

A recent UN report offers a glimmer of hope. The global number of children dying before their 5th birthday has reached a record low of 4.9 million in 2022.

This translates to a significant 51% decline since 2000, highlighting the effectiveness of investments in primary healthcare, particularly child health initiatives.

Countries like Cambodia and Rwanda stand out as success stories, achieving an over 75% reduction in under-5 mortality rates in the past two decades.

“The success stories of countries like Rwanda and Cambodia demonstrate the life-saving potential of investing in primary healthcare, particularly for children,” said Li Junhua, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

However, the fight is far from over. Every year, millions of children, nearly half of whom are newborns, die from preventable causes.

Despite progress, an estimated 4.9 million children die before their fifth birthday somewhere in the world, or 1 death every 6 seconds.

Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia bear the heaviest burden, the report shows. Here, most child deaths stem from preventable or treatable illnesses like pneumonia, diarrhea, and malaria.

Limited access to quality healthcare remains a critical roadblock. Essential services like vaccinations, skilled birth attendants, proper breastfeeding support, and timely diagnosis and treatment of childhood illnesses are out of reach for many.

The UN report emphasizes the urgent need for: Investing in healthcare workers which entails ensuring proper training, fair wages, and equipping them to deliver effective primary care, especially in remote areas.

The UN report emphasizes the need to further empower community health services to effectively reach remote areas and deliver critical interventions like vaccinations and basic healthcare. This requires tackling existing inequalities that disproportionately affect children born in poverty or conflict zones. Concerted efforts are crucial to bridge these gaps and ensure universal access to essential healthcare for all children.

The world remains off track to meet the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

of reducing under-5 mortality rates. 59 countries are projected to miss this target, potentially leading to millions of preventable child deaths by 2030.

The UN urges for increased healthcare funding urging that more resources are crucial to strengthen healthcare systems, particularly in high-burden regions. Also, the report urges robust data to monitor progress and identify areas requiring immediate attention.

Furthermore, the report recommends addressing poverty, conflict, and climate change as underlying challenges. This is vital to safeguarding children's well-being globally.

“While we celebrate the historic low in child mortality rates, millions of children still die from preventable causes every year. We must redouble our efforts to ensure every child has access to essential healthcare,” said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.