

MAKE PRETERM BIRTH PREVENTION AND CARE A PRIORITY

- Preterm birth is defined as babies born alive before 37 weeks of pregnancy are completed.
- An estimated 15 million babies are born preterm every year – more than 1 in 10 babies around the world (WHO).
- Preterm birth complications are the leading cause of death for children under 5, causing an estimated 1 million deaths in 2015 globally (UNICEF).
- While preterm birth rates are rising in most countries, preterm deaths are concentrated in low- and middle-income countries, and three countries – India, Nigeria and Pakistan – account for more than half of all deaths (UNICEF).
- The new global target ending preventable newborn and child deaths by 2030 (SDG 3.2) cannot be met without reducing preterm deaths.
- Prioritizing investments in preterm birth prevention and care will improve newborn health and development, reduce maternal mortality and stillbirths, relieve families from untold suffering, and save healthcare systems hundreds of millions of dollars every year.
- Improving **quality, equity and dignity** in the provision of healthcare is critical to ensuring the health and wellbeing of women, newborns, children and adolescents.



ACTION NEEDED FROM ALL OF SOCIETY

To prevent preterm births

- Invest in “LINC factor” (lifestyle, infection, nutrition and contraception) interventions and programs that reduce risks of preterm birth by ensuring optimal health of pregnant women.
- Invest in midwife-led continuity of care, which reduces preterm birth by 24% (WHO ANC Guidelines 2016).
- Integrate preterm birth prevention with other strategies targeting families and communities.
- Fund and report on research designed to identify and manage risk factors.

To care for women and their babies during and after preterm labor

- Ensure that women have access to health care facilities with qualified staff, especially qualified midwives, neonatal nurses or other skilled birth attendants; promote the midwife-led continuity of care model.
- Ensure healthcare providers are trained to safely identify and manage care for preterm, small and sick newborns.
- Ensure health facilities have the equipment and supplies they need so providers can safely care for early/small and sick newborns.
- Ensure communication between health providers and families on preterm babies’ special needs, and provide physical and emotional support to the family.
- Measure the performance of staff, facilities and health systems, and set ambitious targets to reduce preterm birth rates, deaths and disability.
- Disseminate the Joint Statements on Preterm Birth, Kangaroo Mother Care, and Quality of Care by the major international and national professional associations, and encourage endorsing professional associations to take promised actions to incorporate evidence-based standards of care into their training programs.

Premature babies are among the most vulnerable and are entitled to the same quality, equity and dignity as every individual.

ENSURE RESPECTFUL, FAMILY-CENTERED CARE TO HELP PRETERM BABIES THRIVE

- Increased attention must be given not only to access of healthcare, but also to **ensuring quality and respectful care, equitably.**
- **Do no harm** by ensuring that health care providers are trained and have the supplies and equipment needed to safely manage the care of preterm, small and sick newborns.
- Promote **family-centered approaches** to caring for mom and baby; keep families together, and respect and empower parents as rights bearers, decision-makers, and partners in care.
- Ensure all treatments and interventions have **consent of the mother and family.**
- Promote **respectful maternity care for the mother-baby pair**, both by health providers and at home, and including extra emotional and physical support. The lack of respectful maternity care is a major deterrent to the use of skilled care for pregnancy and childbirth.
- **Promote respect for healthcare providers**, which empowers them in turn to provide respectful care.
- **Fight the stigma** that prevents care-seeking or valuing the preterm baby; raise awareness that preterm and small babies are as valuable as other newborns and with proper care can survive and thrive.
- **Register and weigh all babies at birth** to ensure that all babies are counted.

Respectful care encompasses mothers, babies, and families as a unit, from pre-pregnancy through labor, delivery and care of the child. **It covers a multitude of topics, and we encourage you to highlight specific messaging from this message map that is important to you.**

#worldprematurityday