

Overview of SRH in the Asia-Pacific Region

**Meeting of Interagency Working Group on
Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations (IAWG)**

University of NSW
2 – 4 October 2006

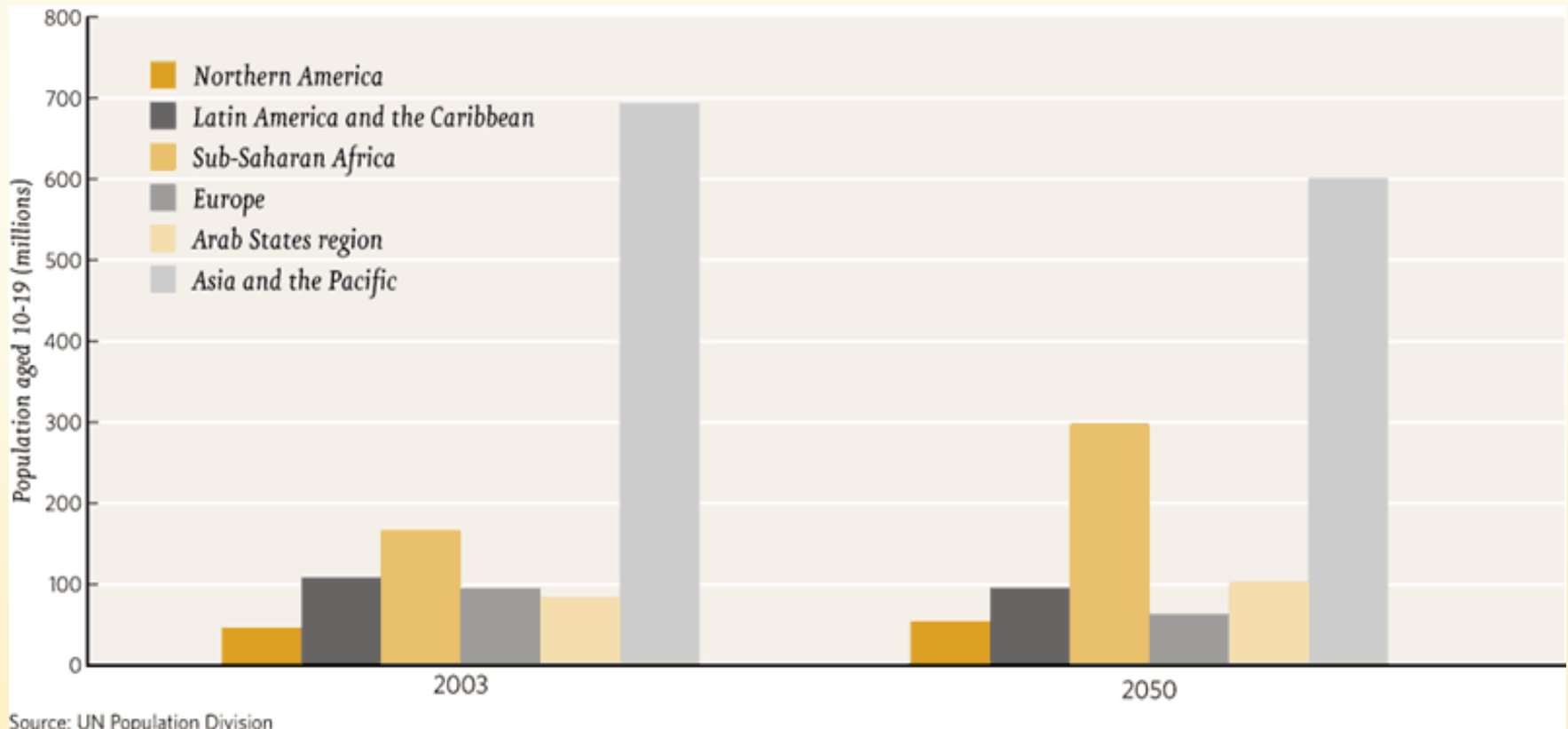
Overview of the Region

- The Asia Pacific region is home to some 60% of the world's people.
- Two out of every three people living in extreme poverty live in the Asia Pacific region.
- HIV/AIDS is a growing concern, especially given the high rate of STD transmission in Pacific countries.
- Maternal deaths in the South East Asian region account for one-third of all reported maternal deaths worldwide.
- Around 50% of the world's unsafe abortions occur in Asia, with 1/3 in Southeast Asia alone.



