

The importance of reducing maternal mortality for women's health in Africa

Regional Preparatory Meeting for Africa
on Women and Health
Dakar, 12 January 2010

Isabelle de Zoysa

Senior Adviser, HIV/AIDS

Office of the Assistant Director-General

Family and Community Health

World Health Organization

Geneva



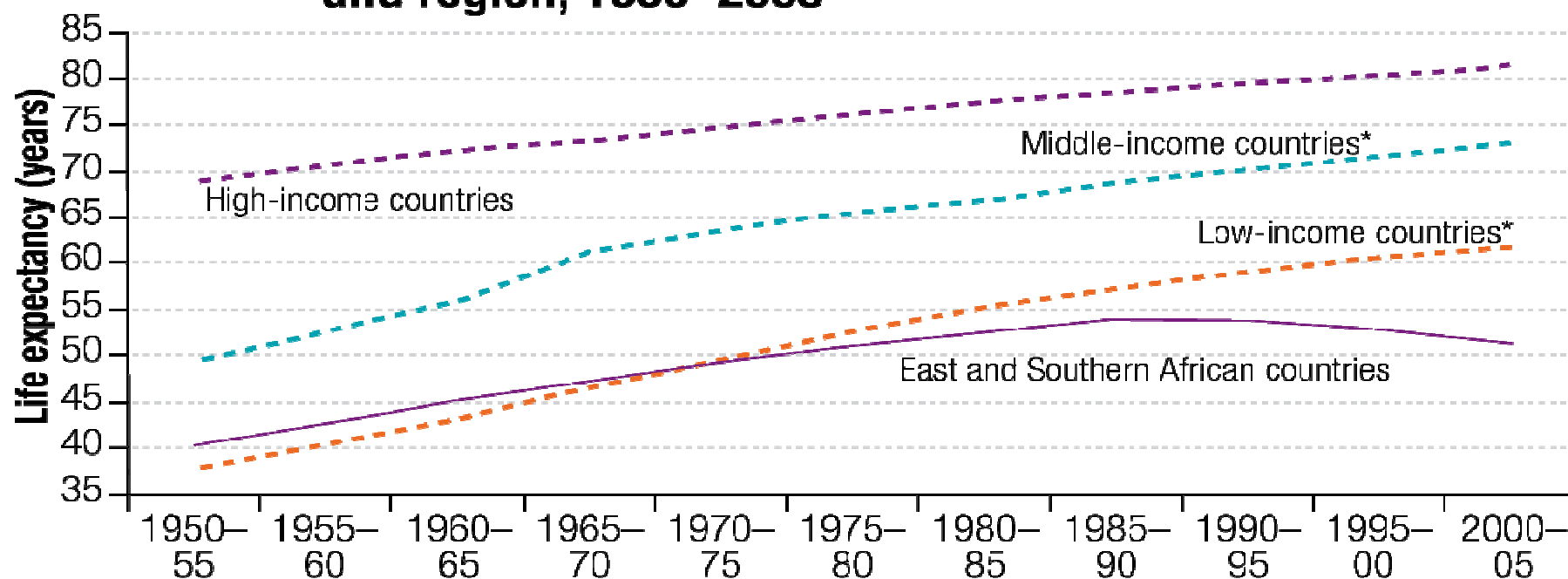
Structure of the presentation

- **Maternal health within the broader context of women's health**
- **Maternal health issues in Africa**
- **Key interventions to reduce maternal mortality**
- **Policy responses**



