag but no woman in Africa should see maternity as a death sentence when it is supposed to be a blessing.

References

- (2024) *Maternal mortality rates and statistics — UNICEF data*. Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/maternal-health/maternal-mortality/> (Accessed: 04 September 2024).



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