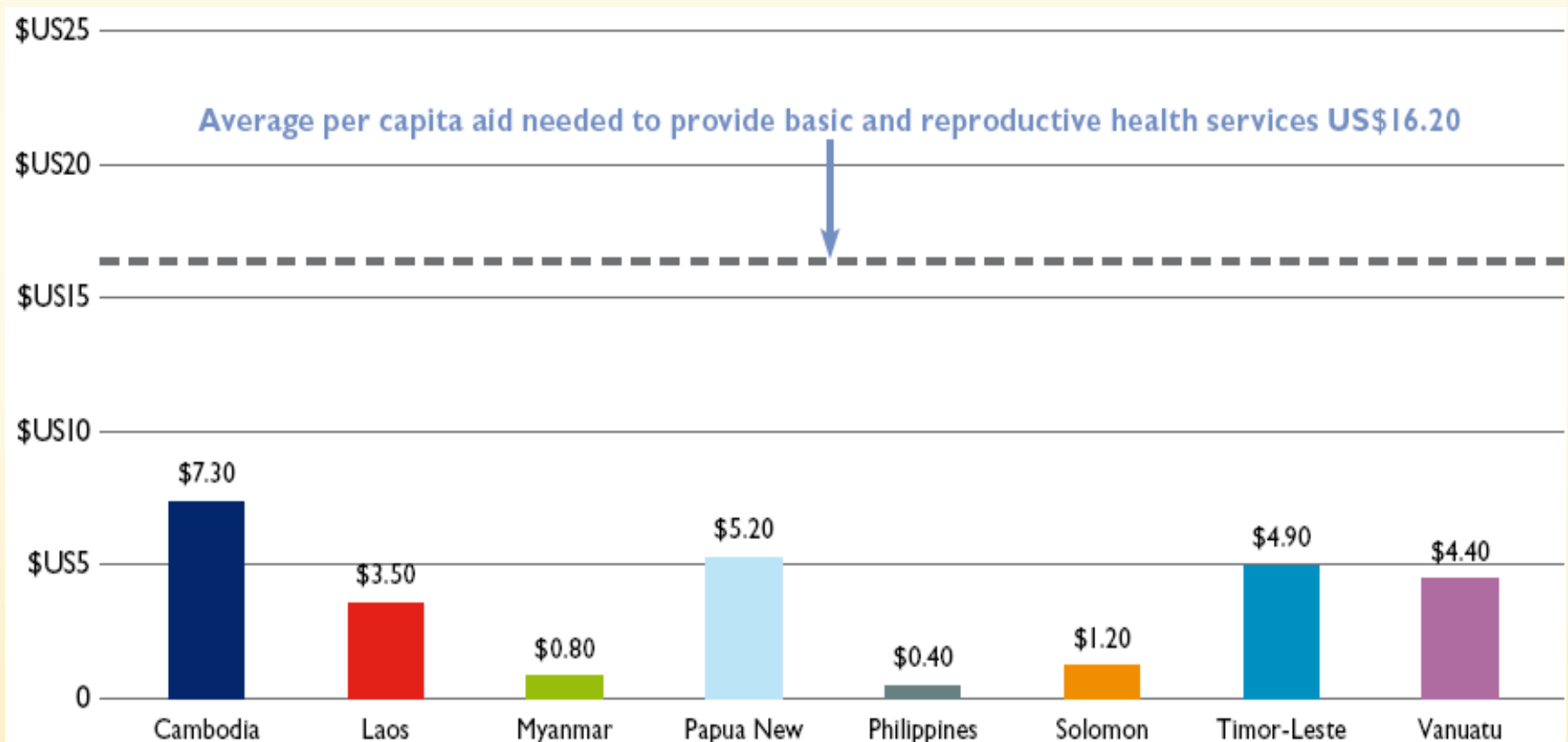
Youth in the Region

- More than half of the world's young people - some 850 million between the ages of 10 and 24 - live in the region
- In some countries, such as Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste, more than 40% of the population are under the age of 15.

