

Giving Newborns the Best Chance for Survival

Reducing Newborn Deaths in Bhutan



Facts about Newborn (Neonatal) Death:

- The death that occurs within 28 days of birth of any live-born baby regardless of weight or duration gestational age.
- Neonatal deaths now account for almost half (43%) of child deaths globally.
- Although number of child deaths worldwide has reduced in recent decades, progress in newborn mortality reduction has lagged substantially.
- Too many newborns continue to die each year despite the availability of feasible, evidence-based solutions.

Situation of Newborn Health in Bhutan:

- Bhutan has made significant progress in reducing child deaths. The country has achieved the Millennium Development Goal 4 target with infant and under-five deaths currently 30/1,000 live births and 37.3/1,000 live births respectively, (according to National Health Survey (NHS) MoH 2012). Despite this progress in improving survival of children, newborn death is still high.
- Currently, 21 out of 1,000 babies born alive die within the first month of birth, indicating that about 67% of infant deaths occur in the first 28 days of birth(NHS, MoH 2012).
- There is not yet a national action plan for accelerating reduction of newborn deaths.

About 75% of all newborn deaths result from three preventable and treatable conditions

Major causes of newborn deaths*

Complications due to prematurity	38%
Neonatal infection	21%
Congenital abnormalities	16%

*Review of Maternal and Newborn Death Investigation, Ministry of Health, 2013

Despite Bhutan's significant progress in improving survival of children, **newborn death is still high**, accounting for more than half of all infant deaths occurring in the first 28 days of birth



Every Newborn Action Plan to End Preventable Deaths:

Developed in response to country demand, the Every Newborn Action Plan sets out a clear vision of how to improve newborn health and prevent still-births by 2035. The plan aims at government leadership and to provide guidance on how to strengthen newborn health components in existing health sector plans and strategies, especially those that relate to reproductive, maternal and child health. Every Newborn calls upon all stakeholders to take specific actions to improve access to, and quality of health care for women and newborns within the continuum of care. Bhutan aims to develop the plan in 2015.



What has been done?

- Development of National Child Health Strategy.
- Capacity building of service providers to improve quality of maternal and newborn care.
- Piloting of postnatal home visits in three low performing districts of Chukha, Samtse and Trashigang and endorsement by the Ministry of Health for scaling up.

What needs to be done?

- Analysis of the newborn health situation.
- Development of a National Action Plan for newborn health.
- Roll-out and monitor implementation of the National Action Plan.
- Continuous advocacy for maternal and newborn health.

Key Partners:

- Ministry of Health
- Health workers and village health workers
- Parliamentarians
- Community leaders
- Media
- Development partners

KEY MESSAGES:

- With newborn deaths still accounting for 21% of under-five deaths in Bhutan, newborn health requires renewed commitment, greater visibility and collaborative efforts to sustain the gains made in reducing under-five deaths.
- Newborn health is part of the “unfinished agenda” of the Millennium Development Goals for women’s and children’s health.
- Investing in quality care around the time of birth and special care for sick and small newborns could save the lives of most babies born each year as well as prevent stillbirths. Cost-effective solutions are available to protect women and children from the most crucial day of their lives which is the day of birth.
- Qualified and equipped health workers, including those with midwifery skills, and availability of essential commodities are crucial to save the lives of most newborns.

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