# UNICEF's Neonatal Mortality Report

## Why in news?

\n\n

\n
- A recent UNICEF report, titled “Every Child Alive”, gives a country-wise ranking of neonatal mortality rates (NMR).
\n
- NMR is the probability of dying during the first 28 days of life, expressed per 1,000 live births.
\n

\n\n

## What are the highlights of the report?

\n\n

\n
- **India** - India ranks 12th among 52 low-middle income countries having the highest infant mortality rates.
\n
- Neonatal mortality rate is recorded at 25.4 deaths per 1,000 live births in India in 2016.
\n
- A small mortality rate can translate to numerous deaths when the birth-rate is high.
\n
- It thus translates to death of over six lakh children within the first month of their birth in India in 2016.
\n
- Worryingly, this is more than any other country.
\n
- With this, India is ranked below Sri Lanka (127), Bangladesh (54), Nepal (50) and Bhutan (60).
\n
- **Global** - Globally, 2.6 million children died in the first month of life in 2016.
\n
- The average newborn mortality in low-income nations is nine times the rate of high-income countries.
\n

- In low-income countries, the average newborn mortality rate is 27 deaths per 1,000 live births.
\n
- In high-income countries, it is 3 deaths per 1,000 live births.
\n
- Newborns in Pakistan, the Central African Republic and Afghanistan face the worst odds.
\n
- Babies born in Japan, Iceland and Singapore are said to have the best chance of survival.
\n

\n\n

## What is the concern with India?

\n\n

\n
- India has more than halved the number of deaths among children under the age of five in the last quarter century.
\n
- India is nearly meeting its MDG target, with a 66% reduction in under-five deaths during 1990 to 2015.
\n
- However, it has not made similar progress in ending **deaths among children less than one month old**.
\n
- Notably, India is ranked behind poorer countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal and Rwanda.
\n

\n\n

## What does it call for?

\n\n

\n
- **Political will** - A majority of these deaths are preventable.
\n

\n\n

\n
- The report has stressed that financial resources were not the biggest constraint in improving this health indicator.
\n
- It is rather the political will that is essential now to ensure better newborn

survival.
\n
- Evidently, Rwanda, which falls in the lowest income group, has reduced its mortality rates from 41/1000 in the 1990s to 16.5.
\n
- This is achieved through programmes targeted at poor and vulnerable mothers.
\n
- **Health care** - Addressing gaps in quality of health care is the need of the hour in India.
\n
- Hospitals should ensure that the critical products to save the newborns are available.
\n
- It ranges from a piece of cloth to keep the baby warm to antibiotics and disinfectants to stave off killers like sepsis and meningitis.
\n
- **Mother's health** - The biggest cause of death is premature birth.
\n
- The second is complications like asphyxia during delivery.
\n
- Preventing these would mean paying attention to the mother’s health during pregnancy.
\n
- It should be ensured that she delivers in a hospital attended by trained doctors or midwives.
\n
- Programmes such as the Janani Suraksha Yojana should be expanded to reach the poor and vulnerable in remote areas.
\n
- **Gender gap** - The issue of neglect of the girl child is much broader and needs interventions beyond health.
\n
- The associated concerns with social norms and cultural practices should also be addressed.
\n
- Focussing on factors outside the healthcare system, like female literacy rates is also essential.
\n
- States like Kerala and Tamil Nadu have focussed on these factors, bringing down newborn deaths to fewer than 15 per 1000.
\n
- It is time for the rest of India to take lessons from these successful sates.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

### Source: The Hindu

\n\n

## Quick Fact

\n\n

## UNICEF

\n\n

\n
- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is special program of the United Nations.
\n
- It is devoted to aiding national efforts to improve the health, nutrition, education, and general welfare of children.
\n

\n

