**Equity in maternal, newborn, and child health interventions in Countdown to 2015: a retrospective review of survey data from 54 countries**

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**Summary**

**Background**

Countdown to 2015 tracks progress towards achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5, with particular emphasis on within-country inequalities. We assessed how inequalities in maternal, newborn, and child health interventions vary by intervention and country.

**Methods**

We reanalysed data for 12 maternal, newborn, and child health interventions from national surveys done in 54 Countdown countries between Jan 1, 2000, and Dec 31, 2008. We calculated coverage indicators for interventions according to standard definitions, and stratified them by wealth quintiles on the basis of asset indices. We assessed inequalities with two summary indices for absolute inequality and two for relative inequality.

**Findings**

Skilled birth attendant coverage was the least equitable intervention, according to all four summary indices, followed by four or more antenatal care visits. The most equitable intervention was early initiation of breastfeeding. Chad, Nigeria, Somalia, Ethiopia, Laos, and Niger were the most inequitable countries for the interventions examined, followed by Madagascar, Pakistan, and India. The most equitable countries were Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Community-based interventions were more equally distributed than those delivered in health facilities. For all interventions, variability in coverage between countries was larger for the poorest than for the richest individuals.

**Interpretation**
We noted substantial variations in coverage levels between interventions and countries. The most inequitable interventions should receive attention to ensure that all social groups are reached. Interventions delivered in health facilities need specific strategies to enable the countries' poorest individuals to be reached. The most inequitable countries need additional efforts to reduce the gap between the poorest individuals and those who are more affluent.

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