

Every Newborn Counts, Everywhere: Statement from the 2023 Joint European Neonatal Societies' (jENS) Congress

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INTRODUCTION

Every newborn enters the world the same, but where you are born determines your access to care and your survival. Annually, 2.3 million newborns die, in addition to 1.9 million stillbirths, with 98% in low- and middle-income countries, and only 0.6% in Europe. Almost all these deaths are preventable. Collectively, we can prevent millions of newborn deaths and the majority of stillbirths within a generation.¹ There are totally 134 million births annually, and Table 1 presents the number (%) of births per continent.²

Neonatal conditions are the leading cause of child deaths and of lost human capital through the whole life course, in the Global Burden of Disease, number one since 1990. Conflicts, climate change, COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis are all impacting healthcare systems, but newborns are the most vulnerable.³

Progress to reduce neonatal mortality is unacceptably slow, especially in countries with the highest burden, and 63 countries are off track for their newborn targets by 2030 in the sustainable development goals (SDGs).⁴ Highly effective interventions exist and the *Every Newborn Action Plan* lays out a strategic and cost-effective roadmap, with 106 countries committed to action. We have evidence and new opportunities to accelerate progress in all settings, but urgent action is needed.⁵ The priority is higher coverage to reach every country and every district with maternal and neonatal care. To reach the SDG target of <12 neonatal deaths per 1000 live births requires high coverage of respiratory support for preterm newborns. The following actions are the foundation.³

Invest

It is not just more money, but smarter and fairer investment that is required. There are \$15.9 billion a year of donor aid to spend on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (RMNCH) yet, newborns, and especially stillbirths, are still rarely mentioned.

Table 1: Annual newborn births by continent

Oceania	0.69	(0.5)
Latin America and the Caribbean	9.71	(7.2)
North America	4.10	(3.1)
Europe	6.88	(5.1)
Africa	45.63	(34.0)
Asia	67.23	(50.1)

Number in million (percentage) of births per continent (2021). Data from reference 2

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Furthermore, the return on investment is very high. Recent analyses from Tanzania shows a return of \$8–12 for every \$1 invested in neonatal care improvements.⁶

Implement

Sustainable systems change is required at all levels of health care from facilities to national and subnational policies and programs, including the right data and right healthcare professionals to track and drive faster progress.

Integrate

Collaborate across national and professional boundaries. Support local networks and learning communities. Accountability, based on data is key.

Innovate

Ensure innovations are affordable and available and used in the highest burden countries.^{7,8}

All of us have a role to play to raise the urgency of this silent public health and human rights epidemic. Family's voices must be amplified and acted upon. We can and must partner with communities, healthcare professionals and leaders to change life chances for the next generation everywhere. Each time we lose a newborn, we lose an entire life and its possibilities!

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

AS, DE, JEL, KW, ODS, and TM wrote the first drafts. All authors have commented on and approved the final version. CCR and WdeB are past and present presidents of the European Society for Paediatric Research. CM is president of the Union of European Perinatal and Neonatal Societies. SM is chairperson of the European Foundation for the Care of Newborn Infants. AS is president of the African

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