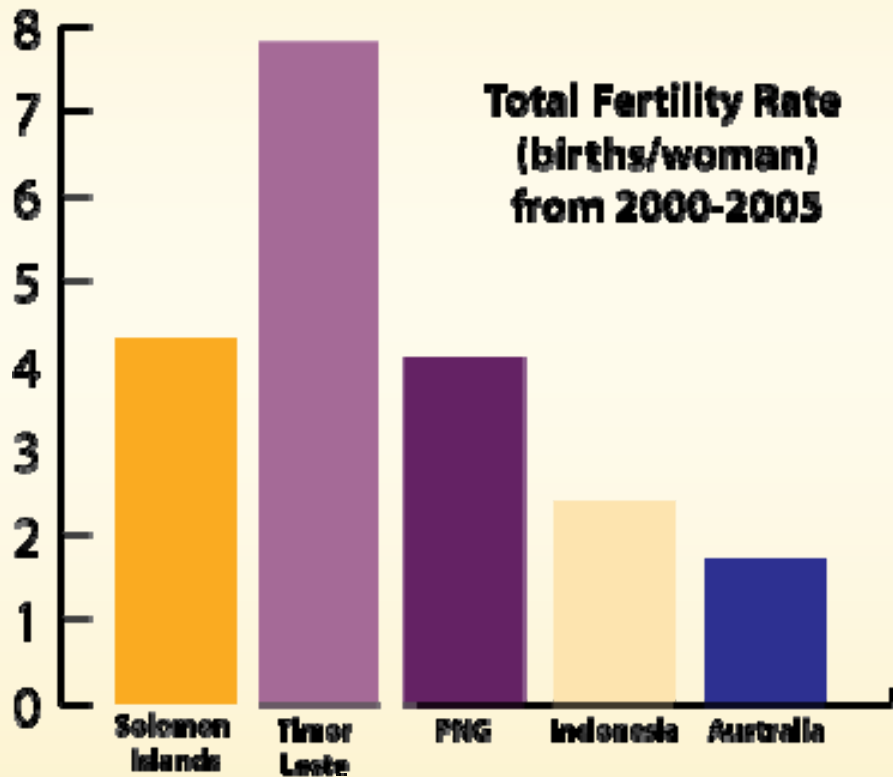


Current Aid for RH in the Region

- Current foreign aid to the region for reproductive health services are far below the required amount



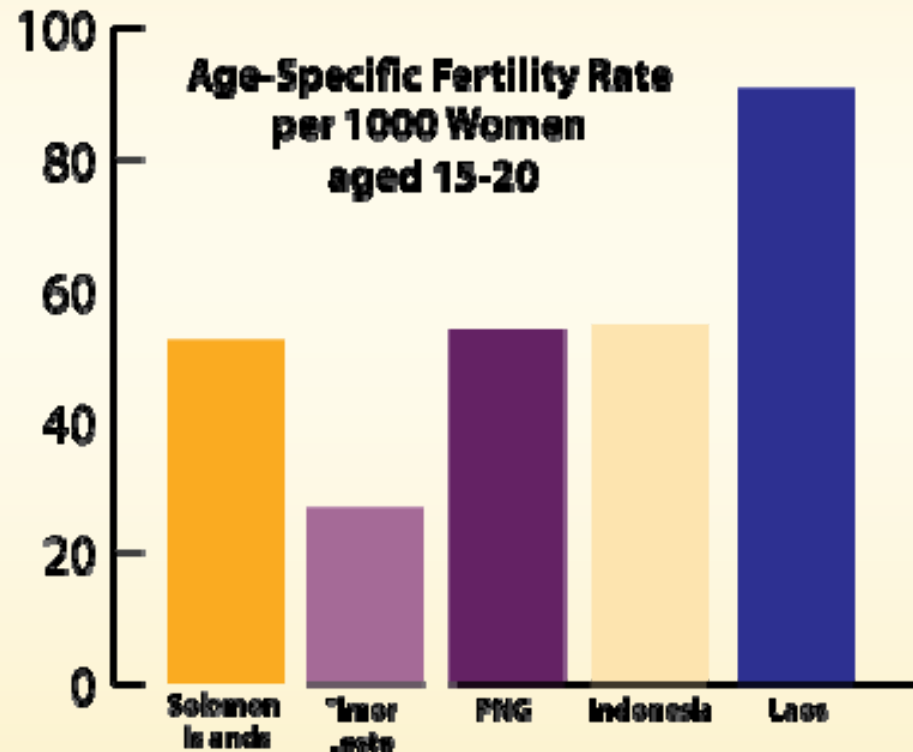
Fertility Rates in the Region



- Fertility rates are quite high across the region although good progress has been made in some countries such as the Solomon Islands where it has dropped from 6 to 4.2 since 1990.
- Timor-Leste, which is Asia's poorest country, and has one of the world's highest fertility rates—an average of 7.4 children per woman.
- If this fertility rate continues in Timor the population could double in just 17 years.

