

South-East Asian Regional Network on Strengthening Newborn health & Prevention of Birth Defects



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Collaborating Centre for Training in Clinical Laboratory Genetics in Developing Countries
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First-annual World Birth Defects Day on 3 March 2015



In many countries, birth defects are one of the leading causes of death in infants and young children. Babies who survive and live with these conditions are at an increased risk for long-term disabilities.

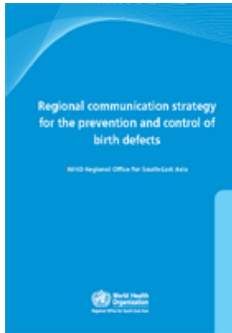
To increase global awareness of birth defects, March 3, 2015, marks the first ever World Birth Defects Day. WHO-SEARO is collaborated with 11 other global organizations to promote this special day.

In response to the 2010 World Health Assembly resolution on birth defects CAH-SEARO has worked with the countries of the region and partner organizations to develop Regional Strategic Framework for prevention and control of birth defects. SEARO in collaboration with WCOs has assisted countries to develop national plans for prevention of birth defects and establish birth defects surveillance mechanisms.

[Activities in South-East Asia](#)

Publications

Regional communication strategy for the prevention and control of birth defects



For the prevention and management of birth defects, an enabling and supportive environment is crucial to encourage individuals, families and communities to adopt and sustain new behaviours. This is achieved through a range of health communication activities including community mobilization and media campaigns. Public campaigns need to focus on alleviating the stigma related to birth defects and sensitively address cultural and religious issues such as consanguinity, myths and misconceptions around birth defects

[Read full publication](#)

Guideline: Optimal serum and red blood cell folate concentrations in women of reproductive age for prevention of neural tube defects



Folic acid insufficiency had been attributed as the major determinant of NTDs and 70% of these defects could be prevented with supplementation and fortification with folic acid. However consensus on the level of folate related to folate insufficiency was not agreed.

This recently launched WHO Guideline "Optimal serum and red blood cell folate concentrations in women of reproductive age for prevention of neural tube defects affirms the recommendations on use of folate levels for the prevention activity of NTDs.

[Read full article](#)

Serum and red blood cell folate concentrations for assessing folate status in populations



Increasing awareness of the public health significance of insufficient folate intake has emphasized the need for identifying accurate biomarkers for large-scale assessment of folate status in different populations. This document provides guidance about the use of serum (or plasma) folate and red blood cell folate as indicators to assess folate status in different populations.

[Read full article](#)

Consensus statement on Folic Acid supplementation during pregnancy



Folate requirements are increased in pregnancy because of the rapidly dividing cells in the fetus and elevated urinary losses. Folic acid insufficiency is associated with an increased risk of neural tube defects.

This article discusses the folic acid dosage and the increased requirement among women who have had a previous pregnancy resulting in a baby with neural tube defects. Furthermore the effects of antimalarial drugs; sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine and co-trimoxazole on malarial parasite and the risk of interference of folic acid supplementation in the treatment of malaria in pregnancy is also mentioned.

[Read full article](#)

WHO Key Facts on Congenital anomalies



Congenital anomalies (also termed as birth defects) are important causes of childhood death, chronic illness and disability in many countries. Although approximately 50% of all congenital anomalies cannot be linked to a specific cause, there are some known causes or risk factors.

This WHO web-page gives an overview on the etiological factors attributed to birth defects, the preventive interventions, screening and management of birth defects and development of global initiatives on birth defect prevention.

[Read full article](#)

Regional Events

Regional Programme Managers Meeting on Prevention and Surveillance of Birth Defects

14 - 16 April 2015, New Delhi, India



Newborn health and birth defects control and prevention initiative of the WHO SEARO region, has taken momentum over the past three years through the collaborative efforts of WHO-Regional office for South-East Asia (SEARO) and CDC-USA. A regional strategic framework on Prevention and Control of birth defects was developed and disseminated. With the technical support from WHO-SEARO and CDC-USA, Ministries of Health in nine countries lead the process of development of national plan on birth defects. The objectives of this meeting were to review implementation of national action plan, share experiences and challenges in birth defects surveillance, share progress on implementation of integrated approaches and discuss the follow up steps. A Regional communication strategy for the prevention and control of birth defects was launched and the opportunity was capitalised to introduce this document among member states during this event.

Stakeholder Consultation on the updated Global Strategy

26-27 February 2015 | NEW DELHI, INDIA



More than 200 experts from 25 countries, civil society organization (CSOs), the private sector, and international organizations gathered in New Delhi for the two-day consultation to update the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. This consultation, hosted by the Government of India, Every Woman Every Child (EWEC), and Partners for Population and Development, is the first of several important milestones leading up to the strategy's launch in September 2015.

National capacity building workshop on Birth Defects surveillance

16-17 March 2015, New Delhi, India



Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) is the national program initiated by the ministry of health and family welfare to address the identified 4 Ds of child health; Defects at birth, Diseases, Deficiencies and Development Delays including Disabilities. The National action plan on Birth defects, included national birth defects surveillance mechanisms to formulate information guided prevention activities.

In this regards, a national level training on Birth Defects surveillance was organized by the RBSK, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with support from WHO and CDC, USA, in New Delhi, in March 2015. The aim of this workshop was to build capacity to scale up the birth defect surveillance network among different states of India.

A total of 30 participants from the nodal hospitals from 19 states of India and RBSK coordinators from 6 states were trained during this workshop.

Progress of Surveillance in SEAR

Birth defects surveillance at NBBD SEAR database: Regional progress

South-East Asia regional network on surveillance on newborn morbidity, mortality and birth defects was established at regional office for South-East Asia, WHO. Countries have been reporting online data on daily basis. There is a steady rise in the number of hospital and member state enrolled with this surveillance network. The NBBD database is a user-friendly online database with real time high-quality data on newborn and birth defects. In addition to data collection, this network had become a platform of sharing experience and capacity building among the participating hospitals. The existence of a prompt verification and feedback mechanism on each case sheet, at institutional and national level, by an identified data verifier is another remarkable feature of this surveillance system.

From June 2014 - March 2015 - 129,341 deliveries were reported. Of these 124,245 were live births and 5,096 stillbirths. A total of 46,364 sick newborn forms were uploaded during this period. Birth defects forms uploaded during this period capturing types of birth defects were 1051.

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