

Despite drop in under-five mortality rate, 7,000 newborns die every day – UN report

19 October 2017 – More must be done to stop babies from dying the day they are born, United Nations agencies said in a new report issued Thursday, which argued that life-saving know-how and technologies must be made readily available – particularly in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa – where they are most needed.

Although the number of children dying before age five is at a new low – 5.6 million in 2016 compared with nearly 9.9 million in 2000 – the proportion of newborn deaths during that period has jumped from 41 to 46 per cent – or 7,000 babies.

This is according to the [Levels and Trends in Child Mortality 2017](#), released today by the Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (IGME) – comprised of the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)), the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), the World Bank and the Population Division in the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs.

“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,” said Stefan Swartling Peterson, the UN Children’s Fund’s (UNICEF) Chief of Health, in a joint press statement.

But without a greater effort 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 added.

Current trends suggest that between 2017 and 2030, 30 million newborns will die within first 28 days of life. As such, the agencies stress that measures must be taken to achieve universal health coverage and ensure that more newborns survive and thrive, including by serving marginalized families.

Universal health coverage and improving quality and availability of services

“To prevent illness, families require financial power, their voices to be heard and access to quality care,” says Dr. Flavia Bustreo, WHO’s Assistant Director-General for Family, Women’s and Children’s Health. “Improving quality of services and timely care during and after childbirth must be prioritized.”

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

“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](#),” he added, referring to the principle financing arm of the UN-backed [Every Woman Every Child](#) initiative.

Despite progress, large disparities in child survival still exist across regions and countries – especially in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

“This new report highlights the remarkable progress since 2000 in reducing mortality among children under age five,” said UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Liu Zhenmin.

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 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target on ending preventable childhood deaths and for ensuring that no one will be left behind.