Tropical Cyclones & Infant Mortality Rate

Prelims: Geography | Health | Current events of national and international importance

Why in News?

Recent research has revealed a significant rise in infant mortality in low—and middle-income countries following exposure to tropical cyclones, including those below hurricane or typhoon strength.

- It highlights an urgent need for stronger disaster response measures and child health protections, particularly as climate change increases the frequency and intensity of severe weather events.
- The study found that infants exposed to tropical cyclones either in the womb or within their first year of life were markedly more likely to die.
- On average, infant mortality rose by 11% compared to baseline levels, an increase of ***4.4 deaths per 1,000 live births.***

  Infant mortality rate (IMR) refers to the number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births within the first year of life.

- The elevated risk was most acute within the first year after a storm and appeared to subside after 2 years.
- However, the precise reasons behind the mortality rise remain unclear.
- The research also noted that the mortality increase was linked to major storms and more frequent, lower-intensity tropical storms.
- Researchers analysed nearly 1.7 million child health records across seven low- and middle-income countries.
    - Bangladesh, India, Madagascar, Cambodia, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti.
- While the average increase in infant mortality was 11%, the effects varied widely between countries.
    - Bangladesh, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic experienced increases of more than ***10 deaths per 1,000 births*** following cyclones.
- In contrast, *little to no increase* was recorded in India, Madagascar, Cambodia, and the Philippines.
- Some countries may be helped by mountainous terrain, while others have more flood-prone areas.
- Disaster preparedness, evacuation efforts, the sturdiness of housing, and pre-existing child health conditions all likely play a role.

Reference

Down to Earth | Tropical cyclones & IMR



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