Life expectancy at birth is increasing -in most, but not all parts of the world

Female life expectancy at birth by country income group and region, 1950–2005



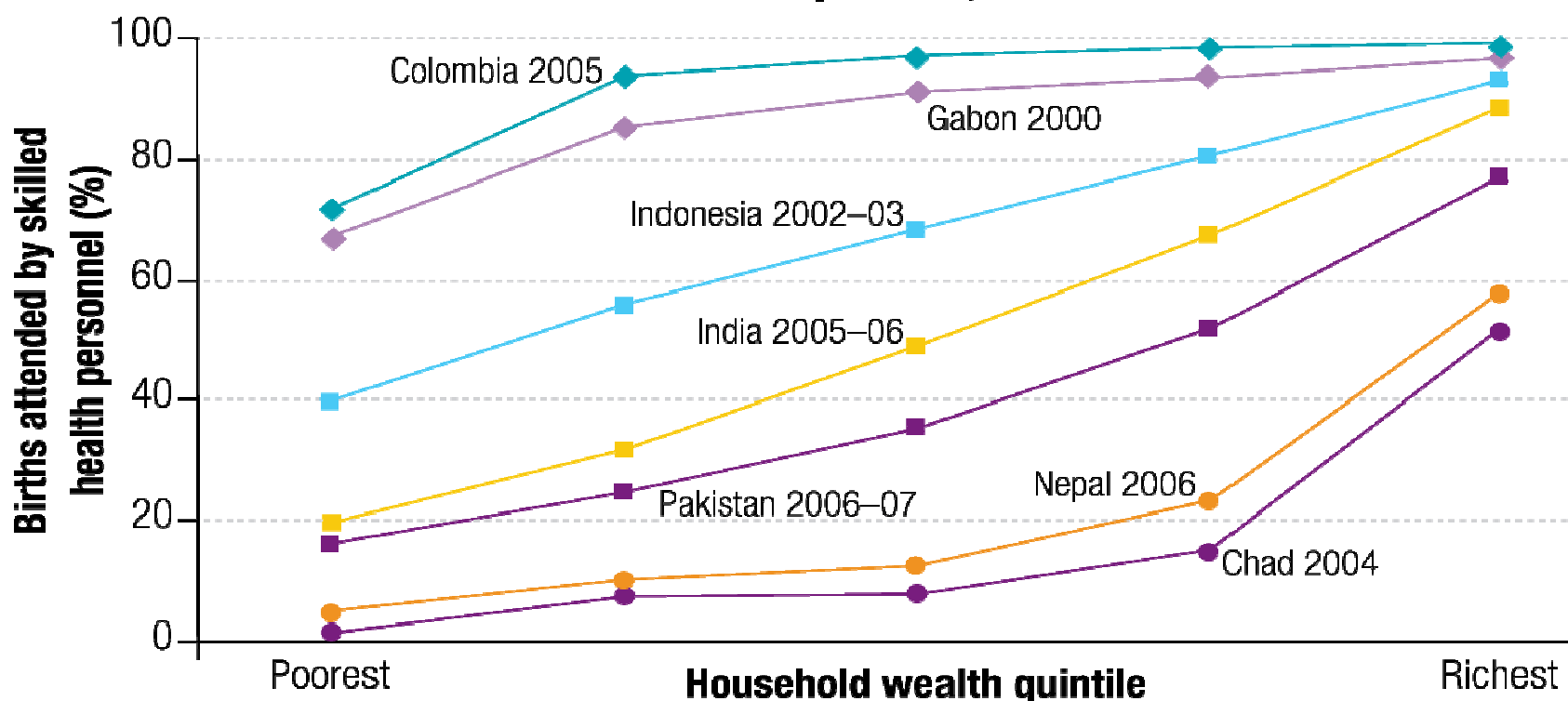
* Excluding East and Southern African countries.

Source: United Nations Population Division.²



Inequities in access to health care are seen in most countries

Births attended by skilled health personnel, by household wealth quintile, selected countries



Source: Demographic and Health Surveys in selected countries, 2000–2007.

Adolescence (10–19 yrs): a time of risk

- Too often, societies are failing to provide the support that adolescent girls need
- In developing countries, **complications of pregnancy and childbirth** are the leading cause of death in young women between the ages of 15 and 19
- About 15% of all maternal deaths worldwide, and 26% in Africa, occur among adolescents
- Adolescent girls in Africa account for one in every four unsafe abortions.



Leading causes of death among women of reproductive age (15-44 yrs)

World			
Rank	Cause	Deaths(000s)	%
1	HIV/AIDS	682	19.2
2	Maternal conditions	516	14.6
3	Tuberculosis	228	6.4
4	Self-inflicted injuries	168	4.7
5	Road traffic accidents	132	3.7



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Maternal health situation in Africa

- Every year in Africa...
 - at least 30 million women become pregnant
 - 265,000 mothers die of causes related to pregnancy and childbirth
 - 1.16 million babies die in the first month of life
- The majority of these deaths could be prevented!



