



UN Report on Child Mortality

According to the **United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UNIGME)** about 8,00,000 infant deaths were reported in India in 2017, the lowest in five years. However, the infant death numbers still remained the highest in the world.

Key Findings

- Despite progress over the past two decades, in 2017 about 6 million children and young adolescents died, mostly from preventable causes.
- Most children under five **die due to preventable or treatable causes** such as complications during birth, pneumonia, diarrhea, neonatal sepsis and malaria.
- Given the crucial early stages of education that take place at these ages, as well as the onset of adolescence and the broader social implications that accompany that stage of life, the survival and well-being of children during this crucial period should not be ignored.
- Globally, the majority of child and young adolescent deaths occur at the youngest ages and the **risk of dying is highest in the first month of life.**
- Around the world remarkable progress in child survival has been made and millions of children have better survival chances than in 1990.
- **Survival chances** for children and young adolescents are **not the same across regions and countries.** Globally, in 2017, half of all deaths under five years of age took place in sub-Saharan Africa, and another 30 percent in Southern Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, 1 in 13 children died before their fifth birthday. In high-income countries, that number was 1 in 185.
- Continued preventive and curative lifesaving interventions need to be provided to children beyond the neonatal period, particularly in low-income countries, where the mortality rates for children aged 1-4 remain high.
- With shifting demographics, the **burden of child deaths is heaviest in sub-Saharan Africa.**
- The number of countries with gender disparities in child mortality continues to decline.
- Children are dying because of who they are and the environments into which they were born - whether they be impoverished families or marginalized communities.
- Eliminating disparities between countries would save millions of lives as a **baby born in sub-Saharan Africa or in Southern Asia was nine times more likely to die in the first month** than a baby born in a high-income country.
- In more than a quarter of all countries, urgent action is needed to **accelerate reductions in child mortality** to reach the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** targets on child survival.
- Accelerating progress to achieve the SDG target by 2030 in countries that are falling behind would mean averting almost 10 million under-five deaths compared with the current scenario.
- Neonatal mortality declined globally and in all regions but more slowly than mortality among children aged 1-11 months or children aged 1-4 years in most cases.
- Despite declining neonatal mortality levels, marked disparities in neonatal mortality exist across regions and countries.

In Context of India

- **Infant deaths were reported highest in the world in India,** followed by Nigeria, Pakistan and Democratic Republic of Congo.
- India's under five mortality rate has been estimated at **39 deaths per 1,000 live births,** the same as the global average. But the **gender gap in child survival remains far below the**

- global average** which means that girl children, after they are born, face discrimination in India.
- The number of Indian **children who died before their fifth birthday went below one million for the first time**. Initiatives like **Mission Indradhanush, Mother and Child Tracking System and neonatal ICUs** in every district, have helped India to achieve remarkable progress over the last five years.
 - India accounts for 18 per cent of global births, and now also 18 per cent of global child deaths following a steady decline from 22 per cent in 2012.

Way Forward

- Achieving the ambitious child survival goals requires ensuring **universal access to safe, effective, high-quality and affordable care for women, children and adolescents**.
- Measures should be taken to ensure early **registration of pregnancies**, and for early detection of high risk cases, improving institutional deliveries, providing skill development training to health staff.
- Education campaign should be taken up to aware the mother of the merits of **antenatal care, institutional delivery, importance of exclusive breast feeding, immunization, home care for diarrhoea**; all these are meant to create awareness among family members to provide support to women during pregnancies and deliveries.
- India continues to show impressive decline in child deaths. The **investment on ensuring holistic nutrition** under the POSHAN campaign and national commitment to make India open defecation-free by 2019 are steps that will help in accelerating progress further.
- Mortality rates among children and young adolescents are not only key indicators for child and young adolescent well-being, but, more broadly, for **sustainable social and economic development**.
- **SDG goal 3** calls for an end to preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age and specifies that all countries should aim to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 deaths per 1,000 live births and under-five mortality to at least as low as **25 deaths per 1,000 live births by 2030**.