

PERINATAL SITUATION IN KOSOVO FOR YEARS 2000 – 2004

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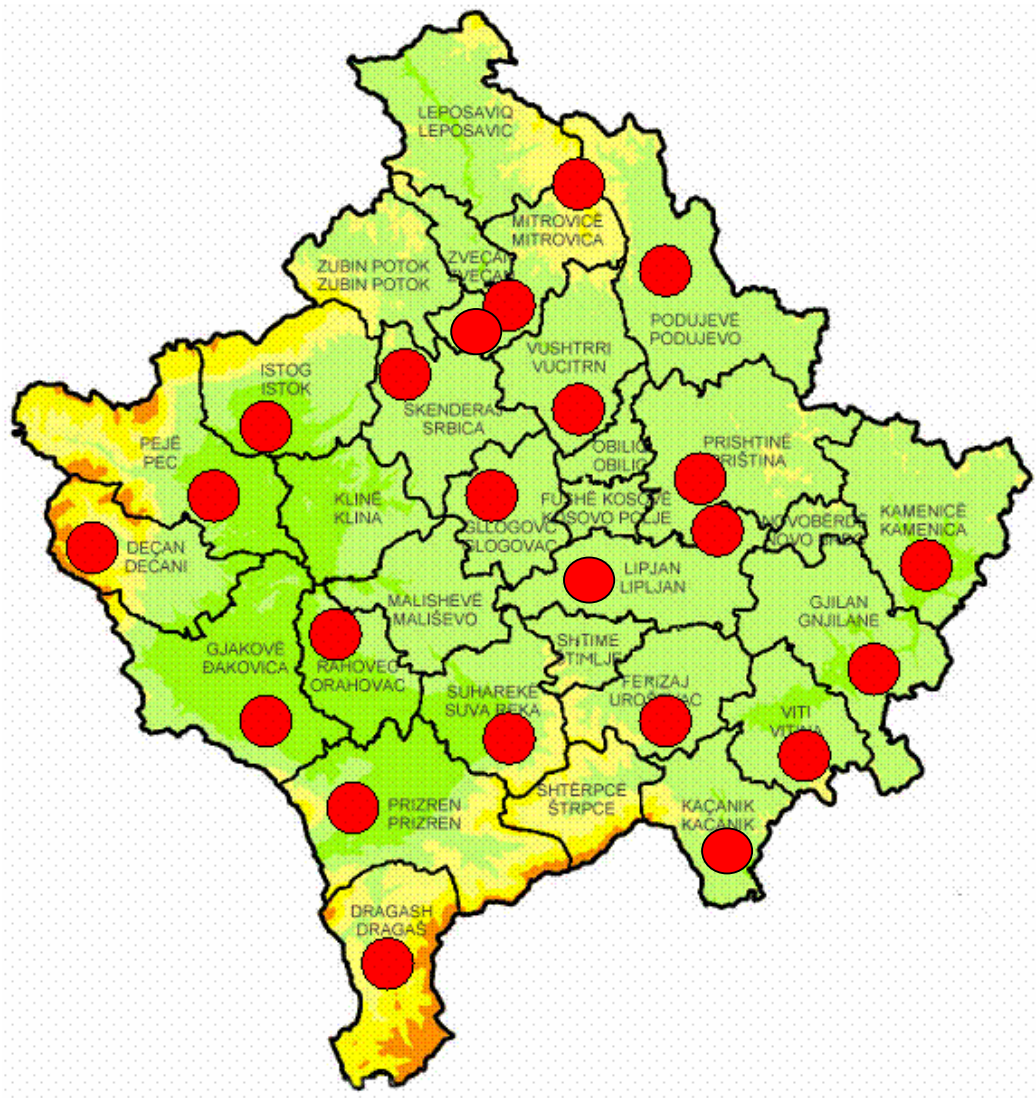
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Table of Contents

Acknowledgment.....	iv
Executive Summary	1
Introduction	2
Perinatal data for years 2000 – 2004.....	4
Methodology.....	4
Main Perinatal Indicators in Kosovo	5
Human Resources	6
Medial Equipment	6
Reported number of deliveries for years 2000 – 2004	7
Perinatal Mortality Rate for years 2000 – 2004	9
Stillbirth Rate for years 2000 – 2004.....	12
Early Neonatal Mortality Rates for years 2000 – 2004	14
Maternal Mortality Ratio	14
Recommendations	19
Annex 1. KOSOVO MATERNITY ACTIVITY, 2000 – 2001 – 2002 – 2003 – 2004.....	21
Annex 2. KOSOVO MATERNITY ACTIVITY, JANUARY – DECEMBER 2004.....	22
References	23

Map of maternities in Kosovo¹



¹ Currently administered by the United Nations pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1244

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We would like to use this opportunity and to express our sincere acknowledgment and gratitude for their active support and understanding.

We do hope that this report will be helpful for further programme planning in mother and child health field, fill the existing data gap and determine the baseline mother and child healthy vital indicators.

Executive Summary

One of the major challenges for Kosovo medical society and International organizations is improvement of the health population status in particular mother and child health situation.

Six years after the end of the conflict the final Kosovo status is still not determined and there is a lack of accurate demographic and other health indicators data.

Lack of the mother and child health vital indicators still remains as one of the main issues. This report attempt to present and evaluate the perinatal situation in Kosovo from year 2000 to 2004.

The information were extracted from the delivery room and neonatal unit logbooks. The recording forms were distributed prior to the relevant staff in maternities. The data were collected also from Neonatal Unit of Pediatric Clinic in Prishtina for the number of newborns refereed and early neonatal deaths. Data from Gynecology and Obstetric ward of Mitrovica North Hospital and Graçanica are not reported regularly. There were no data collected on home deliveries or deliveries in private clinics.

Definitions and Indicators are based on the Family Planning, Maternal and Child Health and Reproductive Health, used in the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

Main Perinatal Indicators in Kosovo for years 2000 – 2004 are given in following table:

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Total number of deliveries	39 091	39 578	35 399	31 932	30 925
Total number of alive newborns	38 907	39 506	35 271	31 815	30 852
Total number of stillbirths	572	579	527	517	452
Stillbirths rate	14.5	14.4	14.7	15.9	14.4
Total number of neonatal deaths	577	574	444	375	352
Early neonatal mortality rate	1.48	1.45	1.26	11.8	11.4
Perinatal mortality rate	29.1 per 1000	28.7 per 1000	27.1 per 1000	27.6 per 1000	25.6 per 1000
Caesarean section rate	7.5	9.1	10.3	11.3	12.3
Sex ratio	1.08	1.09	1.06	N/A	1.06

Introduction

In 1999, Kosovo came under the administration of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo - UNMIK in partnership with the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Kosovo covers an area of 10.908 km² and its population is 2.1 million according to the projections by UNMIK for 2000 elections. Although accurate data is not available estimated age breakdown of the population is given in Table 1 below:

Table 1. General population figures by age groups in Kosovo, 2000

	Total population	Population aged less than 15 years	Population aged less than 5 years	Population aged less than 1 year
Number of persons	2.105.000	736.750	252.600	46.310
Percentage of Total population	100 %	35 %	12 %	2.2 %

Kosovo is characterized by a lack of accurate demographic data. The last commonly accepted census in Kosovo took place in 1981. Based on estimates Kosovo has a population of over 2 million.

