Newborn Mortality

Definitions

Newborn/neonatal refers to the first 28 days of life of a child. Early neonatal refers to the first 7 days.
Post-natal includes babies and mothers between birth and 6 weeks after birth.
Infant: refers to babies between birth and 12 months. This means that it includes both newborn and post-natal deaths.
Young infant refers to babies between 0 and 2 months.

REMEMBER: both newborn mortality and post-natal mortality are part of infant mortality, and they all contribute to Under 5 and to child mortality!

Causes of Newborn Mortality in Ghana (MICS 2011)

What is Newborn mortality?

In Ghana, a new-born baby dies every 15 minutes, and new-born deaths contribute to 50% of all infants’ deaths!

But what exactly does it mean?

Newborn mortality is expressed, like all mortality indicators, as a rate indicating the probability of dying between birth and exactly 28 days, expressed per 1,000 live births.

So when you hear that in Ghana there is a newborn mortality rate of 32, it means that out 1,000 babies that are born, 32 will die before they reach the age of 28 days.

A common mistake is to interpret it as a percentage, which is wrong because it would mean that ten times more babies die every year!

But nonetheless 32 babies out of 1,000 is a very high number, and it is even higher in the northern regions of Ghana, where the number increases to 35. Twenty-six of these babies (~75% of them) will die in their first week, and seventeen of them (~50%) in the first 24 hours.
Where do these numbers come from?

Nationally representative estimates of child mortality come from several types of sources:

- Civil registration systems,
- Censuses, and
- Sampled surveys.

The preferred source of data would be a civil registration system that records births and deaths on a continuous basis and covers the entire population.

However, despite numerous improvements, Ghana to date remains without a fully functioning vital registration system to accurately record all births and deaths. Household surveys, such as the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), which ask about survival of children, are the basis of child mortality estimates in Ghana. The figures we are using at the moment are from the 2011 MICS, but from next year we will be quoting the 2014 DHS (data is currently being collected).

What happens in the rest of the world?

Ghana is not alone. A total of 2.9 million of newborns die every year worldwide, and because mortality in the neonatal period tends to decline more slowly than the post-neonatal period (1-59 months), every region of the world is experiencing an increase in the proportion of new born deaths. As a result, neonatal deaths as a proportion of under-five deaths increased globally from 37% in 1990 to 44% in 2013.

Contributing factors

- Low adoption of family planning methods (25%)
- High total fertility rate (4.3 children per woman)
- High adolescent birth rate (60/100 women giving birth are teenagers)
- Low utilization of skilled delivery (68% on average, ranging between 37.3% in Northern region and 89.75 in Greater Accra)

To know more, visit:

- http://www.everynewborn.org/about

Or contact our in-house expert, Hari Banskota: hbanskota@unicef.org

Contact Us

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Next Issue: Under-nutrition
**QUIZ!**

**THE STATS CHALLENGE**

**Infant mortality refers to:**
A. Mortality between 0 and 12 months
B. Mortality between 28 days and 12 months
C. Mortality under 2 years of age

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