

WHO Report on Preterm Births

Why in news?

World Health Organization (WHO) has released the "Born Too Soon: Decade of Action on Preterm Birth" report highlighting the urgent need to address the preterm births.

What is preterm birth?

- **Preterm babies** Babies born alive *before 37 weeks of pregnancy* are completed.
- Subcategories of preterm births
 - Extremely preterm less than 28 weeks
 - $\circ\,$ Very preterm 28 to less than 32 weeks
 - $\circ\,$ Moderate to late preterm 32 to 37 weeks

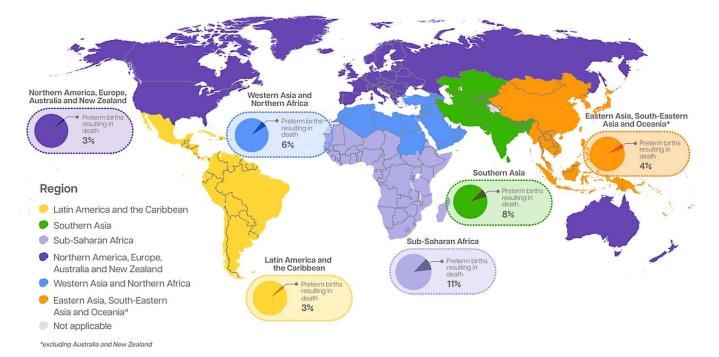
• Reasons for preterm births

- Spontaneously
- $\circ\,$ Medical reasons Infection, chronic conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure, pregnancy complications that require early induction of labour or caesarean birth
- Other reasons Multiple pregnancies
- $\circ\,$ There could also be a genetic influence

Preterm birth is the 4th leading cause of loss of human capital worldwide, at all ages.

What are the key findings of the report?

- **Preterm birth** It is the *single largest killer of children* under five years of age.
- Worldwide, 1 in 10 babies is born preterm (<37 weeks gestation).
- The global preterm birth rate was 9.9% in 2020, compared to 9.8% in 2010.
- Neonatal disorders- They are the leading cause of burden of disease.
- **Inequalities** 9 in 10 extremely preterm babies survive in high-income countries but less than 1 in 10 survive in low-income countries.
- **Regional disparity** Preterm birth rates vary between regions, the highest occurring in Southern Asia (13.2%) and sub-Saharan Africa (10.1%).
- In 2020, *Bangladesh* had the highest estimated preterm birth rate (16.2%), while *India* ranks first in terms of preterm birth numbers.
- **Threat for vulnerable women and babies** The "4 Cs" Conflict, Climate change, COVID-19 and the Cost-of-living crisis.
- **Covid19 pandemic** Maternal Covid-19 infection may directly affect the foetus through pathways of viral transmission from mother to baby.



What are the impacts of the preterm births?

- **Child mortality** It is the leading cause of child mortality worldwide, accounting for nearly 1 in 5 deaths of children under five years of age.
- Loss of human capital Preterm birth is the 4th leading cause of loss of human capital worldwide, at all ages, behind ischemic heart disease, pneumonia and diarrheal disease.
- **Health concern** Preterm birth damages respiratory and cardiac systems in long term for many survivors.
- **Neurodevelopmental problems** Babies born between 37 and 39.9 weeks are at a slightly higher risk of adverse neurodevelopmental outcomes.
- Learning and behavioral disorders Even a few weeks preterm can cause learning and behavioral disorders.
- Adult survivors Adult survivors of preterm births face increased risks of chronic disorders, including psychiatric and cardiovascular disorders.

SDG Target 3.2 aims to end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age by 2030

What is the way forward?

- The quality care of the babies should be ensured to improve child health and reduce the preterm births.
- Every women should have access to quality health care.
- WHO's antenatal care guidelines should to made aware to everyone.

References

- 1. <u>The Hindu Key Findings Of The Report</u>
- 2. The Wire Way Forward For Preterm Births
- 3. WHO About Preterm Births