The maternal, perinatal, infant and child health status of Kosovo's women and children is poor compared to the rest of Europe. The high maternal, perinatal and infant mortality rates reflect the need to improve the accessibility, utilization and quality of services for the prevention, detection and treatment of the health problems that occur during pregnancy, childbirth and infancy.

The infant mortality rate (IMR) is estimated at 49 per 1,000 live births (Demographic and Health Survey – DHS 2003) while under 5 mortality rate is 69 per 1000. Perinatal mortality rate for year 2004 is 25.6 per 1000 showing decline trend from 29.1 for 1000 in year 2000.

Average growth rate is estimated to be 2.01%. It is also estimated that 26% of the population are women of childbearing age.

The population of Kosovo is young, with a mean age of 25 years. Over half of the population is under 25 years of age and only eight per cent is over 60. Women of childbearing age (15-45 years) constitute 56% of the female population. The average number of people per household is 7.

In year 2000 issued UNMIK Regulation No. 2000/10 authorized the former Department of Health and Social Welfare to develop policies for health. Based on this, the Department of Health has issued the "Health Policy for Kosovo - 2001" to guide the development of Kosovo's health care and the first objective of the policy is Health Start in Life.

Economically, Kosovo is one of the least developed and poorest regions in Europe. The lack of economic development also impacts the health sector, with most indicators not in line with developed countries. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in 2003 is 790 USD. Recent World Bank data show that the number of people living in absolute

poverty has increased from 12 per cent in 2000 to 15 per cent in 2003. Unemployment is very high, with 57 per cent of the available workforce out of work. It is particularly concentrated among women and young people who have levels of close to 70 per cent.

Perinatal mortality records deaths occurring during late pregnancy (after 22 weeks gestation), at birth and during the first week of life (0-6 days). The poor reporting of vital events by the health institutions renders it difficult to estimate the perinatal mortality reliably. WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA have tried to solve the problem by collecting and analyzing data on perinatal indicators since 2000. The report does not cover deliveries at home or in the private clinics.

The recorded perinatal rate was 29.2 in 2000 while for year 2004 is 25.6 per 1.000 births. Although there is a decline trend the figures are far too high from the Western Europe countries and this need to be explained and addressed properly by specific studies and one of the possible causes may be inadequate level of the antenatal care.

The development of perinatal mortality over the past four years is characterized by a steady stillbirth rate and a slightly decreasing perinatal and early neonatal mortality rates suggesting that the further educational and clinical efforts and support is needed to improve the quality of obstetric and neonatal care in Kosovo.

In year 2004 Ministry of Health in row of previous organized conferences by the WHO and UNICEF in collaboration with Kosovo Mother and Child Health Council, Kosovo Gynaecology Association and Kosovo Paediatric Association and supported by UNICEF Kosovo Office has organised a Perinatal Conference.

In year 2005 Ministry of Health supported by Swiss Red Cross/UNFAP in collaboration with other relevant institutions and organization have created a working group for development and completed the Reproductive Health Strategy and currently is in the final stage for finalizing the Reproductive Healthy Law.

World Health Day 2005 was focused on maternal and child health with motto "Make Every Mother and Child account". For this purpose was organized in Kosovo a campaign and conference led by the Ministry of Health - Mother and Child Health Office in collaboration with different relevant institutions and very actively supported by WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA. This conference gathered government stakeholders, organizations, professionals and local society and enabled presentation of the Perinatal situation in year 2004, launching of the different publications and final draft of Pregnancy and Child Health booklets. The conference was successful and Mr. Sadik Idrizi, Minister of Health declared year 2005 the Mother and Child Year in Kosovo.

Perinatal data for years 2000 – 2004

Methodology

In order to evaluate the perinatal situation in Kosovo in year 2000 the WHO Mother and Child Health unit in Kosovo has created a monthly report on maternal and neonatal activity recording form for collection of the data. These recording forms were distributed prior to the relevant staff in all maternities. The information were extracted and reported from the delivery room and neonatal unit logbooks. The data were collected also from the health facilities where deliveries occurred even they are not endorsed as maternities. The data were collected also from the Neonatal Unit of Pediatric Clinic in Prishtina for the number of newborns referred and early neonatal deaths. There were no data collected on home deliveries or deliveries in private clinics. With aim to obtain overall and accurate perinatal mortality data, neonatal deaths occurred in Prishtina Neonatal Unit are attributed to the referred maternities.

In year 2001 UNICEF Kosovo Office has joined and during these years led and supported collection and analysing process of the perinatal indicators. The process of data collection and analysis process continued actively supported by the health professionals, Kosovo Mother and Child Health Council, Kosovo Gynecology Association and Kosovo Pediatric Association. The collected data has filled the lack of vital indicators and data collection process has followed the same methodology since year 2000.

Definitions and Indicators are based on the Family Planning, Maternal & Child Health & Reproductive Health, used in the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

The results and interpretation of data for the year 2000 – 2004 were as below:

- Reported number of deliveries
- Reported mode of delivery
- Reported number of live births
- Reported number of low birth weight babies
- Reported number of stillbirths
- Reported number of early neonatal deaths, and
- Reported number of maternal deaths

The following indicators were calculated using the reported data:

- Perinatal Mortality Rate
- Early Neonatal Mortality Rate
- Stillbirths Rate
- Maternal mortality ratio, and
- Caesarean section Rate

Main Perinatal Indicators in Kosovo

In 2000, there were reported 38 907 live births and 572 stillbirths delivered by 39 091 mothers. There were 2 264 low birth weight babies and 577 early neonatal deaths. The Caesarean section rate was 7.5 %. Nine maternal death was reported; the maternal mortality ratio was 23 per 100 000 live births. The perinatal mortality rate was 29.1 per 1000 of all births (29.1/1000).

In 2001, there were reported 39 506 live births and 579 stillbirths delivered by 39 578 mothers. There were 2 397 low birth weight babies and 574 early neonatal deaths. The Caesarean section rate was 9.1 %. Five maternal death was reported; the maternal mortality ratio was 12.6 per 100 000 live births. The perinatal mortality rate was 28.7 per 1000 of all births (28.7/1000).

In 2002, there were reported 35 271 live births and 527 stillbirths delivered by 35 399 mothers. There were 2086 low birth weight babies and 444 early neonatal deaths. The Caesarean section rate was 10.3 %. None of maternal death was reported. The perinatal mortality rate was 27.1 per 1000 of all births (27.1/1000).

In 2003, there were reported 31 815 live births and 517 stillbirths delivered by 31 932 mothers. There were 2 155 low birth weight babies and 375 early neonatal deaths. The Caesarean section rate was 11.3 %. Seven maternal deaths were reported. The perinatal mortality rate was 27.6 per 1000 of all births (27.6/1000).

