

WHEN I WAS BORN...

ELEMENTARY LEVEL

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL #5: Improve maternal health

Activity Snapshot:

Your students will discover the story of their birth by talking to their mothers or another parent or guardian to complete the attached worksheet.

Rationale:

Every year, more than 500,000 women die in childbirth, most of them in developing countries. While this is not an issue of concern in wealthier nations—where fewer than 10 women die for every 100,000 child births—the rate of deaths among women in the developing world can be as high as 1,000 for every 100,000 births. Poverty is the biggest reason for this disparity. The women in the developing world are dying during childbirth because they are malnourished and weakened by other illnesses and diseases. They are also more likely to have numerous births and they lack access to trained health care workers and medical facilities.

Objective:

- Students will discover the range of experiences and health care services provided for pregnant women and compare the experience between North America and developing countries.
- Through discussion, both at home and at school, they will see the different experiences a pregnant woman can have based on where she lives or the poverty with which she must live.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

Please keep in mind that not all students will have been born in a hospital or in a developed country. You may also have students in your class who are adopted children, and may not necessarily know or have access to the story of their birth. Let students know that you're looking for all the stories that are represented in your classroom. Be sensitive to any discomfort or anxiety expressed about this assignment and consider talking with students about the exercise one-on-one if you sense that they are uncomfortable.

Time: Two 30-minute periods (or more time, based on level of discussion)

Materials: Handout/worksheet E17: When I was born...

Steps:

1. To assess prior knowledge, hold a brief discussion about the range of services that women have to choose from when they are pregnant—hospital care, midwives, family doctor, etc. Ask students if they know about the types of tests/services that pregnant women typically get—ultrasounds, blood tests, etc.
2. Talk to your students about their experiences with child birth (e.g. younger siblings, neighbors, cousins, etc.). What do they remember? What do they remember about the mother? Hold a discussion about the things a mother may need when she is about to give birth (doctor, medicines like vitamins, help from family, etc.).
3. Distribute handout/worksheet E17: When I was born..., and ask students to speak to their mother (or their parent/guardian) about her experiences during pregnancy and childbirth. With your students, review the instructions for the written paragraph on the worksheet.
4. The next day, hold a discussion based on the information they gathered.



- a. What are some of the similarities between their experiences?
 - b. What are some of the differences?
 - c. What did they learn?
 - d. Did the birth stories interest students? Why or why not?
 - e. Looking at their written paragraph on the worksheet, share some of the descriptions that express how things would be different for new mothers in the developing world?
 - f. Is it fair that, in parts of the world, poverty is a big reason why so many mothers are denied doctors and medicines for a safer birth?
5. Explain to students that the United Nations came up with the fifth Millennium Development Goal (improve maternal health) to help make things more fair for all mothers so that they have access to life-saving health care during pregnancy and child birth.
6. End the lesson by asking students to write a reflection on what they learned through this assignment. How are their mothers' experiences different from that of mothers in developing countries? What is unfair about this difference?

Closure:

Ask students to read from their reflections and share with the rest of the group.

Assessment Suggestions:

- Student worksheets and depth of understanding as indicated in the written reflection.

Handout/worksheet E17

WHEN I WAS BORN...

My mother was pregnant with me from (month/year) _____ to (month/year) _____

During this time, she visited the doctor _____ times.

The doctor told my mother to take care of me by doing these things:

-
-
-

She took these medicines and/or vitamins while she was pregnant:

-
-
-

She bought the medicines from:

She took a childbirth class: Yes or No (Circle one)

The class was provided for free through public health or a hospital: Yes or No (Circle one)

My mother was mostly comfortable/uncomfortable while she was pregnant.

Her labour pains started on (date) _____. She went to the hospital on (date) _____.

She had the following people help her while she was in the hospital: (list doctors, nurses, family members, etc.)

-
-
-

She took some medicine to lessen the pain when she began delivery: Yes or No (Circle one)

I was born on: _____

My mother stayed at the hospital for _____ days before bringing me home with her.

With your mother's help, write a paragraph on the following:

Mothers in the developing world sometimes have a harder time when having a baby because they don't have easy access to doctors, hospitals and other services. My mother believes that if she had been a mother in a developing country, maybe things would have been different. This is how (write a paragraph on the back of this page):