



STATE OF THE WORLD'S NEWBORNS

A Report from Saving Newborn Lives



“We know what needs to be done. We have the tools. It is time to marshal global political will and to commit unprecedented resources to saving newborn lives. We call on the world to give all children a healthy start now.”

Melinda French Gates

Co-founder,
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

MAKING NEWBORN LIVES A PRIORITY

Each year, an estimated four million babies die before they reach the age of one month, and four million more are stillborn (dying between 22 weeks of pregnancy and birth). Ninety-eight percent of these newborn deaths take place in developing countries. For the most part, newborns die at home, in the absence of any skilled health care.

State of the World's Newborns, the first-ever study on global newborn health from Save the Children, analyzes the most recent data from 163 countries and points to the alarming lack of health care for newborns and mothers in virtually all impoverished countries. This report, published with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, highlights a handful of



proven, cost-effective solutions that can significantly reduce the number of newborns who die each year. Deaths among children under five have been reduced since 1990—an improvement that can be traced to the 1990 UN Special Summit on Children where world leaders made a commitment to eradicating the chief causes of death among young children. But health care for newborns has slipped between the cracks, and consequently, newborn death rates have remained virtually stagnant. Indeed, newborn deaths now constitute over 40 percent of all deaths among children under the age of five. We now recognize that additional gains in child survival will depend in large measure on saving newborn lives. This fact sheet provides an overview of the findings of *State of the World's Newborns* and essential recommendations to improve newborn and maternal health care.

THE VULNERABLE NEWBORN

People in industrialized nations accustomed to specialized medical attention and hospital-based care find it hard to imagine that millions of babies die every year for lack of simple, low-

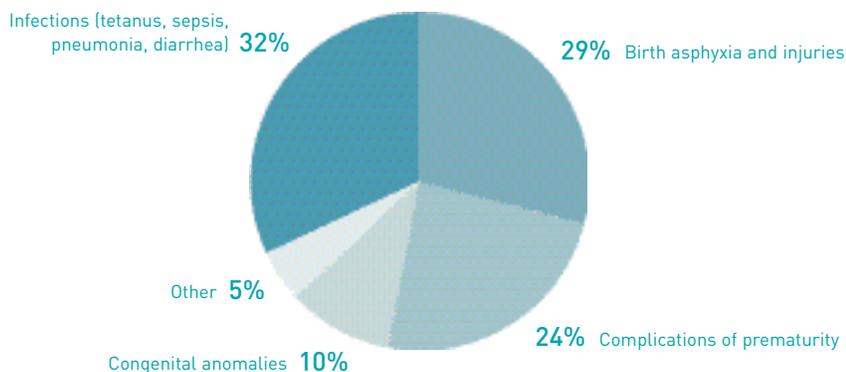
cost care such as two doses of tetanus toxoid vaccine for a mother during pregnancy, training in midwifery skills for birth attendants, or encouraging a mother to breastfeed her baby and keep her (or him) warm. These are examples of measures we know can help save countless newborn lives. The challenge now is to make these and other relatively simple, affordable measures more widely available and used, while working to develop new and better community-based measures to treat certain newborn complications.

According to the World Health Organization's estimates for 2001, infections account for 32 percent of newborn deaths (e.g., respiratory infection, tetanus, sepsis, and diarrhea), complications of prematurity explain a further 24 percent, and birth asphyxia and injuries cause 29 percent. An important secondary factor in 40 to 80 percent of neonatal deaths is low birth weight (a weight of less than 2,500 grams at birth). In addition to inadequate care of newborns, another major cause of neonatal deaths in developing countries is the poor health of mothers, especially during pregnancy, delivery, and early postpartum period.

