

# Newborn health in India

## Slide NH-1

Nearly 26 million babies are born in India each year. This accounts for 20% of global births. Of these, 1.2 million die before completing the first four weeks of life. This accounts for nearly 30 percent of the total 3.9 million neonatal deaths worldwide.

## Slide NH-2,3

The current neonatal mortality rate of 44 per 1000 live births accounts for nearly two-third of infant mortality and half of under-five mortality. Over one-third of all neonatal deaths occur on the first day of life, almost half within three days and nearly three-fourth in the first week.

The rate of neonatal mortality varies widely among the different states ranging from 10 per 1000 live births in Kerala to around 60 in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. The states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar together contributed to over half of all newborn deaths in India in 2000.

## Slide NH-4

### Perinatal mortality

On the basis of community-based studies, the stillbirth rate in India is estimated at 30-35 per 1000 births and the perinatal mortality rate at 60-70 per 1000 births. There are approximately 0.8 million stillbirths and 1.7 million perinatal deaths each year in India.

**Slide NH -5**

**Place of delivery**

Almost two-third of all deliveries occurs at home and only 42 percent of these are attended by skilled birth attendants. It is documented that states with higher institutional births ( Kerala ) have lower neonatal mortality in contrast to states with lower institutional births ( M.P., Bihar ).

**Slide NH -6, 7**

**Causes of neonatal deaths**

Infections, birth asphyxia and prematurity are the leading causes of neonatal deaths. The incidence of neonatal tetanus, formerly a major cause of mortality, has declined dramatically since the 1980s, but even in the late 1990s, there were still over 48,000 neonatal deaths per year from this entirely preventable disease.

The NMR declined rapidly in the 1980s, from 69 in 1980 to 53 in 1990. In recent years, however, the rate has been more or less static; between 1995 and 2000, there has been only a negligible decrease from 48 to 44 per 1000 live births. This slow declining trend is a cause for concern.

**Slide NH-8**

**Static NMR**

Most of the Government programmes (ARI, Diarrhoeal Disease Control, and Immunization) in the last decade have focused on infants and children beyond neonatal period. In addition, most of the focus for essential newborn care was directed to limited government facilities. This has resulted in the decline of IMR but NMR remained almost static.

**Slide NH - 9, 10**

**Way forward**

India, being signatory to UN Millennium Declaration (2000) for achieving Millennium Development Goals by 2015 plans to give importance to newborn health in Reproductive Child Health II (2005-10) by introduction of IMNCI strategy, promotion of institutional deliveries and strengthening

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of health facilities. The National Population Policy (NPP) is the framework for family planning, maternal health and newborn and child health programs for India. The NPP calls for the reduction of the infant mortality rate to less than 30 per 1000 live births by the year 2010. The NPP also aims to reduce Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) to less than 100 per 1,00,000 live births by the year 2010.

The NPP goals for the year 2010 also include achieving an institutional delivery rate of 80 percent and a rate of 100 percent for deliveries by trained persons. The 10<sup>th</sup> five year plan aims at achieving a NMR of 26 by 2007 and specifies IMR and NMR targets for all states in the country. These goals can be achieved if simultaneously strengthening of health facilities is undertaken.

### **For further reading**

State of India's Newborns, a report of National Neonatology Forum of India and Save the Children, New Delhi, 2004.