In 2004, there were reported 30 852 live births and 452 stillbirths delivered by 30 925 mothers. There were 2 106 low birth weight babies and 352 early neonatal deaths. The Caesarean section rate was 12.34 %. Three maternal deaths are reported. The perinatal mortality rate is 25.68 per 1000 of all births (25.68/1000).

Main Perinatal Indicators in Kosovo for years 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 are given in following table:

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Total number of deliveries	39 091	39 578	35 399	31 932	30 925
Total number of alive newborns	38 907	39 506	35 271	31 815	30 852
Total number of stillbirths	572	579	527	517	452
Stillbirths rate	14.5	14.4	14.7	15.9	14.44
Total number of neonatal deaths	577	574	444	375	352
Early neonatal mortality rate	1.48	1.45	1.26	11.8	11.41
Perinatal mortality rate	29.1 per 1000	28.7 per 1000	27.1 per 1000	27.6 per 1000	27.09 per 1000
Caesarean section rate	7.5	9.1	10.3	11.3	12.34
Sex ratio	1.08	1.09	1.06	N/A	1.06

Human Resources

During year 2003 and 2004 were collected additional data from maternities regarding the human resources. It is evident that the number of Gynecologist and Obstetricians is sufficient an even exceeding the requirements. However the adequate distribution all over Kosovo is present and is affecting fully functioning of some maternities because they don't have or number of Gynecologist working in these maternities is limited mostly in primary health care services in places such as Podujeva, Viti, Glogoc, Suha-Reka.

Most severe issue is lack of Neonatologist in tertiary and secondary health care levels and this need to be considered and addressed in future.

The number of nurses and midwives is sufficient, however distribution is also required.

The inadequate and lack of human resources skills is affecting and overcrowding the Prishtina Gynecology and Obstetric Clinics. Prishtina Clinic yearly is performing around 12 000 deliveries. Vast of pregnant women are coming from surrounding areas that have available maternities. The pregnant women are either self-referred or referred from maternities.

In some maternities that are performing high number of deliveries although they are possessing good but insufficient infrastructure, qualified health personnel, equipment they are facing lack of anesthesiologist which also affects and overload the Prishtina Gynecology and Obstetric Clinic.

Medial Equipment

Beside the human resources and their skills the quality of the health care services is also affected from the adequate equipment.

In general maternities are well equipped with basic obstetric equipment. However there is a lack of specific and high technology equipment in tertiary and secondary health care. There is a lack of incubators in secondary health care levels while there are to many and unused in primary health care levels. This needs further evaluation and reallocation in places that have inadequate and insufficient incubators.

There is a lack of equipment regarding the intensive neonatal care particularly in Gynecology/Obstetric Clinic Neonatology Unit.

Reported number of deliveries for years 2000 – 2004

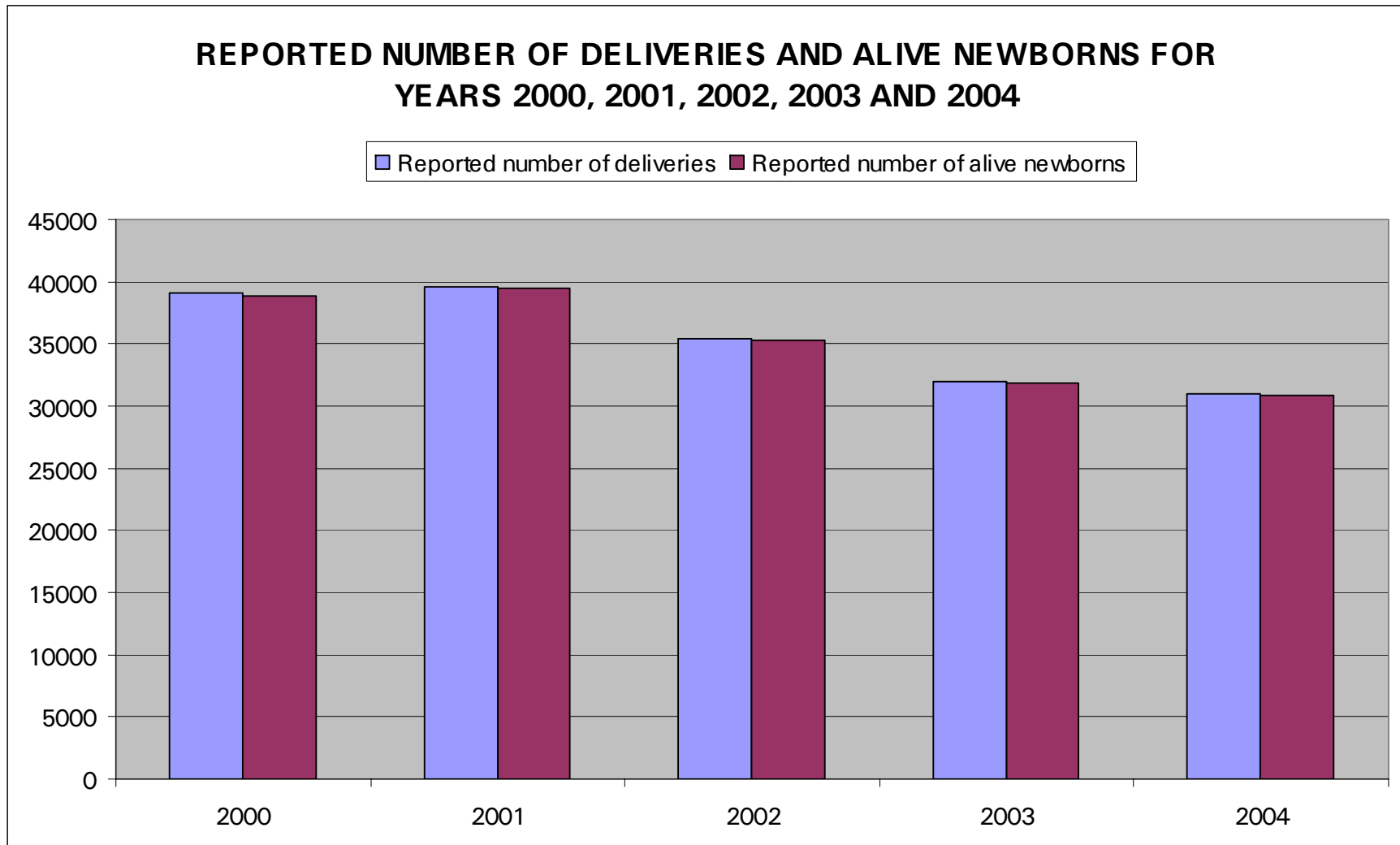
Since year 2000 the number of deliveries has shown decline trend. In year 2000, there were reported 39 091 deliveries while in year 2004 there were reported 30 925 deliveries.

There are several assumptions about possible factors affecting the decreased trend such as use of contraceptives, deliveries occurring at the private institutions, migrations but these needs to be addressed further by specific surveys.

