

## *Goal 5: Improve maternal health*

‘It takes a lot of money to give birth and raise a healthy baby’

In Moldova 14 out of 1,000 children die before they reach the age of 5. Some of them die at birth. Ectopic pregnancies lead to a large number of deaths. Out of 100,000 pregnant women 25 die during the pregnancy or when giving birth.

Academician Gheorghe Paladi, professor of obstetrics and gynaecology, says that poverty is the main cause for maternal and infantile mortality. Pregnant women and children suffer from poor nutrition; doctors are seen late in pregnancy because there are no financial means. Infections and diseases are detected late and the risks are very high when giving birth. Many pregnant women see a doctor only when they come to give birth. ‘In these cases the doctors have no record of how the pregnancy developed. They have no knowledge about the state of the mother or baby. Being responsible for the two lives, the risk situations must be overcome. In spite of their super-human efforts, sometimes the results are not successful.’

Imminent abortions, haemorrhages, and heart diseases are the main causes endangering the life of the mother and baby during pregnancy and giving birth. According to Gheorghe Paladi, the pregnancy pathology sections and neo-natal care units are overcrowded at present. The quality of medical care is very poor due to lack of equipment and medication.

The legislation prevails that pregnant women receive free medical treatment. Because the states lack funds, many pregnant women pay for medical care, Gheorghe Paladi tells us.

Alina B. is 23 and in the 20th week of pregnancy. She was admitted at the pregnancy pathology section of the N1 hospital in Chisinau after finding out that she could lose the baby. ‘I came late to see the gynaecologist because I was not in the country. I worked in Moscow in the construction business. I had to go to Russia to make money for my child. It takes a lot of money to give birth and raise a healthy baby. When I lifted heavy things I felt ill. I fainted a couple of times. I understood that if I kept working I would feel worse. I came back home and saw a gynaecologist. He said I should be in a hospital, because I risk losing the baby,’ says Alina.

Maria I., age 34, and patient of the same hospital is in the 30th week of pregnancy. She is haemorrhagic and risks premature labor. ‘I want this child very much. There were no problems in the first part of the pregnancy. I went for my check up and was feeling fine. One day, after cleaning the house, I saw that I was bleeding. I called the ambulance. The doctor said I should not go to work. Now I stay in bed and follow the treatment. I want to give birth on time and have a healthy child,’ she tells us.

Premature babies have a high risk of death, says academician Gheorghe Paladi. Even if the doctors succeed to save them, if the parents cannot provide adequate care, then their life is endangered again. They have a feeble constitution and are more exposed to diseases than the children born on time.

UNICEF statistics reveal that 40% of the children who die before they are 5 die at home. In most cases the parents are to blame, because they don’t know how to take care of them and do not ask the advice of the doctor. UNICEF specialists claim that a large number of deaths could be avoided if the parents were better trained.

Infant and maternal mortality slightly decreased in 2002, but the rate is still too high for Moldova, reveals Dr Boris Gilca. According to him, the rate of maternal and infant mortality should decrease taking into account the low natality and massive population exodus. However, this doesn't occur because only a very few couples have access to a successful family planning. Prenatal assistance is insufficient and the population lacks the training regarding a healthy life.

'Many women have poor health. And it is not only due to poverty, but to the negligence towards themselves. Future mothers should be aware that the health of their children depends on the health of their parents,' says Dr Gilca.

The highest infant mortality rate is registered in the northern districts of the republic. The ministry of health claims that this is generated by two problems: lack of coherent programs to educate parents and ancient medical assistance delivered by some doctors.

UN experts believe that maternal mortality and under-5 age mortality can be reduced only if an efficient strategy is elaborated in the field of mother and child health. The authorities in Moldova committed to accomplishing this goal at the UN Summit in New York in 2000.

Ilona Spataru