Millennium Development Goals

- **Goal 5: to improve maternal health**

- Target 5a: Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio

 - 5.1 Maternal mortality ratio

 - 5.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel

- Target 5b: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health

 - 5.3 Contraceptive prevalence rate

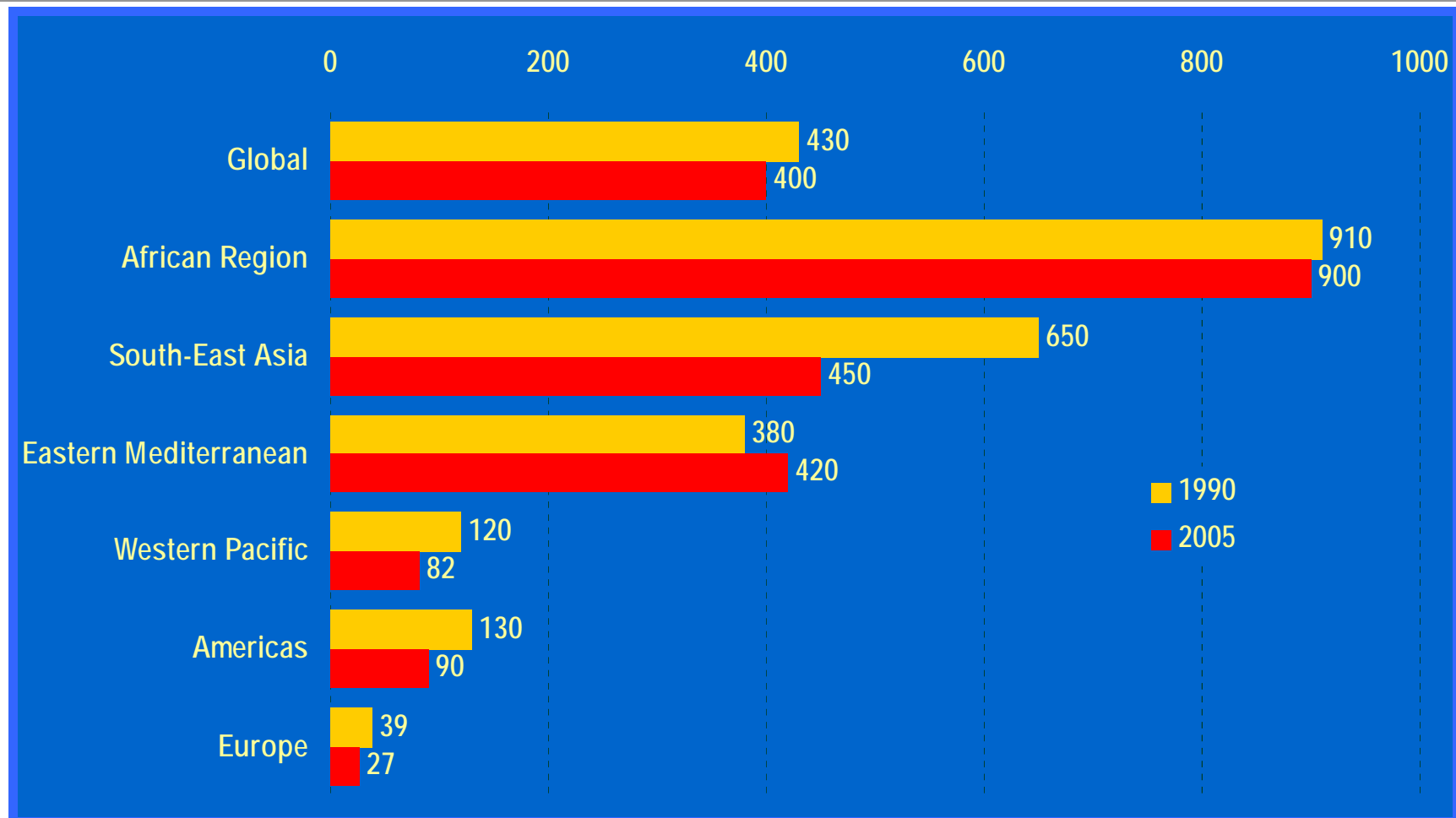
 - 5.4 Adolescent birth rate

 - 5.5 Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits)

