Infant mortality has declined in all regions since 1960, however progress in Sub-Saharan Africa has been slower than elsewhere (Fig.2). In Southern Asia - the region with the second highest infant mortality rate - a 65 percent decline occurred over a period of 50 years. Even larger reductions in infant mortality were achieved in Northern Africa – a 78 percent decline. In Sub-Saharan Africa, infant mortality rates decreased from 156 per 1,000 live births in the 1960s to 79 in 2005-2010. As infant mortality rates have fallen more sharply elsewhere, the disparity between Sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the world has grown.

The latest estimates of infant mortality from the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) show that Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest level of child mortality, with an infant mortality rate of 64 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2012 (Fig.1). Nearly half of all infant deaths round the world occur in Sub-Saharan Africa. There were 2.1 million deaths in the region in 2012.
The fall in Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Sub-Saharan Africa since the 1960s has been relatively small, and the region now has the highest fertility in the world, with 5.4 children per woman. In Northern Africa and Southern Asia – where the reductions in infant mortality have been larger – TFR declined faster and now stand at about 3 births per woman (Fig.3).

 Declines in infant mortality rate in Sub-Saharan Africa started to slow down during the 1980s and 1990s, and it is plausible to suppose that the stall contributed to a slower fertility decline in the region (Malmberg, 2007). There is certainly a close cross-sectional correlation between infant mortality and fertility in the region (Fig.4).

**References**