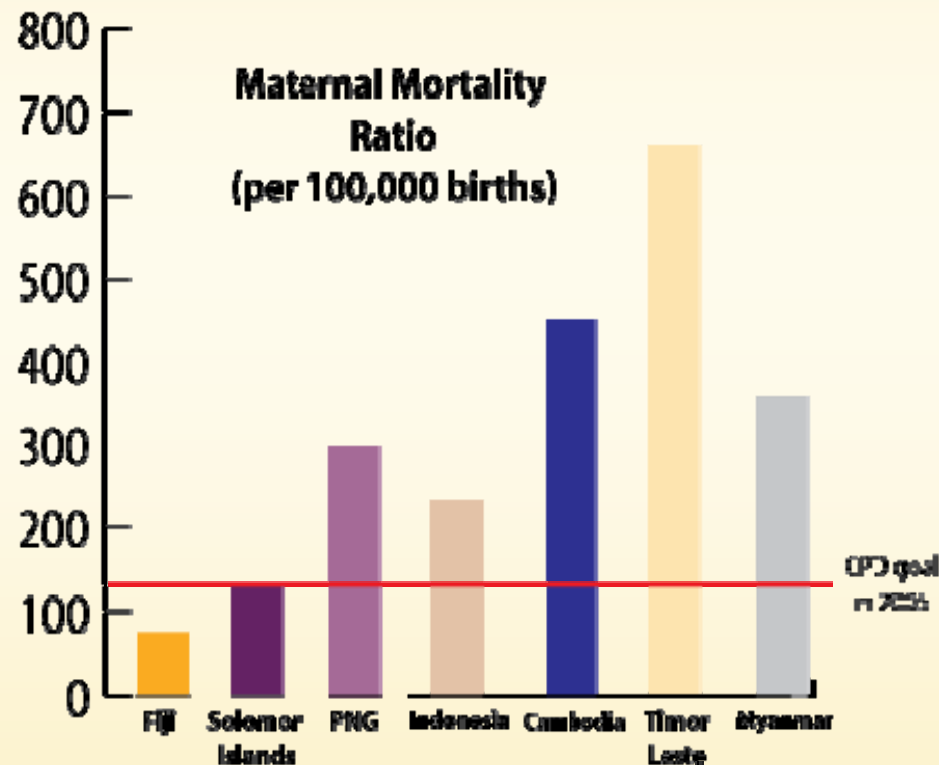
Youth Fertility Rates

- In Lao PDR's more than half of the population is under the age of 20.
- In rural areas in Lao PDR's, women and adolescent girls have shorter intervals between births, marry younger, bear children younger, and have a higher fertility rate. Over 18% of women start their families before the age of 20.



