

Newborn Care in Mali: Results of a Baseline Survey Executive Summary Save the Children, 2008



Introduction:

Every year up to 28,000 newborns die in Mali, representing a quarter of all under-five year old child deaths. To reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), care of newborns in Mali is crucial. Save the Children's Saving Newborn Lives program successfully implemented a newborn care package 2001 – 2004 through community health volunteers, Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) as well as health center staff at various levels. This pilot program demonstrated an increase in postnatal care visits from four percent to 26 percent in the first three days of life, when the risk of dying for mothers and newborns is highest.



Given Save the Children's (SC) experience in newborn health, UNICEF in partnership with SC is integrating an Essential Newborn Care (ENC) component into the national Child Survival Strategy.

The National Child Survival Strategy is an integrated strategy of maternal, newborn and child health interventions, created to accelerate the reduction of maternal and child deaths and reach the MDG goals. UNICEF with funds from the Canadian International Development Agency will assist the Ministry of Health to implement the strategy. It includes cost-effective interventions such as the Expanded Program for Immunizations, Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses, care of mothers and newborns, prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS, as well as community practices favorable for the health and nutrition of the child and pregnant woman. Essential Newborn Care (ENC) as part of the package of interventions in the Child Survival Strategy is indispensable for a comprehensive Maternal, Newborn and Child Health package.

Save the Children is supporting the integration of ENC into the Child Survival Strategy by contributing technical assistance, assistance with trainings, the Behavior Change and Communication (BCC) materials and the newborn manuals. Also, SC will evaluate the newborn component by conducting baseline and endline surveys.

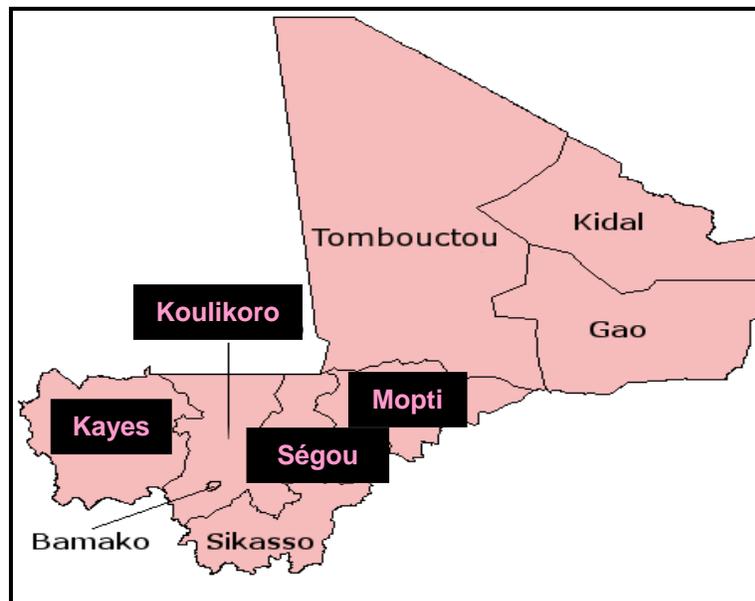
Objectives of the Baseline Survey:

- Determine the use of newborn services
- Identify current ENC practices in the survey area
- Create recommendations for ENC within the Child Survival Strategy

Methodology of the Survey:

- Household survey of 840 mothers 15 to 49 years old who had a live birth in the last year
- Four regions (16 districts): Kayes, Koulikoro, Ségou et Mopti
- Conducted in April 2008
- 60 clusters with randomly selected households