Since year 2000 it is noted that the percentage of deliveries performed with Cesarean Section has increased from 7.5% in year 2000 to 12.3 in year 2004.

In the Graph 1 are shown the trend of deliveries and number of alive newborns from year 2000 to year 2004.

Graph 1: Kosovo - Reported number of deliveries and alive newborns for years 2000 - 2004



Perinatal Mortality Rate for years 2000 – 2004

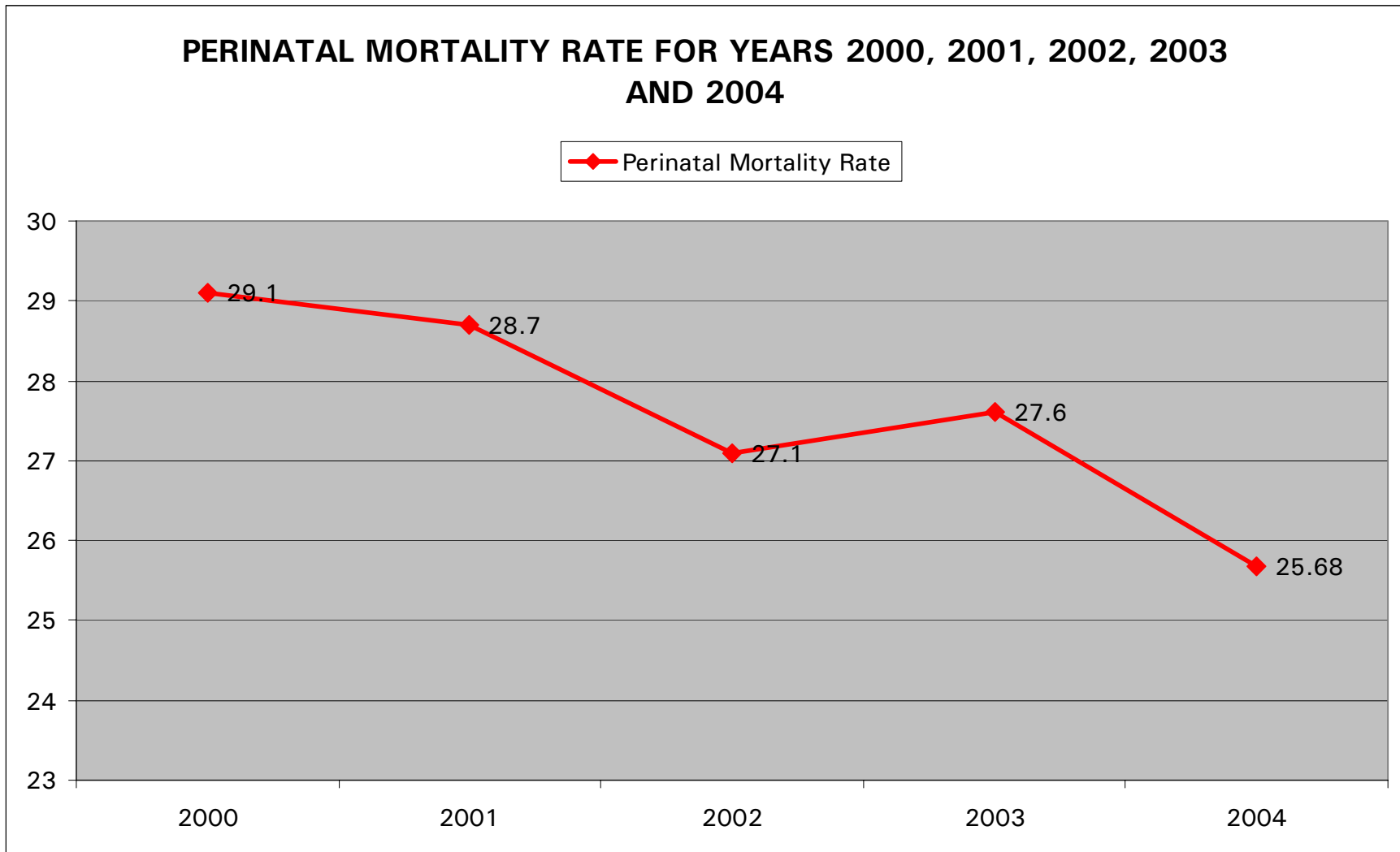
Perinatal mortality records deaths occurring during late pregnancy (after 22 weeks gestation), at birth and during the first week of life (0 – 6 days). Perinatal mortality rate is one of the indicators of the health care services and situation.

Based on the reported data Perinatal Mortality Rate in Kosovo shows the decline trend from 29.1 in year 2000 except in year 2003 where is noted a insignificant increase and reaching at the 25.68 per 1000 of all births in year 2004.

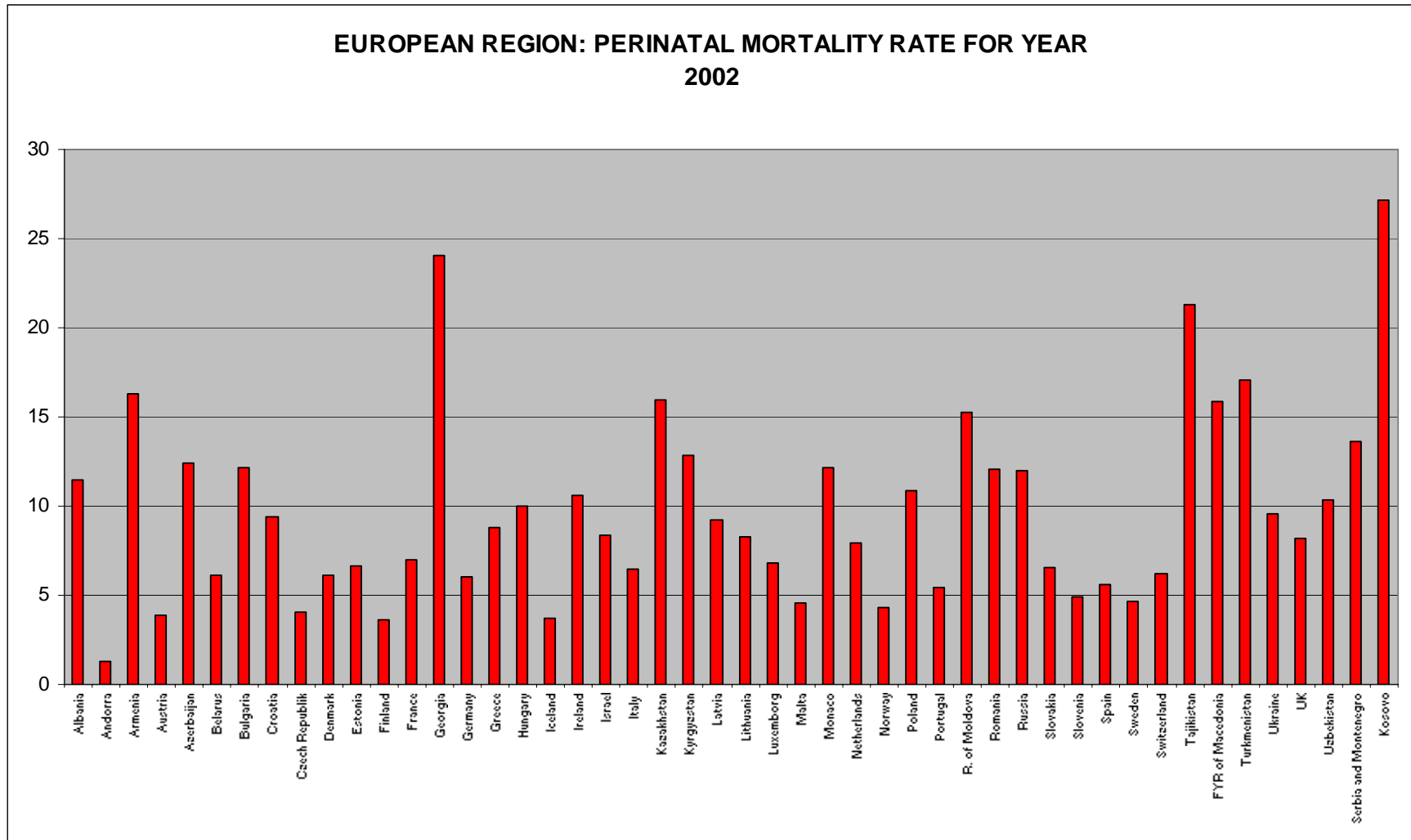
Although there is a decline trend the current perinatal mortality rate is far from the western European countries requiring further emergent obstetrical and neonatal measures to improve and decrease the perinatal mortality rates.

