

“Newborn survival is being left behind despite well-documented, cost-effective solutions to prevent these deaths,” says Dr. Flavia Bustreo, WHO Assistant Director-General for Family, Women's and Children's Health. “With four years to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, more attention and action for newborns is critical.”

Almost 99% of newborn deaths occur in the developing world. The new study found that in part because of their large populations, more than half of these deaths now happen in just five large countries – India, Nigeria, Pakistan, China and Democratic Republic of the Congo. India alone has more than 900,000 newborn deaths per year, nearly 28% of the global total. Nigeria, the world's seventh most populous country, now ranks second in newborn deaths up from fifth in 1990. This is due to an increase in the total number of births while the risk of newborn death has decreased only slightly. In contrast, because the number of births went down and the risk of newborn death was cut in half (23 to 11 per 1000), China moved from second place to fourth place.

With a reduction of 1% per year, Africa has seen the slowest progress of any region in the world. Among the 15 countries with more than 39 neonatal deaths per 1000 live births, 12 were from the WHO African Region (Angola, Burundi, Chad, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone) plus Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia. At the current rate of progress it would take the African continent more than 150 years to reach U.S. or U.K. newborn survival levels.

Of the ten countries with a newborn mortality reduction of more than two-thirds in these two decades, eight were high income countries (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Luxembourg, Oman, San Marino, and Singapore), and two were middle income countries (Maldives and Serbia).

“This study shows in stark terms that where babies are born dramatically influences their chances of survival, and that especially in Africa far too many mothers experience the heartbreak of losing their baby,” said co-author Dr. Joy Lawn of Save the Children's Saving Newborn Lives program. “Millions of babies should not be dying when there are proven, cost-effective interventions to prevent these deaths.”

To read the paper in PLoS Medicine please go to:

<http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1001080>

More information:

1. Country specific data on neonatal mortality >> [link](#):
2. Audiovisual material http://terrance.who.int/mediacentre/broadcast_material/NMR/

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