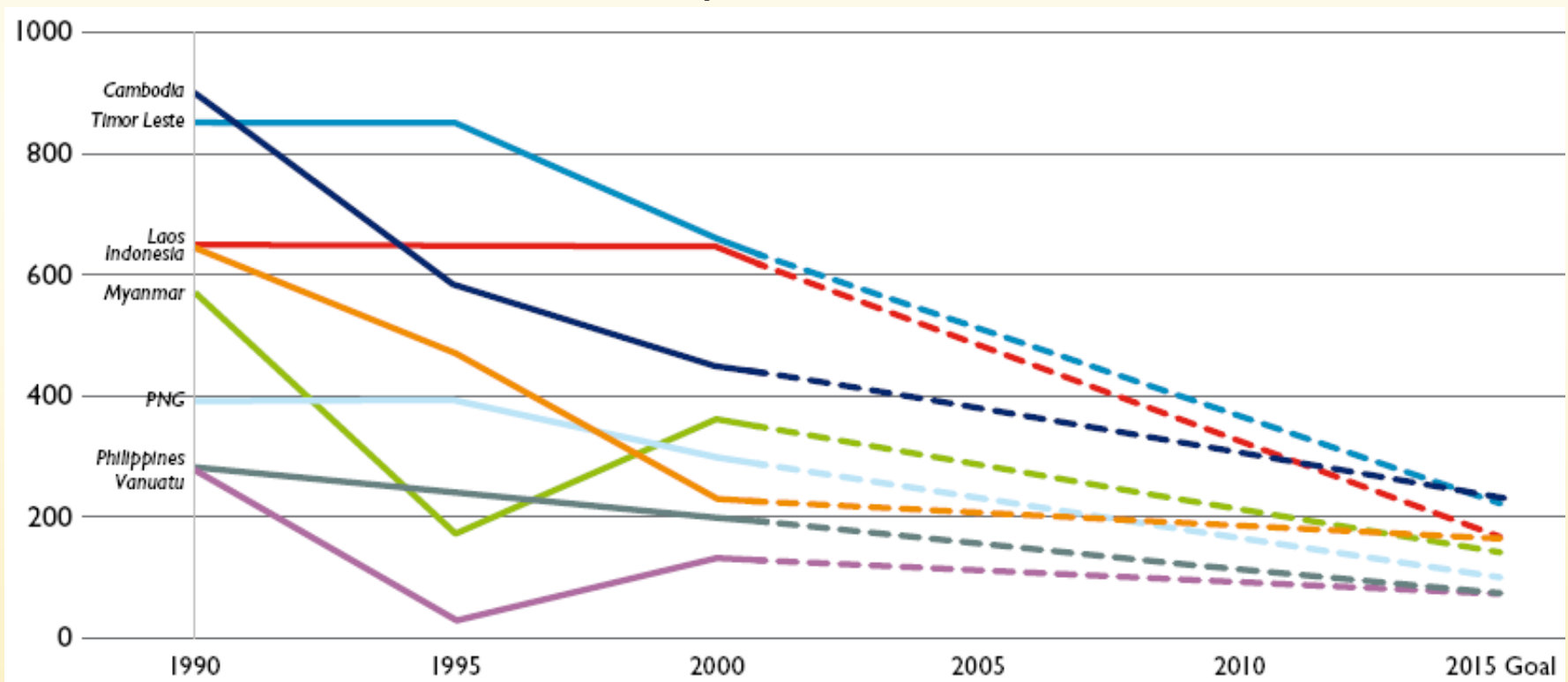
Maternal Mortality in the Region

- In Timor-Leste, where only 24% of births are attended by a skilled birth attendant, the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) is now the highest in the Asia Pacific region, at an alarming 660 deaths per 100,000 live births.
- The Solomon Islands and PNG have both made progress, with the MMR decreasing from 549 and 800 in 1994 to 130 and 300 respectively.
- In Indonesia the Ministry of Health developed the National Strategic Plan on Making Pregnancy Safer, 2001-2010 in order to combat the high MMR.



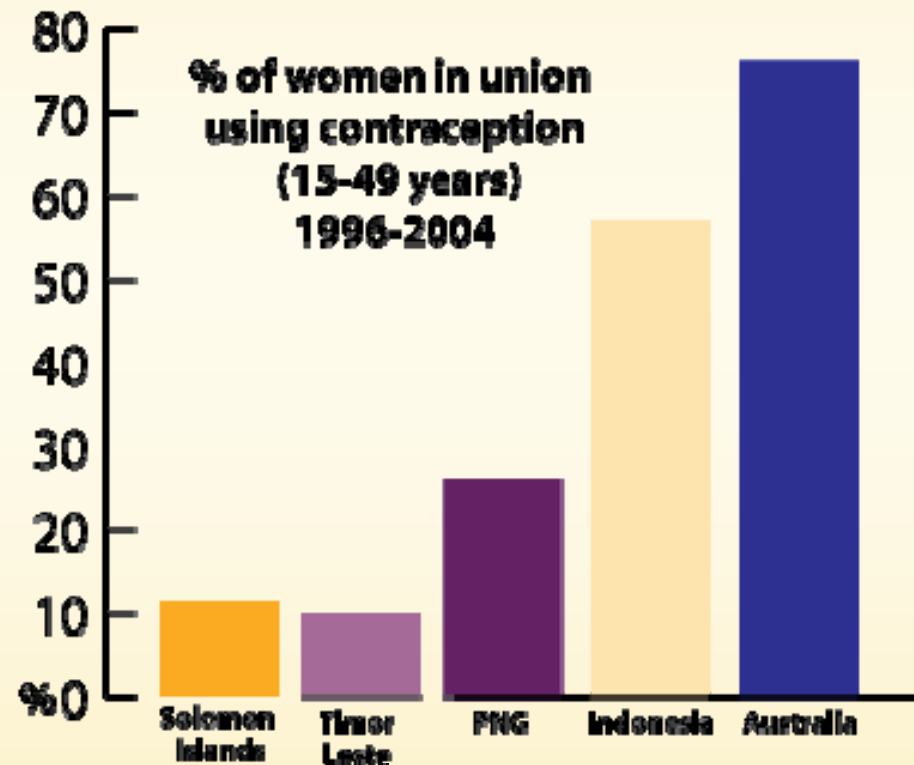
- Although the MMR is generally decreasing in the region a greater sustained effort is needed to meet the MDG goal of reducing the MMR by three-quarters by 2015.