 - 5.6 Unmet need for family planning

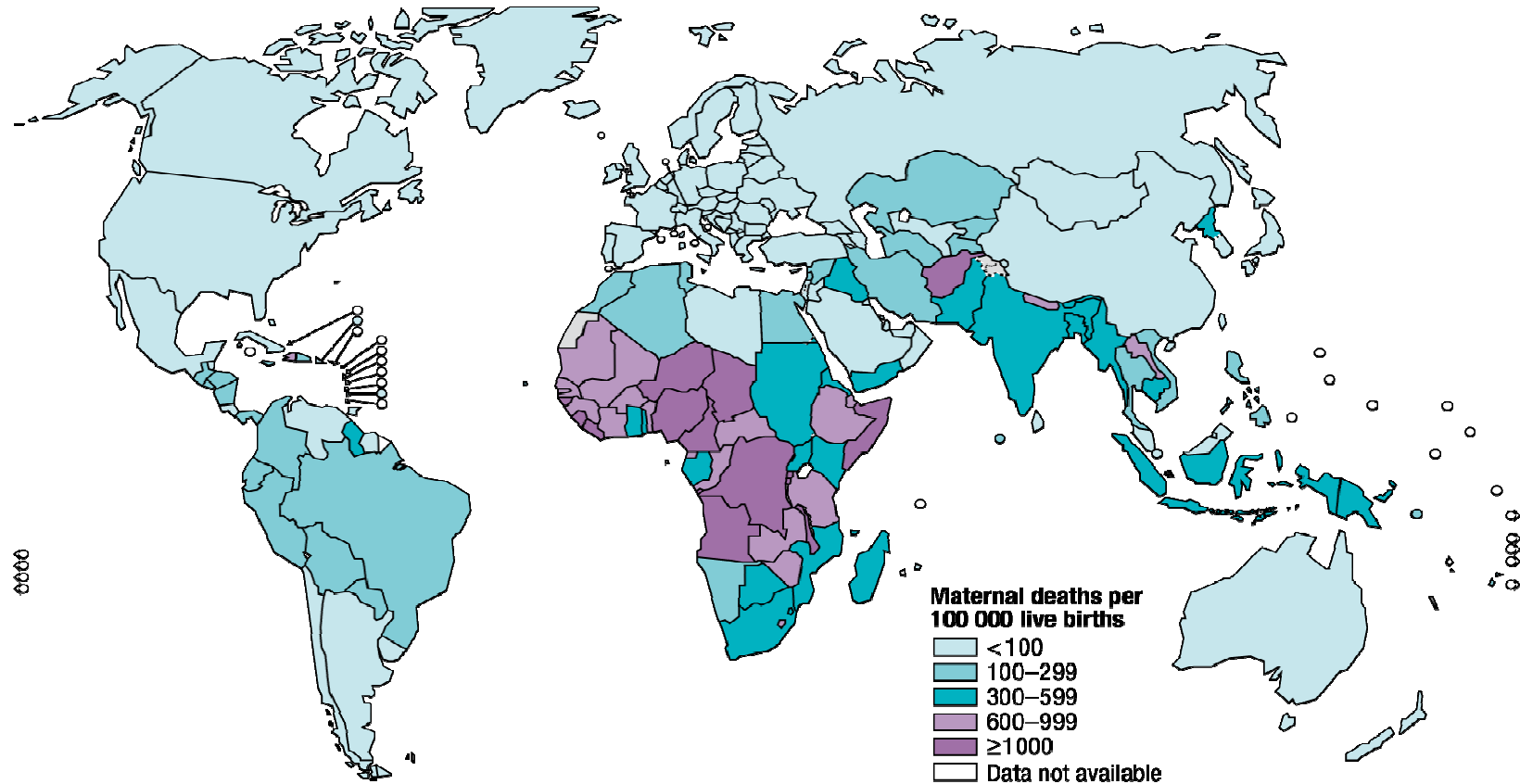


Africa as a whole is not making progress towards achieving MDG 5