Baseline Survey Regions

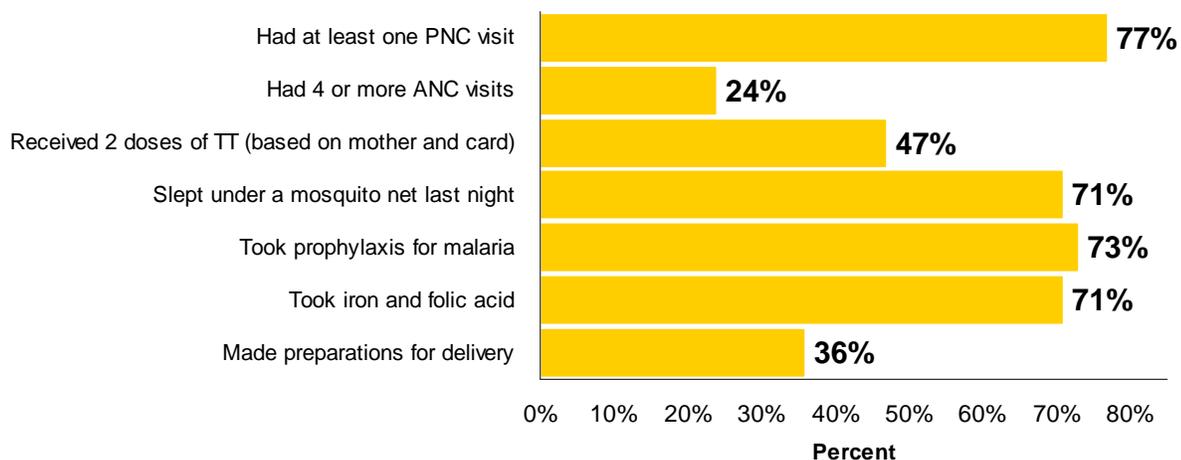


Baseline Survey Results:

1. Antenatal Care:

More than three quarters of women had at least one antenatal consultation, but unfortunately only 24% had the recommended four or more visits. During the antenatal consultations, health agents took blood pressure of 91% of mothers, conducted a urine exam of 35% of mothers and took a blood sample of 31% of them. About three quarters of women took prophylaxis for malaria, slept under a mosquito net and took iron plus folic acid. About half of the women received two doses of tetanus toxoid (TT) vaccinations and 36% of women made preparations for delivery.

Antenatal Care During the Last Pregnancy



During these visits, women received little advice. Almost half of women received no advice during their prenatal visits. Furthermore, few women received blood and urine exams.

Types of exams received during prenatal consultations

Had blood pressure taken	91%
Had urine sample analysed	35%
Had blood sample taken	31%
Received all three exams	25%

Advice received during prenatal consultations

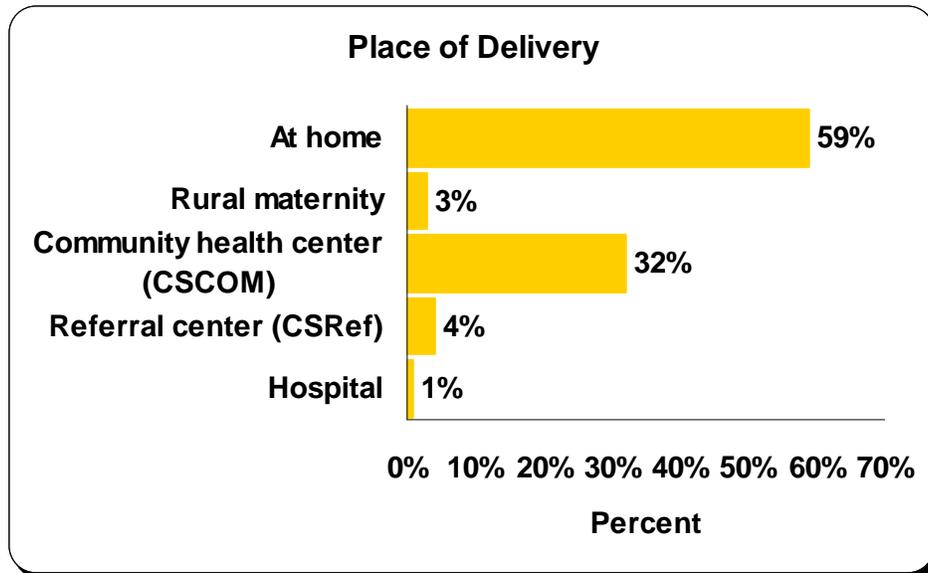
Nutrition for the mother	26%
Tetanus toxoid vaccination	10%
Preparation for delivery	6%
Danger signs during pregnancy	33%
Malaria	21%
Family planning	3%
Postnatal care	2%
Breastfeeding	9%
HIV/AIDS	2%
Other	5%
None	46%

2. Delivery:

Only 36% of women made preparations for delivery, of which some saved money, identified where and with whom to deliver, organized transportation or bought materials for the delivery.

