

**DEBT, STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT, AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: A
CROSS-NATIONAL ANALYSIS OF MATERNAL MORTALITY**

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ABSTRACT

We begin this study by considering dependency theory claims regarding the harmful influence of both debt and structural adjustment on maternal mortality. We expand upon previous research by conducting the first cross-national study to examine the impact of health and women's non-governmental organizations on maternal mortality. In doing so, we use lagged dependent variable panel regression for a sample of sixty-five poor nations. We find substantial support for dependency theory that higher levels of debt service, structural adjustment, and multinational corporate investment are associated with increased maternal mortality. Initially, we find no support for world polity theory that health and women's non-governmental organizations are significantly related to maternal mortality. However, we respecify our original models in order to test the idea that democratic nations provide a "political opportunity structure" that improves the ability of health and women's non-governmental organizations to deliver health and other social services. We find substantial support for this hypothesis. The results indicate that both health and women's non-governmental organizations are associated with decreased maternal mortality in nations with higher levels of democracy than in nations with lower levels of democracy. We conclude with a discussion of the findings, theoretical implications, methodological implications, policy implications, and potential directions for future research.