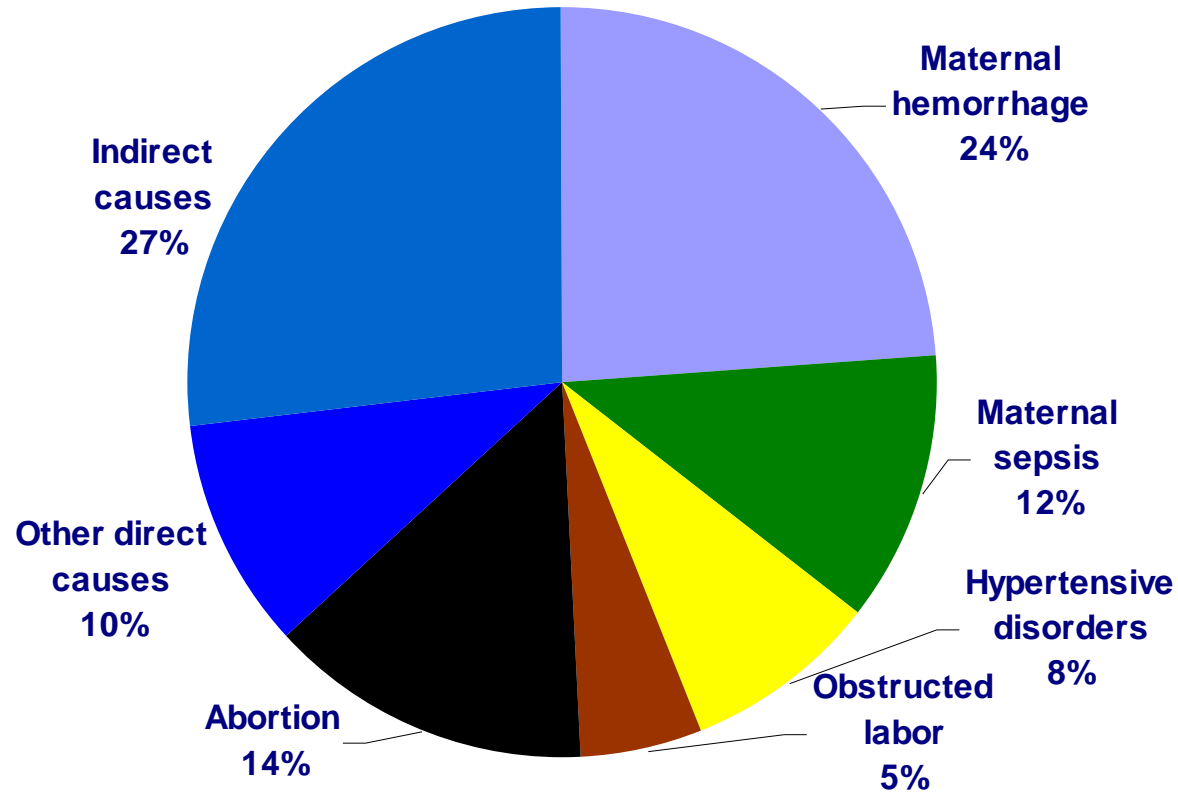
Maternal mortality ratios are high to very high in African countries

