

FACT SHEET

The 'continuum of care' - highs and lows of coverage across the lifecycle

A functioning continuum of health care is crucial to reduce the largely preventable deaths of over 10 million mothers and children every year, according to the 2008 Countdown to 2015 report. This 'continuum of care' for maternal, newborn and child health includes integrated service delivery through the lifecycle. Such care is provided by families and communities, through outpatient services, clinics and other health facilities.

The chart below based on Countdown to 2015 findings shows average care coverage during key periods: pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, childbirth, the postnatal period and childhood. The bars show the highs and lows of care - a rollercoaster of ups and downs as opposed to the consistent high coverage needed to reduce mortality. The thin black bars represent the huge variations between countries.

The chart highlights three priority coverage gaps across the 'continuum of care':

Family planning services: Only one third of women in the 68 priority countries are using a modern contraceptive method.

Skilled care during childbirth and the postnatal period: Only around half of women benefit from a skilled birth attendant at the time of birth, though this is the riskiest period for mother and infant. Care during the critical postnatal period is even lower, an important missing link in the continuum of care.

Clinical care for sick children: Only about one-third of children with pneumonia – the biggest single killer of children – receive the right treatment.

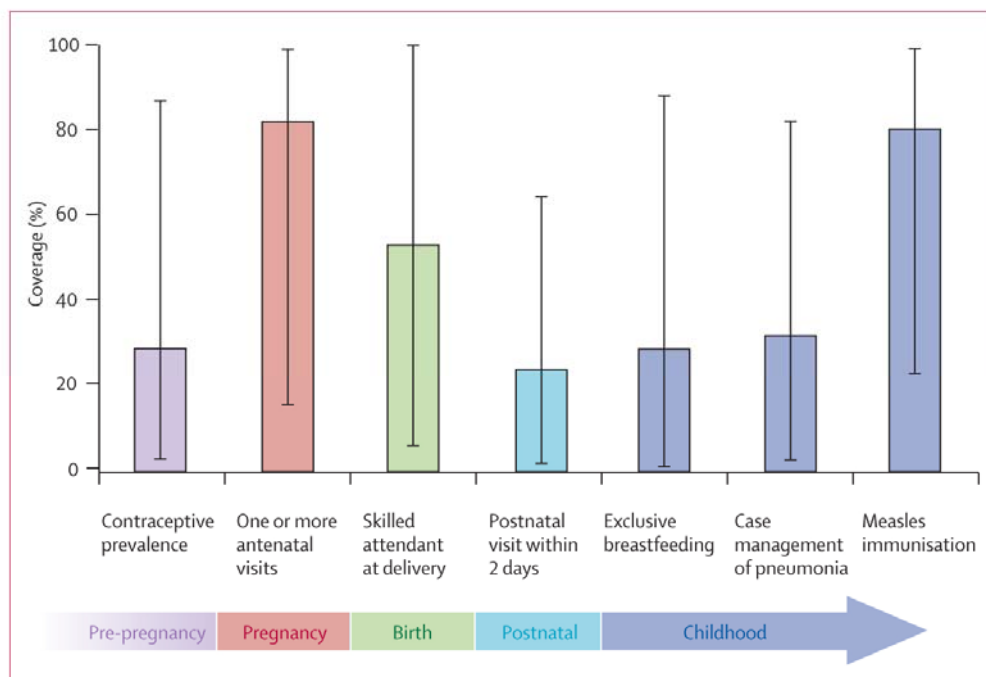


Figure 3: Coverage estimates for interventions across the continuum of care in the 68 priority countries (2000-06)