Maternal mortality trends – regional countries with the highest rates at the start of the period – deaths per 100,000 births



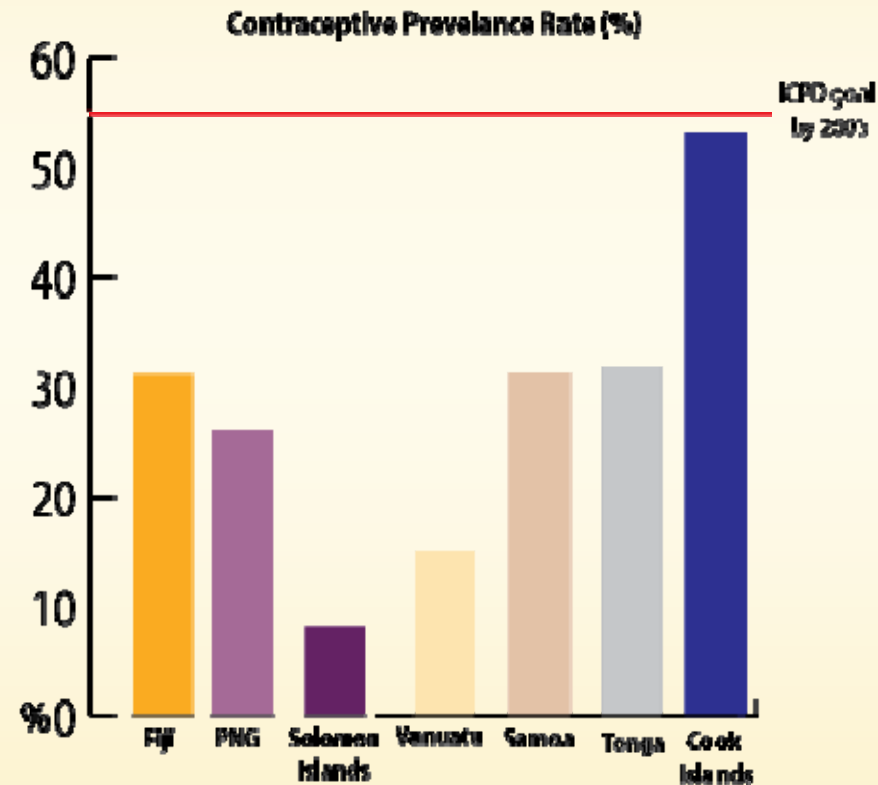
Contraception

- Timor-Leste, along with the Solomon Islands, has a very low level usage of contraception—around 10%.
- This low usage of contraception is especially worrying in Timor where a recent UNICEF survey found that 98% of children and adolescents said they know "absolutely nothing" or "only the name" in regard to knowledge about HIV/AIDS.
- Also in Timor between 2000-2015 the number of women of reproductive age is projected to increase by 102%.



