1. PREAMBLE/INTRODUCTION

Childhood mortality rates are very good indicators of health status, quality of life and development of a country. Infant and child mortality rates and its trends also gives an idea about the progress of various health programs and policies. Childhood mortality measures are very useful in improving child survival efforts of the country. Categorization of mortality rates by demographic characteristics and socioeconomic characteristics helps in identifying and targeting high risk population groups. Infant and childhood mortality rates are good indicators of social development and health status of a country. Mortality measures are also helpful in measuring a country’s progress towards millennium development goals.

Around 6.3 million children aged under 5 years died globally in the year 2013 (WHO, 2014). More than 50% of these deaths occur due to preventable conditions. Ironically, most of these deaths occur in low and middle income countries. Neonatal deaths account for 44% of under 5 child mortality. (WHO, 2014). According to WHO and UNICEF reports, child mortality rate has gradually decreased over last 2 decades; however there are regional differences in the mortality rates. According to world bank data, under 5 child mortality rate of Nepal is 40 per 1000 live births, one of the highest child mortality rates globally. Under 5 mortality rates in developed countries like USA and UK are 7 and 5 per 1000 live births respectively. (World Bank, 2015). Although child mortality rate has declined globally, it remains high in sub-saharan Africa and South Asia. Child mortality rates have declined in developed countries due to economic growth, improvements in living conditions and nutrition. Immunization has also played a major role.

Childhood mortality risks vary with age. It is highest during the neonatal period. Child mortality can be categorized according to the age at death. This will have implications in formulating
programs and policies for improving child survival. Childhood mortality rates can be measured using surveys, census or registration data.

Neonatal death comprises of deaths occurring within 28 days of life. It can be divided into Early and Late neonatal mortality rates. There is a lack of proper data on neonatal mortality from developing countries. Causes of neonatal mortality include prematurity, poor antenatal and obstetric care, poor hygiene and lack of newborn care. Death of a baby before his/her first birthday is included in Infant Mortality Rate. Child Mortality includes death occurring in between age 1 year to 4 years. All the deaths occurring within the age of 5 years is included in Under 5 mortality. Most of the childhood deaths usually occur within the age of 5 years, so Under 5 mortality is probably the best indicator for overall childhood mortality.