In Graph 2 are shown the Perinatal mortality rates for year 2000 – 2004.

Graph 2: Kosovo - Perinatal Mortality Rate for years 2000 – 2004



Graph 3: European Region - Perinatal Mortality Rate for year 2002



Adapted from WHO The European Health Report 2002

Stillbirth Rate for years 2000 – 2004

One of the indicators interpreting quality of obstetric care is also the stillbirths rate.

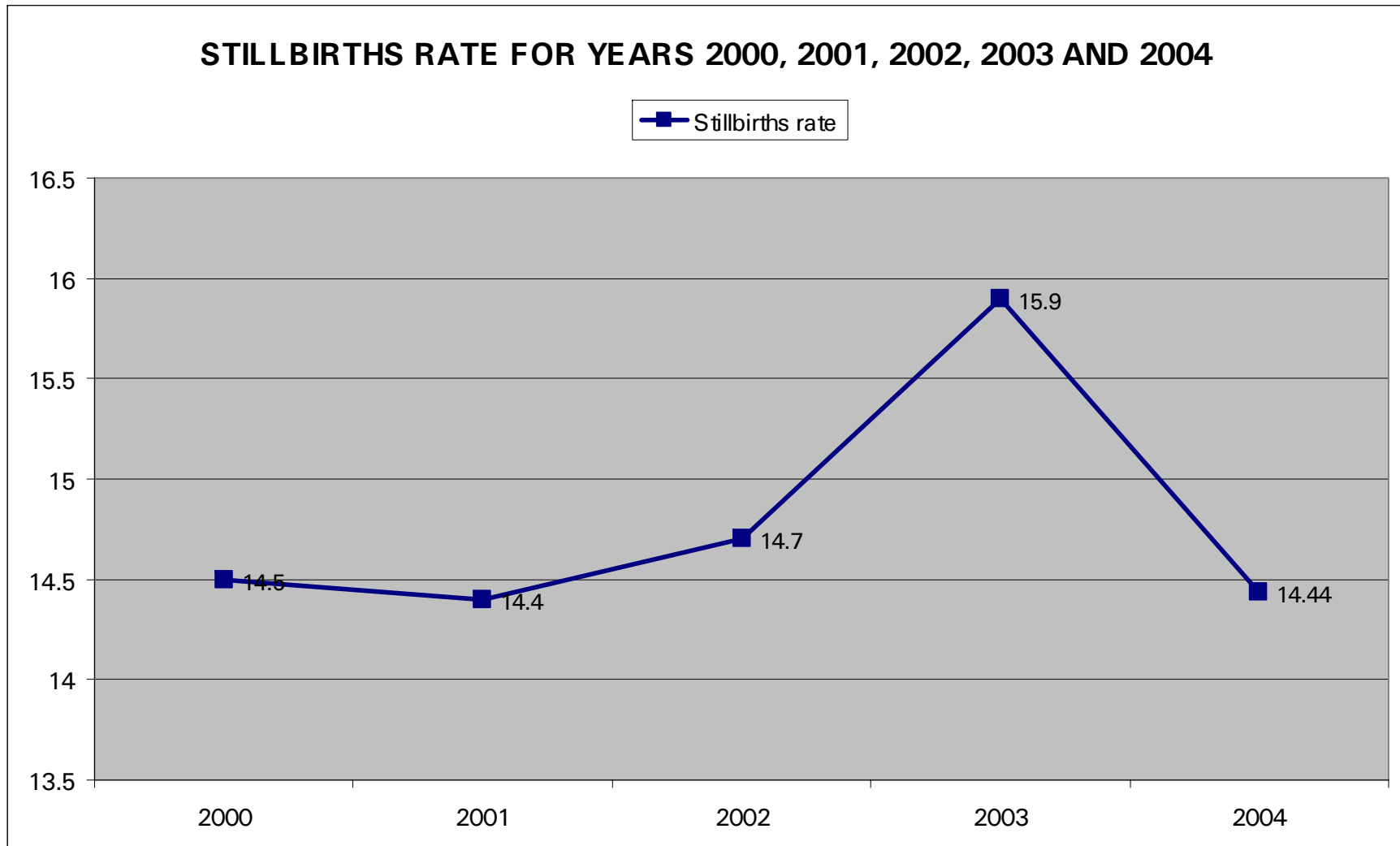
Stillbirths rate is characterized by a steady trend. Based on the reported number of stillbirths rate of stillbirth for year 2000 in Kosovo was 14.5, while for year 2004 is 14.4.

Although some surveys show that there is a high antenatal coverage however the quality of antenatal care services is considered poor. In fact this is considered as one of the main causes for steady stillbirths trend.

At this stage due to many issues there are no available disaggregated stillbirths data occurred during the antenatal or delivery period and this needs to be determined further by the specific studies.

In following Graph 4 are shown the stillbirth rates.

Graph 4: Kosovo - Percentage of stillbirths for years 2000 - 2004



Early Neonatal Mortality Rates for years 2000 – 2004

Another process indicator of the quality of obstetric and neonatal care is the number of early neonatal deaths, which may be related to the quality of prenatal care and/or intrapartum events and the disease condition(s) of the neonates.

