

Death at birth

India has persistently high rates of newborn mortality, over three lakh a year, and accounts for 29 per cent of all first-day deaths globally.

MORE than one million babies die on the first day of life globally, making the first 24 hours the most dangerous day for babies in nearly every country.

These are some of the key findings in Save the Children's 14th annual "State of the World's Mothers" report:

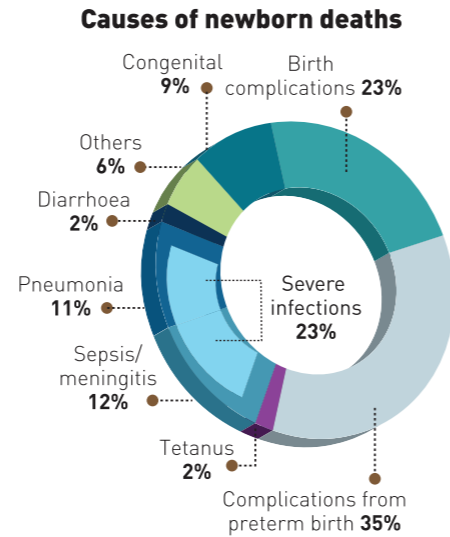
- Every year, 40 million women give birth at home without the help of a skilled birth attendant.
- Every day, 800 women die during pregnancy or childbirth and 8,000 newborn babies die in their first month of life.
- Newborn deaths account for 43 per cent of all deaths among children under age five.
- Three million newborn babies die every year—mostly owing to easily preven-

table or treatable causes such as infections, complications at birth and complications of prematurity.

- Sixty per cent of infant deaths occur in the first month of life. Among those, nearly three-fourths (two million a year) occur in the first week after birth.
- Nearly all newborn and maternal deaths (98 and 99 per cent, respectively) occur in developing countries where pregnant women and newborn babies lack access to basic health-care services.

THE INDIAN SCENE

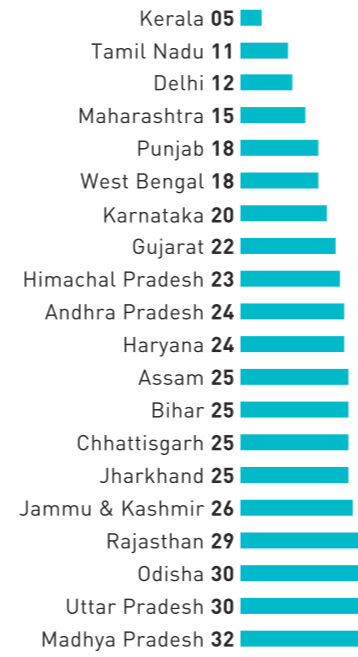
India has persistently high rates of newborn mortality—over three lakh a year—and accounts for 29 per cent of all first-



day deaths globally, says the report.

Quoting Sample Registration Survey (SRS 2011) figures, the report says Madhya Pradesh has the highest burden of early newborn deaths at 32, followed closely by Uttar Pradesh and Odisha (30). Kerala is the leader in reducing neonatal mortality by a wide margin, while Tamil Nadu, Delhi and

Distribution of early neonatal mortality in selected Indian States



Neonatal mortality rate: Number of infants dying in fewer than seven days of life per 1,000 live births.

Maharashtra too have bucked the national rate of 24.

Clearly, all babies born in India do not get an equal chance of survival. Inequities are persistent and widening.

Children born in socially and economically disadvantaged families have a higher newborn mortality level.

Babies born to the poorest families have a much higher risk of death compared with babies from the richest families.

Children from poor households are more likely to be exposed to diseases and have lower resistance because of malnutrition. They are also less likely to receive preventive interventions as their families have limited resources.

Inter-State disparities: The highest regional inequality in early neonatal mortality is in the Empowered Action Group (EAG) region, which is the most backward in terms of socio-economic and health indicators, such as Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

Rural-Urban divide: Rural areas distinctively show higher newborn mortality rates than urban centres. However, recent evidence shows that health indicators among the urban poor are equally bad, sometimes even worse.

Education: Another inequity exists in the level of education and age of the mother. For successive years neonatal mortality rate among children born to illiterate mothers has been higher than those born to mothers with some education.

Age of mother: The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) data also show that neonatal death is directly related to the mother's age at birth. The lower the age, the lesser will be her baby's chance of survival.

Caste difference: Children born to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families have a higher risk of dying than others. While there has been a decline in child mortality in all other social groups, the decline among these two groups has been much lower.

Source: Save the Children's "State of the World's Mothers, 2013" report.

Low-cost products to save over one million babies

Major causes of newborn deaths

Birth complications

23%



Resuscitation equipment to help babies breathe.

Lives saved 229,000
Cost \$0.50-\$6.00

Preterm birth

35%

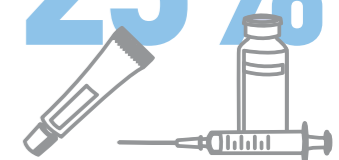


Corticosteroids for mothers to reduce deaths of preterm babies.

Lives saved 340,000
Cost \$0.51

Infections

25%



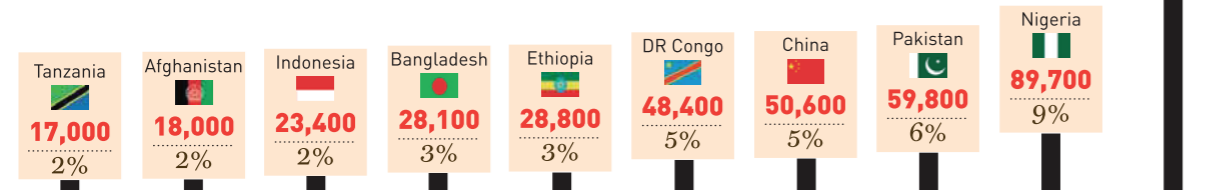
Chlorhexidine to prevent babies' umbilical cord infections. Injectable antibiotics to treat newborn sepsis and pneumonia.

Cost \$0.23 \$0.13-\$2.03
Lives saved 509,000

Universal coverage of these four products could save 1,077,000 newborn lives in 75 high-mortality countries each year.



Countries with most first-day deaths and their share in the global total



Total number of first-day deaths - 6,73,200 | Share of global first-day deaths - 64% | Total differs from column sum because of rounding.