

**INFLUENCE OF MATERNAL AND SERVICE FACTORS
ON NEONATAL DEATHS AND STILL BIRTHS
IN THE MALDIVES**

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M.A. (POPULATION AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RESEARCH)

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Despite socio economic development and improvements in health care provision, the rate of decline in neonatal mortality and still births is slow worldwide. In the public health arena, deaths to newborns are largely the result of inadequate care during pregnancy, child birth, and the immediate postnatal period. In the Maldives, infant mortality has fallen rapidly which is due to expansion and improvements in health care, good immunization coverage, and socio economic development. However, this decline is not even throughout infancy. Neonatal deaths now make up a large proportion of overall infant deaths, and further decline in the infant mortality rate is obstructed. The still birth rate also remains relatively high.

Using data from the Vital Registration System of the Maldives, and births and deaths linked data, this study aimed to investigate the influence of maternal factors – age of mother at birth, birth order and birth weight - and service factors – place of delivery and birth attendant on neonatal deaths and still births.

The results of this analysis of a total of 15,718 births from 2003 – 2005 with a total of 221 deaths (128 still births and 93 neonatal deaths), showed that maternal factors had a significant relationship to birth outcome, the most significant of which was birth weight. Low birth weight babies were 9 times more likely to die than normal birth weight babies. In terms of the age of the mother, the higher the age of the mother, the higher the chance of death. A similar probability of death was found with higher birth order - the higher the birth order, the more likely the chance of death. Neither place of delivery nor birth attendant, showed a significant relationship to neonatal mortality and still births which leads to the conclusion that biological factors play a major role in the birth outcome during the neonatal and perinatal period in the Maldives.

These results therefore imply the need for a strengthening of two programmatic interventions, family planning and maternal nutrition. Due to the limited availability of data on other influential biological, medical and socio economic factors, a thorough investigation is recommended in order to know the root causes of neonatal deaths and still births in the Maldives in order to take appropriate interventions to avoid preventable deaths.

**KEY WORDS: NEONATAL DEATH/ STILL BIRTHS / MATERNAL
FACTORS/PLACE OF DELIVERY/BIRTH ATTENDANT**

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