Based on the reported number of the early neonatal deaths in year 2004 in Kosovo the early neonatal rates declined comparing it with the previous years. This shows improvements of the neonatal care although trends are very far from western countries and needs further strengthening and comprehensive approach.

Unfortunately due to many issues transport conditions of the newborn babies from the regional maternities particularly from the primary health care are inappropriate. Transport incubators or warm chain is not applied routinely and correctly. The health workers in the neonatal unit II are not able even to measure the temperature of the transferred newborns.

There is a lack of collaboration and networking between maternities of all health care levels. There is no feedback and monitoring of the referred newborn from lower to higher level and versa.

In order to have reliable PMR the data collection forms were designed to track referred newborn babies and early neonatal deaths. From Neonatal Unit of Pediatric Medical Clinical Center in Prishtina were collected reported number of referred newborn babies by all maternities and reported number of early neonatal deaths. In addition were collected self-referral from homes and registered deaths in total number of early neonatal deaths. In cases when the death of referred newborn from any maternity occurred the deaths was attributed to the referred maternity.

Improvements in the early neonatal deaths are noted and reflected in the main causes of the neonatal deaths respectively in lower percentage of infections and asphyxia. However the immaturity is a major newborn death cause and congenital anomalies. This need to be addressed further with increasing skills of the health workers, adequate equipment, routine use of corticosteroids and qualitative antenatal screening.

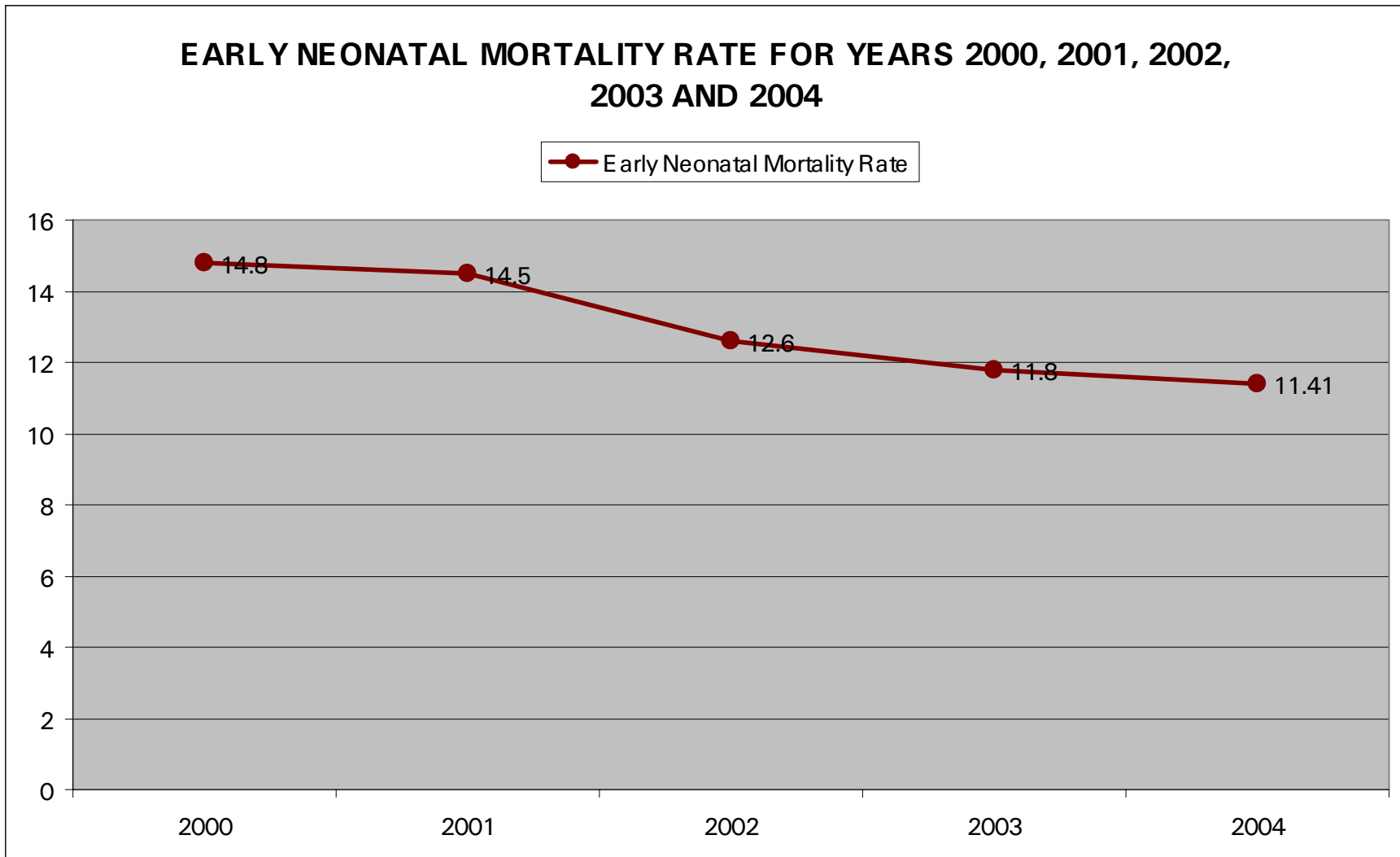
Maternal Mortality Ratio

Maternal mortality data in Kosovo are scarce and unreliable. In Kosovo, there is no comprehensive vital registration available precluding the conventional approach of counting maternal deaths to monitor trends in mortality.

Since year 2000 in total are reported 24 maternal deaths. In year 2000 are reported 9 maternal deaths, in year 2001 are reported 5 maternal deaths, in year 2003 none, in year 2003 reported 7 deaths and in year 2004 are reported 3 maternal deaths. However this numbers are not reliable since the maternal deaths are reported only from maternities and birth centres.

