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Under-5 Girls Face High Mortality in India: UNICEF

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Why in News

Recently, the **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** released the '**Levels and Trends in Child Mortality**' report. According to it, unlike global trends, India's under-5 mortality of girls exceeded that of boys in 2018.

- On average, boys are expected to have a higher probability of dying before reaching age-5 than girls.
- The global report states that fewer countries showed gender disparities in child mortality in 2018.

Key Points

- Countries primarily located in **Southern Asia and Western Asia** have a significantly higher risk of girls dying before age 5.
- According to the report, half of all under-5 deaths in 2018 occurred in **five** countries: **India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia**.
India and Nigeria alone account for about a third.
- Despite the tremendous progress in child survival made over the past two decades, one child or young adolescent died every five seconds in 2018.
- The burden of child mortality is determined both by the **mortality rate** (the proportion of children who die) and by the **estimated population** of any given State (total number of annual births).
- Current trends predict that close to 10 million 5 to 14 year olds and 52 million children under 5 years of age, will die between 2019 and 2030. Almost half of these under-5 deaths will be newborns.

Indian Context

- The majority of child mortality cases in India are attributable to **deaths during the neonatal period**.
 - The **major causes of neonatal mortality** are preterm birth, intrapartum related events and neonatal infection.
 - In the **post-neonatal period**, the major direct causes of death are **diarrhoea** and **pneumonia**.
- **India's neonatal mortality rate is 23 per 1,000 live births**.
According to India's **2017 Sample Registration System (SRS)**, the States with the highest burden of neonatal mortality are **Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh, with 32, 33 and 30 neonatal deaths** per 1,000 live births, respectively.
- **Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttarakhand** showed the **largest gender gaps** in under-5 mortality.
Uttar Pradesh is the state with the **highest number of estimated newborn deaths** in India, both because of the **high neonatal mortality rate** and because of the **large number of births** that occur every year in the State.

Wide gap

Among bigger States in India, the gender gap in the under-five mortality rate was most pronounced in Jharkhand (girls: 38 and boys: 30). Madhya Pradesh had the highest overall under-five mortality (55) while Kerala had the least (12)

State	Under-five mortality rate (girls)	Under-five mortality rate (boys)	Gap	Under-five mortality rate
Jharkhand	38	30	8	34
Assam	51	45	6	48
Haryana	38	32	6	35
Uttar Pradesh	48	43	5	46
Rajasthan	45	41	4	43
Bihar	43	39	4	41

■ Among the **5.3 million** under-five deaths in 2018, **2.9 million** were of boys and **2.4 million** of girls

■ On average, **15,000** children died before age 5 every day in 2018 compared to **34,000** in 1990 and **27,000** in 2000



Under-five mortality of girls in Kerala was 11

Steps to be Taken

- It is urgently required to further accelerate progress in preventing child deaths by **adopting proactive measures**.
- Deaths of newborns can be prevented by reaching **high coverage of quality antenatal care, skilled care at birth, postnatal care for mother and baby, and care of small and sick newborns**.

Source: TH