ESSENTIAL CARE FOR NEWBORN HEALTH

Reducing newborn and maternal mortality does not require medical breakthroughs, expensive technology or the makeover of national health systems. Major strides can be made by putting existing solutions into general practice, while continuing to search for the most effective ways to bring about desired behavioral changes, and to treat certain complications, such as asphyxia and infections in the newborn. Saving Newborn Lives has identified a comprehensive package of health care solutions for newborns and mothers:

DIRECT CAUSES OF NEONATAL DEATHS



ESSENTIAL CARE FOR NEWBORN HEALTH



CARE OF FUTURE MOTHERS

- Improve the status of women
- Improve women's health and family planning services
- Improve the nutrition of girls
- Discourage early marriages and early childbearing
- Promote safer sexual practices
- Provide opportunities for female education

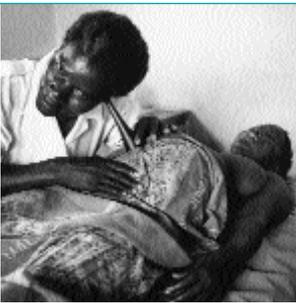


CARE DURING PREGNANCY

- Improve the nutrition of pregnant women
- Immunize against tetanus
- Screen and treat infections, especially syphilis and malaria
- Improve communication and counseling: birth preparedness, awareness of danger signs, and immediate and exclusive breastfeeding

SPECIAL ATTENTION

- Monitor and treat pregnancy complications, such as anemia, preeclampsia, and bleeding
- Promote voluntary counseling and testing for HIV
- Reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of HIV



CARE AT TIME OF BIRTH

- Ensure skilled care at delivery
- Provide for clean delivery: clean hands, clean delivery surface, clean cord cutting, tying and stump care, and clean clothes
- Keep the newborn warm: dry and wrap baby immediately, including head cover, or put skin-to-skin with mother and cover
- Initiate immediate, exclusive breastfeeding within one hour
- Give prophylactic eye care, as appropriate

SPECIAL ATTENTION

- Recognize danger signs in both mother and baby and avoid delay in seeking care and referral
- Recognize and resuscitate asphyxiated babies immediately
- Pay special attention to warmth, feeding, and hygiene practices for preterm and LBW babies



CARE AFTER BIRTH

- Ensure early postnatal contact
- Promote continued exclusive breastfeeding
- Maintain hygiene to prevent infection: ensure clean cord care and counsel mother on general hygiene practices, such as hand-washing
- Provide immunizations such as BCG, OPV, and hepatitis B vaccines, as appropriate
- Promote birth spacing

SPECIAL ATTENTION

- Recognize danger signs in both mother and newborn, particularly of infections, and avoid delay in seeking care and referral
- Support HIV positive mothers to make appropriate, sustainable choices about feeding
- Continue to pay special attention to warmth, feeding, and hygienic practices for LBW babies



“Despite the daunting magnitude of newborn mortality each year, we can reverse this trend by initiating key health solutions that are proven, affordable and doable. We count on the world’s leaders to take stock of how mothers and newborns fare in every country. Investing in this most basic partnership of all—between mother and newborn—is the first and best step in ensuring healthy children, prosperous families and strong communities.”

Charles MacCormack
President, Save the Children

CALL TO ACTION

With the support and collaboration of national decision-makers, community leaders, health care professionals, and development assistance agencies, the world’s newborns can receive the care and resources they need to survive and thrive. Specifically, we call on policy-makers to:

- Establish newborn care as a priority in national health plans and health reform programs.
- Strengthen and expand use of proven cost-effective practices and services.
- Conduct appropriate research to test promising new approaches and technologies and enhance the understanding of cultural and economic factors affecting newborn care.
- Foster and promote strategic partnerships to achieve greater scale and impact.
- Support programs that seek to improve women’s nutrition and access to health and family planning services.

SAVING NEWBORN LIVES INITIATIVE

Saving Newborn Lives, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is a 15-year global initiative to improve the health and survival of newborns in the developing world. Saving Newborn Lives works with governments, local communities and partner agencies in developing countries to make progress toward real and lasting change in newborn health.

Saving Newborn Lives is part of Save the Children’s Every Mother/Every Child Campaign, a global public awareness and advocacy campaign designed to ensure that every mother in the developing world has the tools she needs so that she and her children can survive and thrive.

SAVE THE CHILDREN is a leading international nonprofit child-assistance organization working in over 40 countries worldwide, including the United States. Our mission is to make lasting positive change in the lives of children in need. Save the Children is a member of the international Save the Children Alliance, a worldwide network of 30 independent Save the Children organizations working in more than 100 countries to ensure the well-being and protect the rights of children everywhere.



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To learn more and to get involved, log on to our website at www.savethechildren.org or call 1-800-728-3843.

PHOTOGRAPHY Thomas L. Kelly, Brian Moody, Anne Tinker