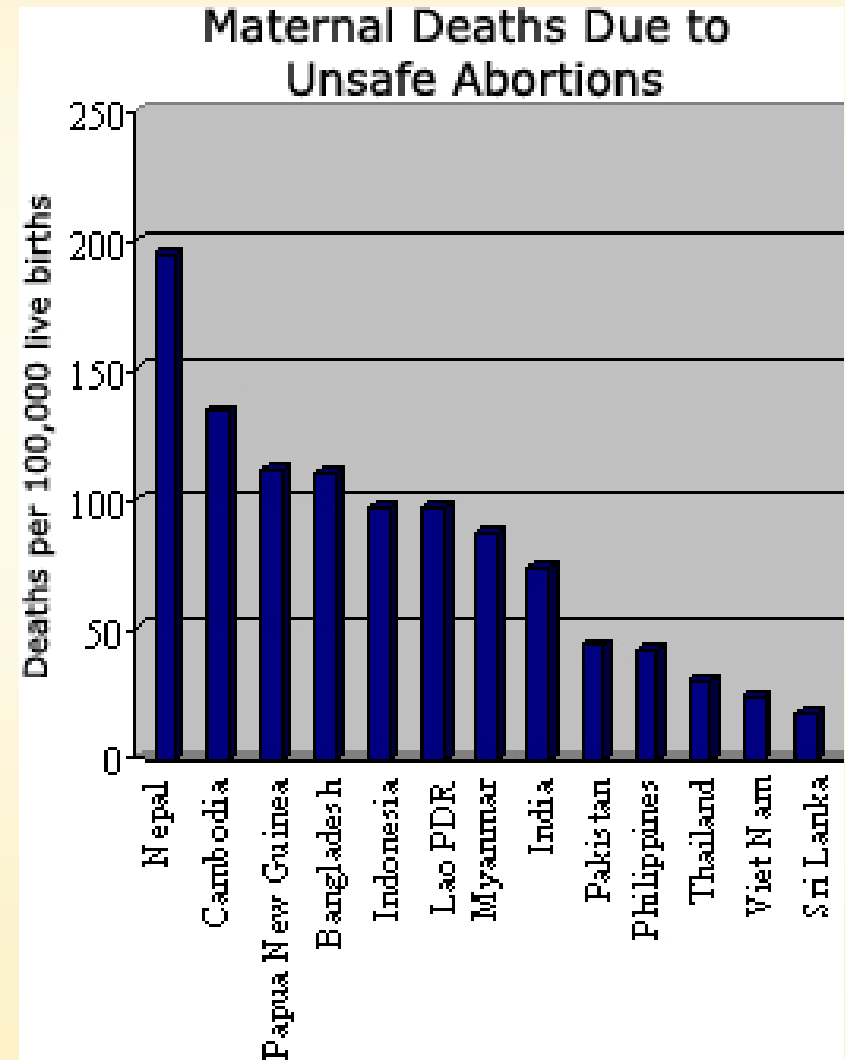
Contraception in the Pacific

- In PNG very low levels of condom use and wide sexual networking, coupled with sociocultural norms which discriminate heavily against women are contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- More than 90% of all HIV infections reported in Oceania to date occur in PNG.
- In Vanuatu, pregnant women have very high levels of STIs with about 40% of women having had more than one STI.
- In Samoa, 43% of pregnant women had at least one STI.



