

CHILD MORTALITY RATES

In India, 8.8 lakh children under five years – highest in the world – died in 2018, says UNICEF

The report, which was released on Wednesday, pointed out that malnutrition caused 69% of under-five deaths in India.

Scroll Staff

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Representative image. | Money Sharma/AFP

India reported the [most number of deaths](#) of children below five years in 2018, with 8,82,000 deaths, the United Nations Children's Fund, or UNICEF, said in a report released on Wednesday. The report, titled "State of the World's Children 2019", came a day after the Global Hunger Index placed India at the 102nd rank in the ["serious" category](#).

After India, Nigeria reported the highest number of such deaths (8,66,000), followed by Pakistan (4,09,000), Democratic Republic of Congo (2,96,000), and Ethiopia (1,91,000). The median under-five mortality rate for every 1,000 live births in India is 37, the report pointed out. It is 120 in Nigeria, 69 in Pakistan, in DR Congo it is 88 and 55 in Ethiopia.

The UNICEF report ranked nations in the order of “highest burden of death among children under five” to the “lowest burden of death among children under five”. Denmark, Ireland, Mauritius, Qatar, and Singapore were among the countries that reported no annual deaths of children under five.

The report said about 38% of Indian children under five years suffer from stunting. “In India, for example, almost half of children are stunted in the worst-affected state compared with a fifth in the least-affected state,” it said.

The organisation analysed the state of children’s health across the world in terms of malnutrition, anaemia, and obesity, among other health problems. The report pointed out that malnutrition caused 69% of under-five deaths in India, adding that every other child had some form of undernourishment.

Stunting rates were reported at 35%, child wasting (low weight for height) at 17%, with 2% of children overweight, according to PTI. Around 42% of children between the ages of six months and 23 months were provided food at a sufficient frequency and 21% get adequately varied diet, the report revealed.

Women’s health in India

The report said every second woman is anaemic, and pointed out it was also mostly prevalent in children under five. Adolescent girls were also found to be anaemic more than twice the number of boys of the same age.

Adult diseases, including chronic kidney disease and hypertension, were also being reported among children in India. The children were also suffering from micronutrient deficiencies, with every fifth five-year-old child found Vitamin A deficient. One in every third infant reportedly has B12 deficiency and two of five children are anaemic.

The UNICEF report, however, praised the Union government’s health programmes, and said the National Nutrition Mission, or POSHAN Abhiyaan, was making a significant contribution to improving nutrition standards. The Anaemia Mukta Bharat programme was also tackling anaemia and was recognised as one of the best schemes implemented by administrations across the world to combat malnutrition.

UNICEF said at least one in three children under five across the globe, or nearly 200 million, were either reported to be undernourished or overweight.

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