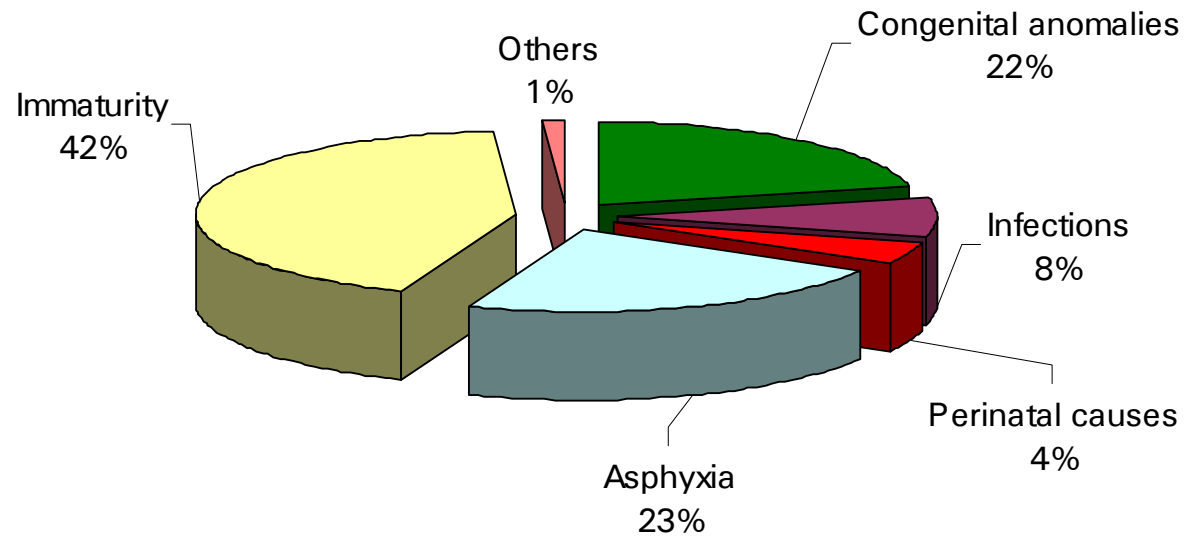
Regarding the antenatal care based on the available information it can be concluded that access to health facilities and professional assistance in the area of maternal health is almost universal, while the quality of care is poor. According to "Micronutrient Status Survey" findings show that 95% of women have access to antenatal care services. The frequency of antenatal care visits varies. Based on this survey only 25% of women had more than three ANC visits, which are conceived as optimal number of ANC visits during pregnancy.

Graph 5: Kosovo - Early Neonatal Mortality Rate for years 2000 – 2004



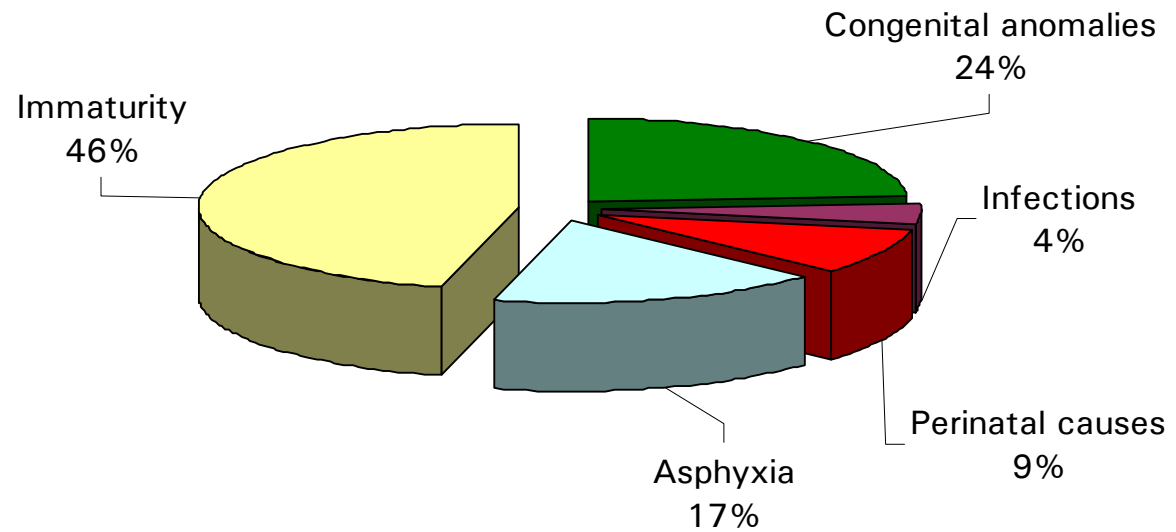
Graph 6: Kosovo - Main Causes of Early Neonatal Deaths for year 2004

MAIN CAUSES OF EARLY NEONATAL DEATHS – 2004

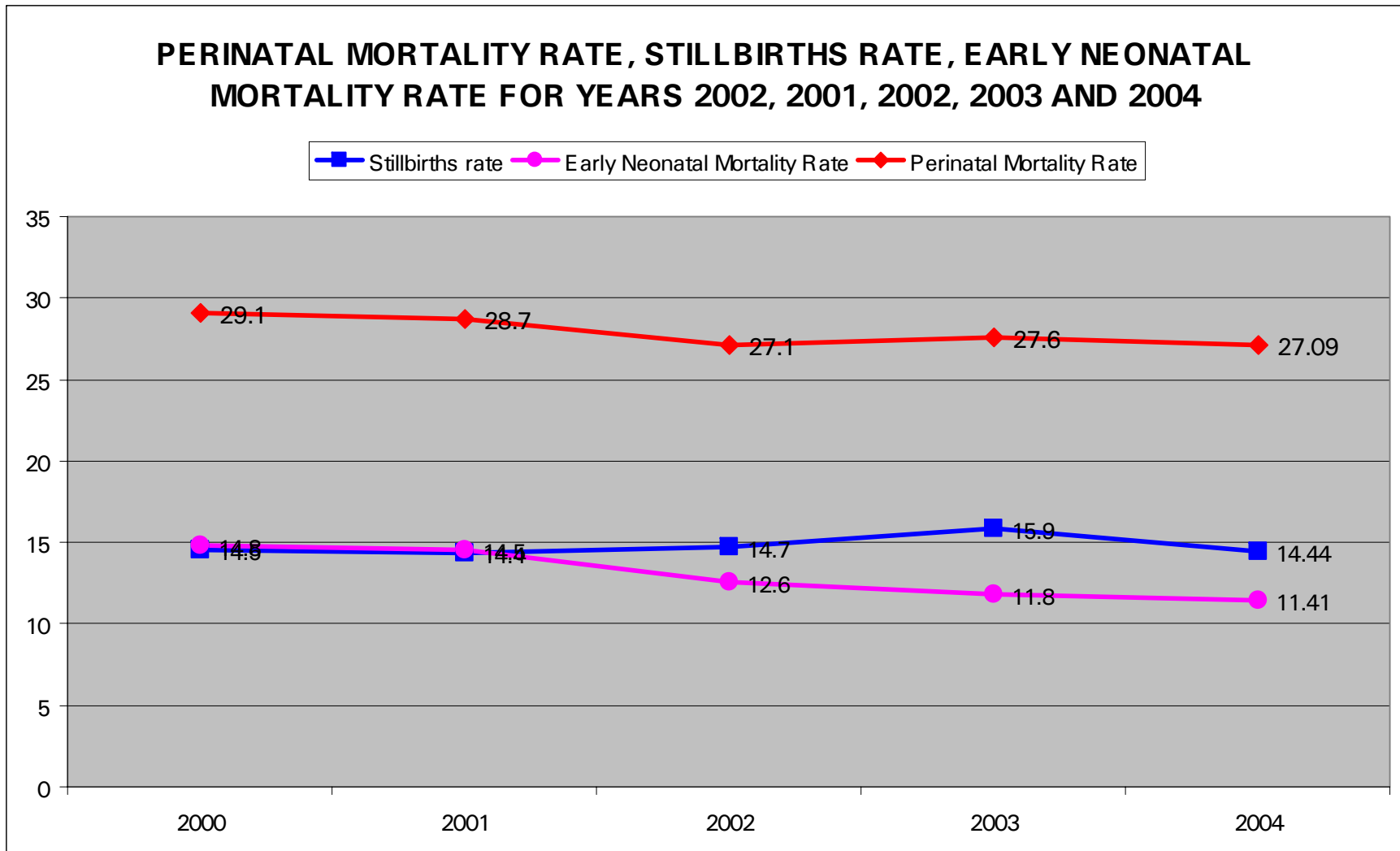


Graph 6: Kosovo - Main Causes of Early Neonatal Deaths for year 2003

MAIN CAUSES OF EARLY NEONATAL DEATHS – 2003



Graph 6: Kosovo - Perinatal Mortality Rate, Stillbirths Rate and Early Neonatal Mortality Rate for years 2000 - 2004