Maternal mortality ratios, 2005



Source: World Health Organization.⁴

Causes of maternal deaths



Causes of maternal mortality in the African Region, 2004

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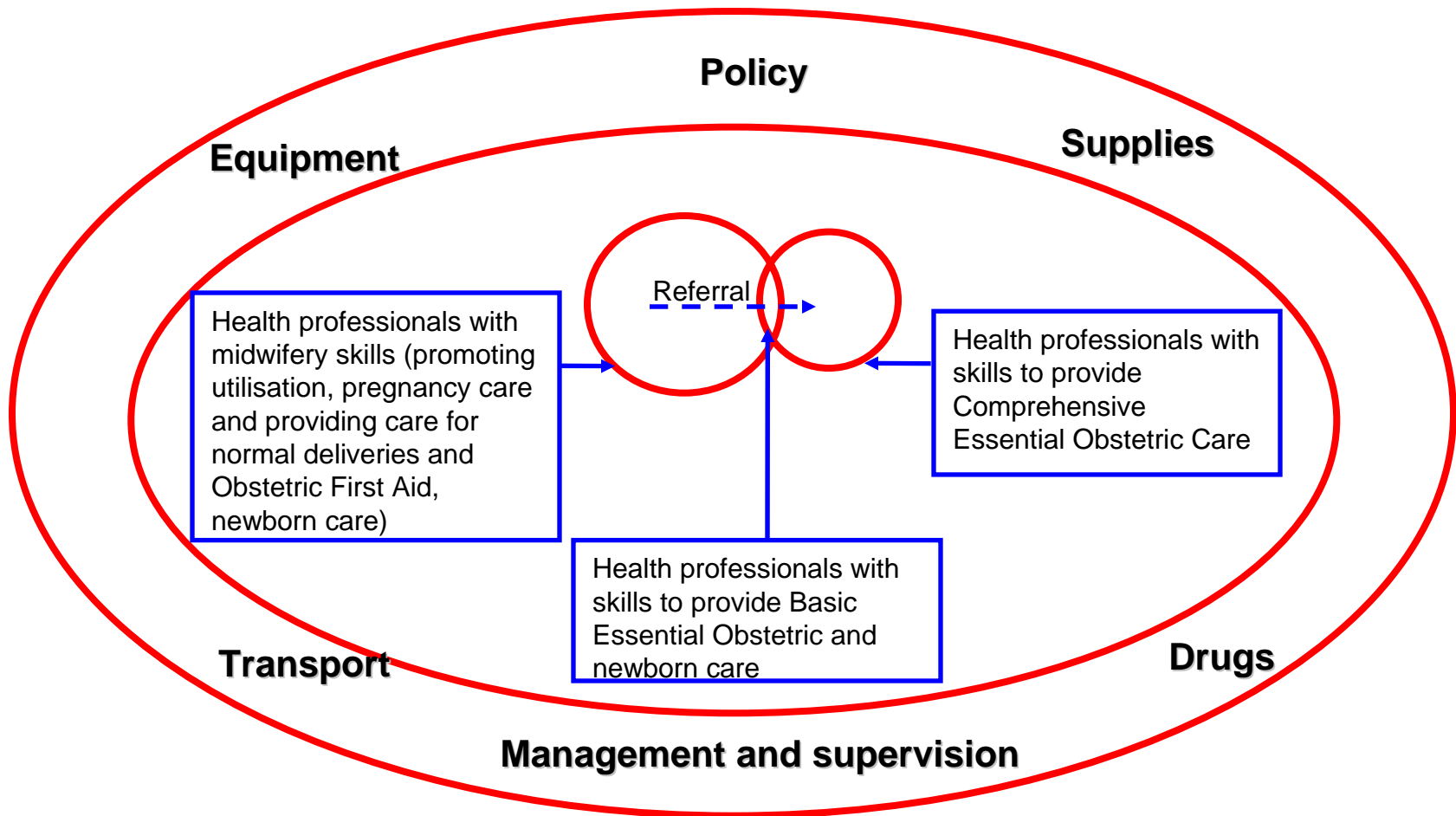


Effective interventions

- Access to skilled attendants at birth, combined with prompt referral in case of complications
- Emergency obstetric care
- Family planning
- Other measures to reduce adolescent pregnancies
- Addressing links between HIV, malaria and maternal health
- Empowering women, families and communities to make timely decisions and carry out appropriate actions



