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30 million newborns could die by 2030: UNICEF report

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7,000 newborns die every day, despite steady decrease in under-five mortality, new report says



According to the report **'Levels and Trends in Child Mortality 2017'** released by UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the World Bank and the Population Division of UNDESA which make up the Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (IGME).

The report reveals that that although the number of children dying before the age of five is at a new low– 5.6 million in 2016, compared with nearly 9.9 million in 2000 – the proportion of under-five deaths in the newborn period has increased from 41% to 46% during the same period.

Stefan Swartling Peterson, UNICEF Chief of Health said, "The lives of 50 million children under-five have been saved since 2000, a testament to the serious commitment by governments and development partners to tackle preventable child deaths."

"But unless we do more to stop babies from dying the day they are born, or days after their birth, this progress will remain incomplete. We have the knowledge and technologies that are required – we just need to take them where they are most needed", he also added.

Most newborn deaths occurred in two regions: Southern Asia (39%) and sub-Saharan Africa (38%). Five countries accounted for half of all new-born deaths: India (24%), Pakistan (10%), Nigeria (9%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (4%) and Ethiopia (3%).

Dr Flavia Bustreo, Assistant Director-General for Family, Women's and Children's Health at WHO said, "To achieve universal health coverage and ensure more newborns survive and thrive, we must serve marginalized families."

"To prevent illness, families require financial power, their voices to be heard and access to quality care. Improving quality of services and timely care during and after childbirth must be prioritized."

The report notes that many lives can be saved if global inequities are reduced. If all countries achieved the average mortality of high-income countries, 87% of under-five deaths could have been averted and almost 5 million lives could have been saved in 2016.

Tim Evans, Senior Director of Health Nutrition and Population at the World Bank Group said, "It is unconscionable that in 2017, pregnancy and child birth are still life-threatening conditions for women, and that 7 000 newborns die daily."

Tim also said, "The best measure of success for Universal Health Coverage is that every mother should not only be able to access health care easily, but that it should be quality, affordable care that will ensure a healthy and productive life for her children and family. We are committed to scaling up our financing to support country demand in this area, including through innovative mechanisms like the Global Financing Facility (GFF)."

Pneumonia and diarrhea top the list of infectious diseases which claim the lives of millions of children under-five globally, accounting for 16% and 8% of deaths, respectively. Preterm birth complications and complications during labour or child birth were the causes of 30% of newborn deaths in 2016. In addition to the 5.6 million under-5 deaths, 2.6 million babies are stillborn each year, the majority of which could be prevented.

Ending preventable child deaths can be achieved by improving access to skilled health-professionals during pregnancy and at the time of birth; lifesaving interventions, such as immunization, breastfeeding and inexpensive medicines; and increasing access to water and sanitation, that are currently beyond the reach of the world's poorest communities.

For the first time, mortality data for older children age 5 to 14 was included in the report, capturing other causes of death such as accidents and injuries. Approximately 1 million children aged 5 to 14 died in 2016.

LIU Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs said, "This new report highlights the remarkable progress since 2000 in reducing mortality among children under age 5. Despite this progress, large disparities in child survival still exist across regions and countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet many deaths at these ages are easily preventable through simple, cost-effective interventions administered before, during and immediately after birth. Reducing inequities and reaching the most vulnerable newborns, children and mothers are essential for achieving the SDG target on ending preventable childhood deaths and for ensuring that no one will be left behind."