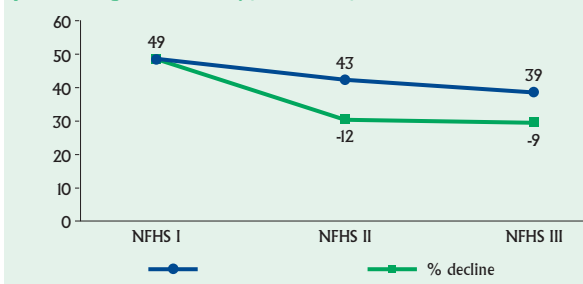


Neonatal Mortality and Newborn Care in India

Reducing neonatal mortality, i.e. the death of a baby within its first 28 days of life, poses perhaps the greatest public health challenge of our time targeted at our most vulnerable victims. In recent decades, though India has experienced progress in ensuring the survival of its youngest members of society, the newborn; today, deaths within the first month of life represent three-quarters of all infant deaths.

Rates of neonatal deaths have declined from 60 per 1,000 live births between 1978-1983 to 39 per 1,000 live births between 2005-2006.[†] However, if India is to attain its Millennium Development Goal of halving infant mortality, the rate of neonatal mortality decline will have to accelerate significantly. This will require a renewed and intensified scale up of evidence-based interventions and programs focused on preventing deaths to newborns.

Neonatal Mortality Rate for the five-year Period preceding the survey, NFHS I, NFHS II and NFHS III

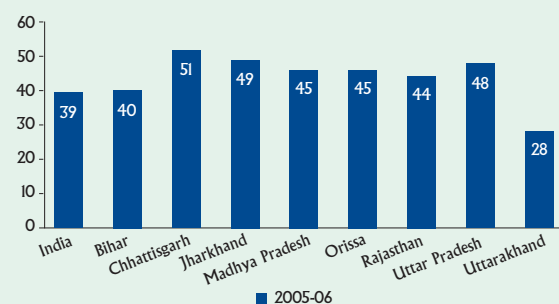


Did you know?

- 26.9 million babies are born in India each year.
- 70% of the babies are born at home.
- 1.2 million newborns die within their first month of life; the majority of these deaths occur within the first 7 days[‡].
- 75% of all infant deaths and 65% of deaths to children under 5 years of age occur within the first month of life.

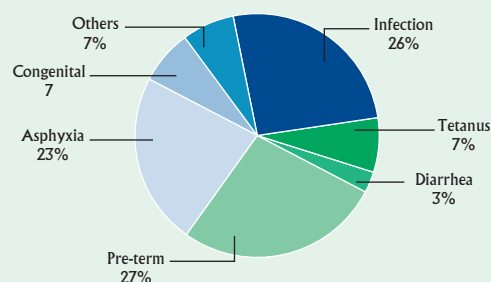
- 39 newborns die within the first month of life for every 1,000 live births throughout the country; however, the rates of death among newborns are highest in Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh (45-51 newborns dying per 1,000 live births)[†].

Neonatal Mortality Rates for the five-year period preceding the survey, India and EAG states, NFHS III



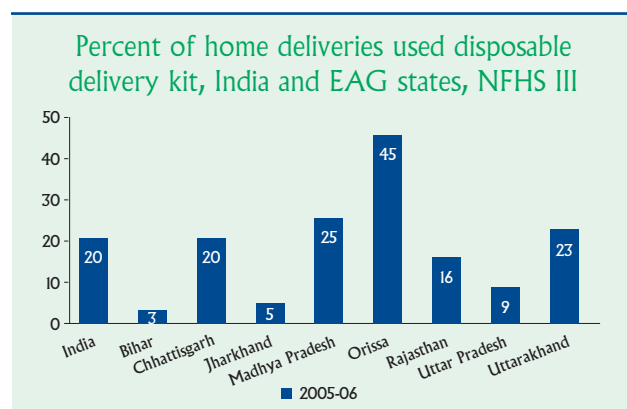
- The major direct causes of neonatal death are pre-term birth, infections, and asphyxia[€].

Causes of neonatal mortality

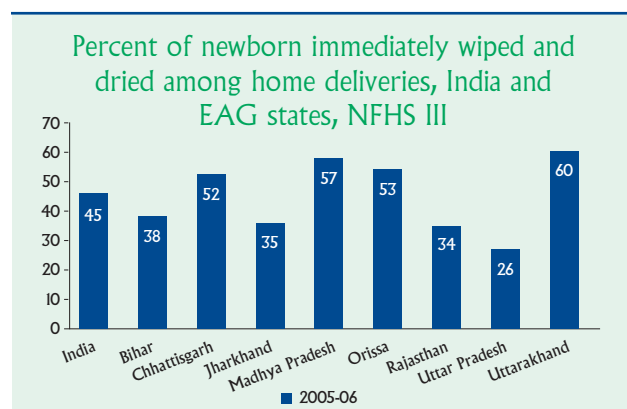


- Neonatal mortality is highest among those born to mothers under 20 years of age, those born of high birth order, those born of a birth interval less than 2 years, and for very small babies[‡].
- Most services for infants focus on the post-neonatal period after the first month of life, though the majority of deaths to children occur within the first 28 days.

- Use of simple technologies to reduce neonatal deaths is low. For example, only 20% of home deliveries used a disposable delivery kit[†].



- Less than half of the newborns are wiped and dried immediately after delivery exposing them to hypothermia[†].



What works to reduce neonatal deaths

- Coverage of all pregnant women with full antenatal care, providing assistance at delivery and postnatal care including emergency care[‡].
- Health interventions that focus on curtailing risks arising from the mothers' younger age at childbirth, low birth weight, higher order births, and short birth intervals[‡].
- Immediate and exclusive breastfeeding.
- Prevention and management of hypothermia.

- Clean delivery and cord care.
- Community-based pneumonia case management using antibiotics.

What more needs to be done?

- Increase coverage of deliveries attended by skilled health personnel and backed by obstetric and neonatal emergency care.
- Scale-up evidence-based interventions that improve essential neonatal care and care seeking behaviour, particularly for pre-term neonates in the early postnatal period[#].
- Increase access to medical care for sick newborns.
- Gather evidence about the most effective referral systems for primary level facilities[£].
- Document effective approaches for taking small successful newborn care interventions to scale and study which factors are important in scaling up effective neonatal care interventions[£].

References

*Estimated based on the project population of India by the Technical Group on Population Projection, RGI, India, 2008 and Vital Rates from SRS.

[†]National Family Health Survey (NFHS III), 2005 – 06, India: Volume I, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, September 2007.

[‡]Joy E. Lawn et. al, "4 million Neonatal Deaths: When, Where, Why?" *The Lancet*, 2005

[‡]Perianayagam Arokiasamy and Abishek Gautam. *Neonatal Mortality in The Empowered Action Group States of India: Trends and Determinants. Journal of Biosocial Science (2008), 40:183–201 Cambridge University Press, 2007*

[#]A H Baqui et al, "Rates, timing and causes of neonatal deaths in rural India: Implications for neonatal health programs", *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 2006; 84–706–713

[£]Community based interventions that improve newborn health outcomes: A review of evidence in South Asia, *Evidence Review Series, Vistaar Project, India, Intra Health International, March 2008*

For further information, contact: mchstar@gmail.com

This fact sheet is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this fact sheet are the sole responsibility of Emerging Markets Group Ltd. and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.