Ensuring skilled care at every birth



Improved coverage is needed along the Continuum of Care

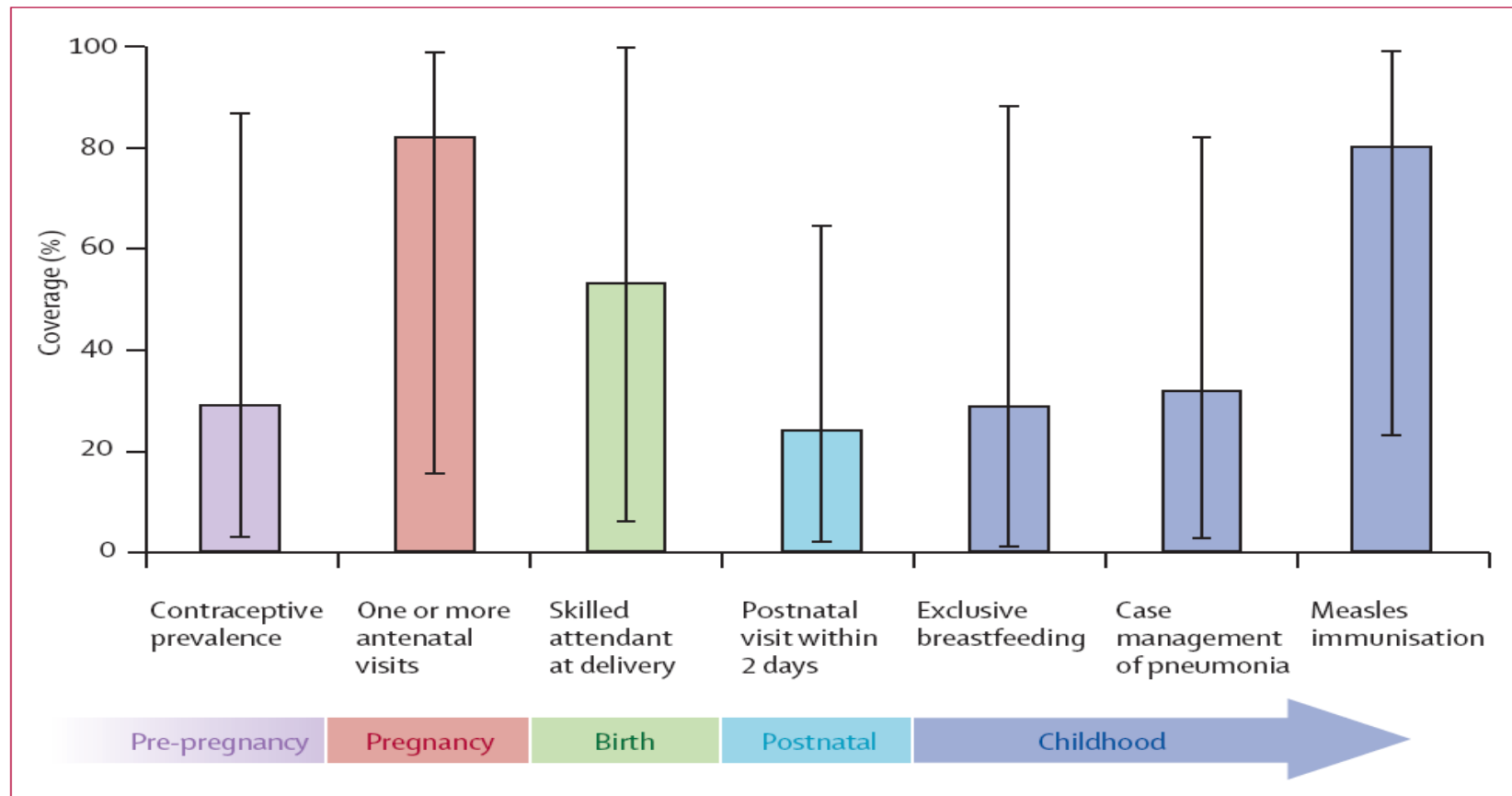


Figure 3: Coverage estimates for interventions across the continuum of care in the 68 priority countries (2000–06) Source: Lancet Countdown Coverage writing group, Lancet Countdown special issue, 2008

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A shared agenda for women's health

- Building strong leadership and a coherent institutional response
- Making health systems work for women
- Leveraging changes in public policy to build healthier societies
- Building the knowledge base and monitoring progress



Thank you!

