

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1189
ANSWERED ON:17.08.2012
PRE MATURE BIRTHS
Singh Shri Ravneet

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether India has the highest number of infant deaths due to pre-mature births;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has taken any steps to prevent large number of infant deaths; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY)

(a) & (b) Yes. As per recent WHO publication "Born too Soon: The Global Action Report on Preterm Births" , India has the highest number of preterm deaths. Out of an estimated annual 2.7 Crore live births in India, 35 lakh babies are born preterm, and out of these, 3.03 lakh babies die due to complication of preterm births. Due to large birth cohort the number of the preterm babies is also high. The Preterm birth rate in India is 13% (Overall range is 5%-18%). India ranks 36th among 199 countries when it comes to premature births.

(c) & (d) Under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), flagship programme of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, the following interventions are implemented to reduce neonatal and child mortality rates in the country:

1) Promotion of Institutional Delivery through Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) and Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK): Promoting Institutional delivery to ensure skilled birth attendance is key to reducing both maternal and neo-natal mortality. JSY incentivizes pregnant women to opt for institutional delivery and provides for cash assistance. JSSK entitles all pregnant women to absolutely free and zero expense delivery including caesarean section operation in Government health facilities and provides for free to and fro transport, food, drugs and diagnostics. Similar entitlements have also been put in place for sick neonates.

2) Strengthening Facility based newborn care: Newborn care corners (NBCC) are being set up at all health facilities where deliveries take place to provide essential newborn care at birth to all new born babies; Special New Born Care Units (SNCUs) at District Hospitals and New Born Stabilization Units (NBSUs) at FRUs are being set up for the care of sick newborn. As on date 374 SNCUs, 1638 NBSUs and 11432 NBCCs are functional across the country.

3) Home Based Newborn Care (HBNC): Home based newborn care through ASHA has recently been initiated to improve new born care practices at the community level and for early detection and referral of sick new born babies. The schedule of home visits by ASHA consists of at least 6 visits in case of institutional deliveries, on days 3, 7, 14, 21, 28 & 42nd days and one additional visit within 24 hours of delivery in case of home deliveries. Additional visits will be made for babies who are pre-term, low birth weight or ill.

4) Capacity building of health care providers: Various trainings are being conducted under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) to build and upgrade the skills of doctors, nurses and ANM for early diagnosis and case management of common ailments of children and care of newborn at time of birth. These trainings include Integrated Management of Neo-natal and Childhood Illness(IMNCI) and Navjaat Shishu Surakshta Karyakaram (NSSK). A total of 5.3 lakh health care workers have been trained in IMNCI in 457 districts and 68,309 health workers trained in NSSK so far.

5) Management of Malnutrition: Emphasis is being laid on reduction of malnutrition which is an important underlying cause of child mortality. 564 Nutritional Rehabilitation Centres have been established for management of Severe Acute Malnutrition(SAM). Iron and Folic Acid is also provided to children for prevention of anaemia. Recently, weekly Iron and Folic Acid is proposed to be initiated for adolescent population. As breastfeeding reduces infant mortality, exclusive breastfeeding for first six months and appropriate infant and young child feeding practices are being promoted in convergence with Ministry of Woman and Child Development.

6) Village Health and Nutrition Days (VHNDs) are also being organized for imparting nutritional counseling to mothers and to improve child care practices.

7) Universal Immunization Program (UIP): Vaccination against seven diseases is provided to all children under UIP. Government of India supports the vaccine program by supply of vaccines and syringes, cold chain equipments and provision of operational costs. UIP

targets to immunize 2.7 crore infants against seven vaccine preventable diseases every year. 21 states with more than 80% coverage have incorporated second dose of Measles in their immunization program. Pentavalent vaccine has been introduced in two states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu and proposed to be scaled up in six more states. Year 2012-13 has been declared as 'Year of intensification of Routine Immunization'. India has achieved a historic milestone by remaining polio free for one full year now. WHO has taken India off the list of polio endemic countries.

8) Mother and Child Tracking System: A name based Mother and Child Tracking System has been put in place which is web based to enable tracking of all pregnant women and newborns so as to monitor and ensure that complete services are provided to them. States are encouraged to send SMS alerts to beneficiaries reminding them of the dates on which services are due and generate beneficiary-wise due list of services with due dates for ANMs on a weekly basis.