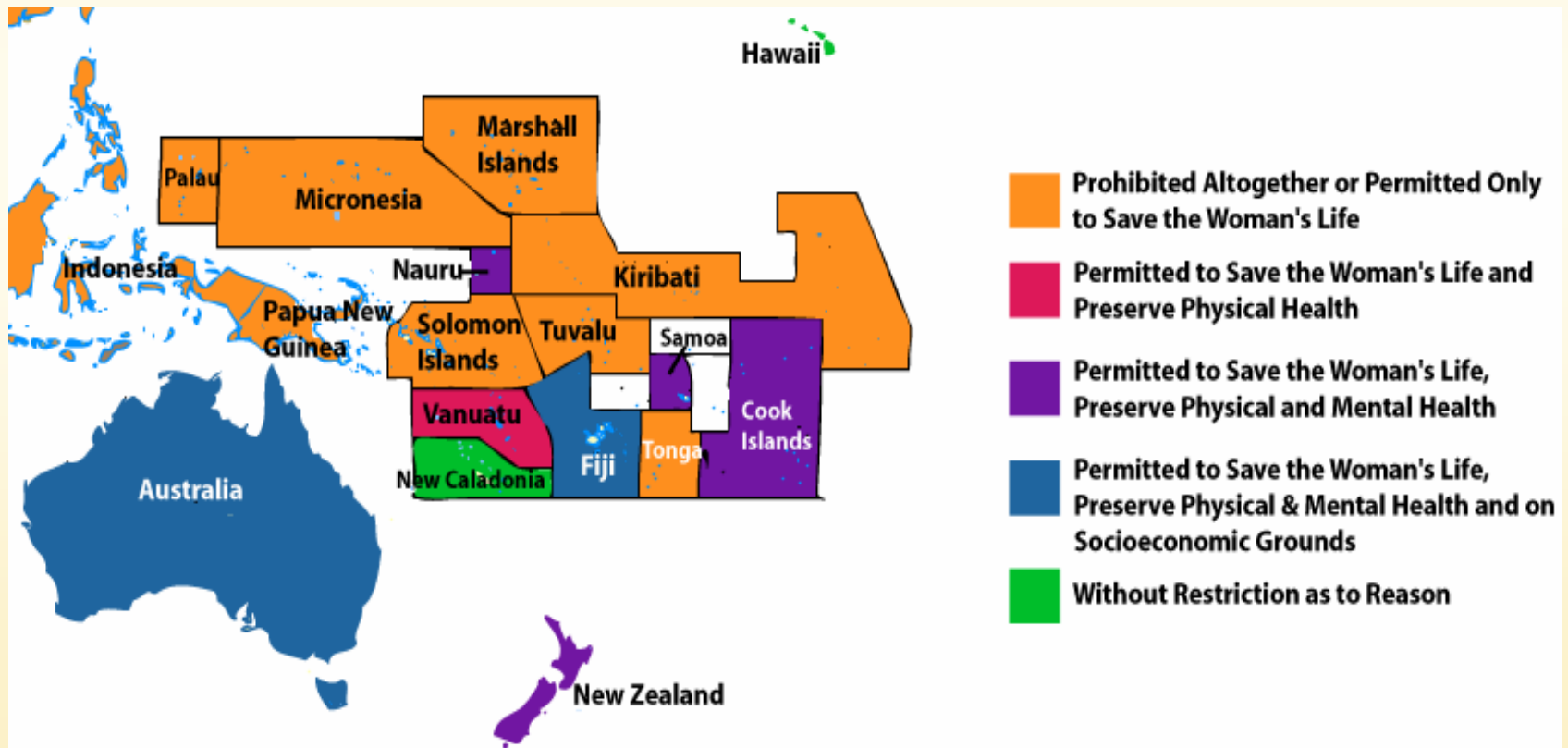
Unsafe Abortion in the Region

- As a whole, Asia has the lowest rate of unsafe abortion among developing regions. Each year, there are about 11 unsafe abortions per 1000 women of reproductive age.
- There is, however, great disparities within the region for example in Indonesia 1500 women die annually from unsafe abortion but in Malaysia it is only 22.
- In Asia 12% of total maternal deaths are due to unsafe abortion, while in Oceania it is 8%.



Abortion in the Pacific

- Access to legal abortion in the Pacific region is generally quite restrictive
- The incidence rate of abortion in the Oceania region is 12 per 100 live births



The Case in PNG

- The abortion laws in PNG are a reproduction of the **1899 Criminal Code Act of Queensland**, and abortion is generally illegal. A person who is found to have carried out an illegal abortion is subject to up to 14 years' imprisonment and the pregnant woman who consents to it is subject to up to 7 years' imprisonment.
- The laws do however allow an abortion to be performed to save the life of a pregnant woman.
- Abortion in Papua New Guinea is also regulated to some extent by customary law. In some parts of the country, abortion may not be culturally regarded as wrong if the mother is unmarried or if the pregnancy is a result of an adulterous or incestuous relationship.



SRH & the Tsunami

- About 150,000 women in the countries hardest hit by the Tsunami—Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and the Maldives—would have been pregnant at the time of the disaster.
- In the case of Indonesia a total of around 133,000 women of reproductive age were displaced and of these around 11,350 were pregnant.
- In Sri Lanka, 100 medical personnel were killed and 4 out of 8 maternity clinics on the east coast were destroyed or prevented from functioning by the disaster.
- In Indonesia, at least 1650 midwives died or went missing and the total complement of midwives in the region was down by one third.
- Post-tsunami supply of contraception was insufficient, it was estimated that Banda Aceh in Indonesia was receiving only 16,000 units out of a requested 80,000 units at a time when the UNFPA believed sexual activity was increasing and demand was high.

Questions?

