- Children in Sweden have best lives
- 'Swedish model' outranks 'American dream'

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Afghanistan is the worst place in the world to be a mother and Norway is the best, with stark differences in conditions for women and children in the two countries, a report released Tuesday says.

In Afghanistan and the nine other countries at the bottom of the Mothers' Index, compiled by the nonprofit group Save the Children, mothers and their children endure "grim conditions," with one in six kids dying before age five and one in three suffering from malnutrition.

Nearly half the population in the worst countries to raise kids lack access to clean water, and only four girls for every five boys are enrolled in primary school.

Most of the other bottom-ranked countries in the index are in sub-Saharan Africa. From worst to less bad, they are Niger, Guinea-Bissau, Yemen, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Mali, Sudan and the Central African Republic, the index says.

The top 10 countries, in order, were the five Nordic nations of Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark and Finland; followed by Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, the Netherlands and France. Women and children enjoy excellent health, education and economic conditions in these countries, the report says.

In Norway, for instance, "skilled health personnel are present at virtually every birth" while in Afghanistan, only 14 percent of births are attended, the report says.

The average life expectancy for a Norwegian woman is 83 years; in Afghanistan, it is 45.

More than eight in 10 Norwegian women use a modern method of contraception, and only 1 in 175 will lose a child before his or her fifth birthday.

"At the opposite end of the spectrum, in Afghanistan... less than 16 percent of women are using modern contraception, and one child in five dies before reaching age five.

"At this rate, every mother in Afghanistan is likely to suffer the loss of a child," the report says.

Save the Children researchers documented conditions for mothers and children in 164 countries: 43 developed nations and 121 in the developing world.

Germany, Spain and Britain ranked just outside the top 10 of the index, while the United States was 31st, just above Luxembourg and Belarus.