Recommendations

The main recommendations are the following:

1. To allocate financial resources from the Ministry of Health to support Mother and Child Health Office and position of the Mother and Child Health Officer.
2. To ensure implementation of the Strategy for Reproductive Health.
3. To endorse and ensure implementation of the Reproductive Health Law.
4. To ensure access and quality health care services for mothers and children at all levels of health care services.
5. To define reasons of low attendance of antenatal care and increase attendance and quality of the antenatal care focusing in Roma/Ashkalia/Egyptian community.
6. To enhance co-ordination and collaboration between central and local health government authorities, government, non-government organizations and other professional association in order to achieve the specific objectives in the implementation of the different programs.
7. To endorse official administrative circular for routinely use of protocols for mother and child health care and for pregnancy and child health booklet.
8. To allocate funds for distribution and further printing of the Pregnancy and Child Health Booklets.
9. To ensure adequate nutrition of pregnant, breast-feeding women and children.
10. To increase efforts and certify in short-term period all the maternities as Baby Friendly Hospitals and implement the International Code of marketing of the breastmilk substitutes.
11. To provide and ensure continues development education and increasing the capacities and skills of the health workers on Promoting Effective Perinatal Care, Integrated Management of Pregnancy and Childbirth, ALARM and other training packages.
12. To review and update the Medical Faculty curriculum regarding the mother and child health care based on evidence based medicine.
13. To assess and adequately distribute the health workers in maternities of all health care levels.
14. To fully implement and monitor application of standardized Essential Obstetric Care (EOC) and Essential Newborn Care and Breastfeeding (ENC and BF) practices.
15. To increase awareness and knowledge of the families and society in the issues of healthy life style, reproductive health protection, safe maternity, prevention of sicknesses among the children.
16. To strength education of the pregnant women at the education and information center within the maternity wards together with companionship.
17. To assess and supply with relevant and necessary equipment and disposable items the maternities and neonatal units at all levels.
18. To institutionalize and continue with the collection and analysis of the perinatal indicators.

19. To organize regularly professional meetings to present and discuss issues for mother and child health care.
20. To conduct surveys on health care services in private and public health sector, mother and child health vital situation and statistics with focus on RAE community.

Annex 1. KOSOVO MATERNITY ACTIVITY, 2000 – 2001 – 2002 – 2003 – 2004

YEAR	Reported number of normal deliveries	Reported number of Caesarean Section	Reported number of instrumental deliveries	Total number of reported deliveries	Total number of reported alive newborns	Reported number of mother deaths	Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,00)	Percentage of newborn under < 2.5 kg	% of Caesarean Section	Reported number of stillbirths	Reported Early Neonatal Deaths	Reported number of Early Neonatal Death in Prishtina	Perinatal Mortality Rate (per 1000)	Average of deliveries per day
2000	34487	2931	713	39091	38907	9	23	5.8	7.5	572	577		29.1	106.8
2001	34133	3591	784	39578	39506	5	12.6	6.1	9.1	579	412	162	28.76	108.43
2002	30057	3656	769	35399	35271	0	0	5.89	10.33	527	354	90	27.12	96.98
2003	26874	3605	653	31932	31815	7	21.92	7.32	11.29	517	375	87	27.59	87.48
2004	25688	3816	642	30925	30852	2	6.47	6.73	12.34	452	352	44	27.09	84.73

Annex 2. KOSOVO MATERNITY ACTIVITY, JANUARY – DECEMBER 2004

LOCATIONS	Reported number of normal deliveries	Reported number of Caesarean Section	Reported number of instrumental deliveries	Total number of reported deliveries	Total number of reported alive newborns	Reported number of mother deaths	Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,000)	Percentage of newborn < 2.5 kg	% of Caesarean Section	Reported number of stillbirths	Reported Early Neonatal Deaths	Reported number of Early Neonatal Death in Prishtina	Perinatal Mortality Rate (per 1000)	Average of deliveries per day
Deçan	158	0	2	160	160	0	0	0.00	0.00	0	0	0	0.00	0.44
Dragash	304	0	0	310	309	0	0	0.32	0.00	1	0	0	0.00	0.85
Ferizaj	2155	57	51	2286	2280	0	0	3.01	2.49	14	7	5	11.33	6.26
Gjakova	1936	376	17	2355	2350	0	0	5.26	15.97	27	10	5	17.67	6.45
Gjilan	2395	230	74	2802	2782	1	35.69	7.25	8.21	46	24	10	28.29	7.68
Glogovc	633	0	5	648	648	0	0	0.62	0	1	0	0	1.54	1.78
Graqanica	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Istok	267	0	0	273	273	0	0	1.10	0	0	1	0	0.00	0.75
Kamenicë	128	0	4	132	132	0	0	2.27	0	0	0	0	0	0.36
Kaqanik	28	0	0	28	28	0	0	28.57	0	0	0	0	0	0.08
Lipjan	126	0	0	126	126	0	0	0.79	0	0	0	0	0	0.35
Mitrovica N.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mitrovicë/FMC	713	0	5	720	719	0	0	0.83	0	2	0	4	8.32	1.97
Mitrovicë/MH	92	40	11	147	144	0	0	7.48	7.48	3	0	0	20.41	0.40
Pejë	2174	534	65	2819	2835	0	0	3.68	18.94	21	17	9	16.46	7.72
Podujevë	312	0	0	316	315	0	0	1.90	0	1	0	1	6.33	0.87
Prishtina	8389	1972	298	11122	11055	1	8.99	11.38	17.73	304	214	1	45.69	30.47
Prizren	3566	565	82	4290	4306	1	23.31	4.43	13.17	28	31	5	14.77	11.75
Rahovec	457	0	0	457	457	0	0	9.19	0	0	0	0	0	1.25
Skenderaj	661	0	0	661	661	0	0	3.47	0	1	0	1	3.02	1.81
Suha-Rekë	337	0	3	342	340	0	0	0.58	0	2	0	0	5.85	0.94
Viti	60	0	0	60	60	0	0	3.33	0	0	0	0	0	0.16
Vushtrri	797	42	25	871	872	0	0	0.57	4.82	1	4	1	6.87	2.39
TOTAL	25688	3816	642	30925	30852	3	9.70	6.73	12.34	452	308	44	27.09	84.73

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