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## 2M babies die within 24 hours

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As many as two million babies born in the developing world every year die within the first 24 hours of life, while a further one million die during the following week, a major new report has found.

The report, *State of the World's Mothers*, has been published by Save the Children, an independent organisation which aims to create lasting change for children around the world.

It notes that of the more than 10 million children under the age of five who die every year, around two million die within the first 24 hours. A further one million die between days two and seven. While a total of four million die within the first month.

"The first hours, days and weeks of a baby's life are critical. Yet only a tiny minority of babies in poor countries receive proper healthcare during this highly vulnerable period", explained Save the Children CEO, Charles MacCormack.

He said that simple and low cost health measures, such as immunising women against tetanus and providing a skilled attendant at birth, could reduce newborn deaths 'by as much as 70% if provided universally'.



The report pointed out that most newborn deaths are the result of preventable or treatable causes, such as infections, low birth weight or complications at birth.

"Newborn deaths are one of the world's most neglected health problems. While there has been significant progress in reducing deaths among children under five, over the past decade, we have made little progress in reducing mortality rates for babies during the first month of life", Mr MacCormack said.

In fact, he added, newborn deaths are so common in some parts of the developing world that parents put off naming their babies until they are up to three months old.

The report notes that 10 countries account for more than two-thirds of all newborn deaths worldwide. The highest number of deaths take place in India (one million) and China (416,000). However because of their large populations, neither of these countries has the highest rate of newborn deaths.

"Overall the region of the world with the highest newborn death rates is sub-Saharan Africa, where one out of five mothers has lost at least one baby in childbirth", it said.

The report makes a number of recommendations, including:

- Increased investment to allow young females in poor countries to have greater access to education, modern contraception and better nutrition.
- Increased provision of low cost, simple solutions that save lives during pregnancy, at birth and immediately after birth, such as tetanus immunisation and prompt treatment of newborn infections.
- Greater availability of good quality healthcare to mothers after childbirth.

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