Preparations made for delivery	
Saved money	31%
Organised transportation	6%
Identified someone to assist with delivery	32%
Identified where to deliver	24%
Bought materials for a clean delivery	30%
Bought new razor blade	29%
Other	21%

The majority of women gave birth at home where many did not receive the necessary care such as postnatal exams. One barrier to delivering in a health center is distance. In Kayes and Mopti, more than a quarter women live more than 15 kilometers away from a health center. Other reasons mentioned for not delivering in a health center include: not used to delivering there, did not know that it was important or their family/husband did not permit it, indicating that Behavior Change Communication activities are really important.



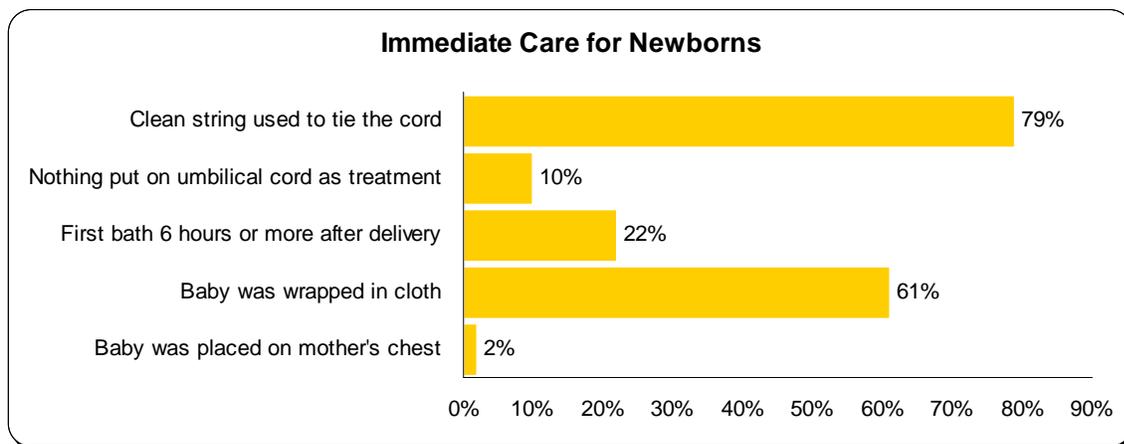
The majority of women mentioned having received assistance from a trained Traditional Birth Attendant (45%) or an auxiliary midwife (36%) during their delivery.

Immediate Care for Newborns:

Half of the mothers started breastfeeding as recommended within one hour after delivery.

Newborns, particularly small babies, are vulnerable to hypothermia. Therefore babies should not be bathed early and need to be wrapped in cloth. According to this survey, seven percent of babies had a low birth weight baby or baby which weighed less than 2.5 kilograms at birth. However, this is likely an underestimation because only a quarter of babies were weighed.

To prevent infections, the cord needs to be tied with a clean thread and nothing put on the cord. While 79% of women used a clean string to tie the cord, only 10% of women put nothing on the umbilical cord.



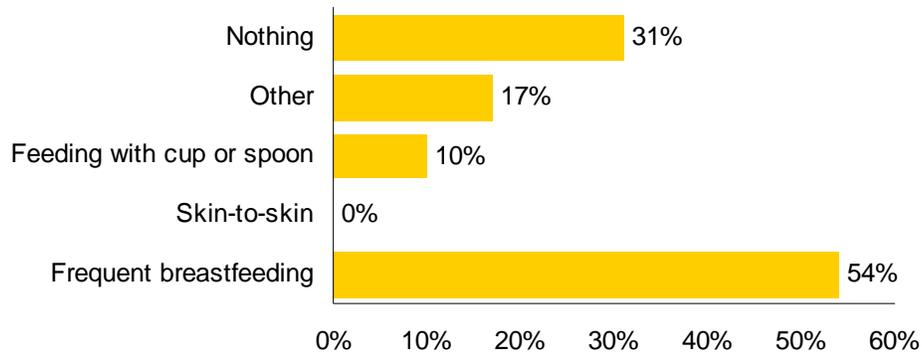
3. Postnatal Care:

Only a little less than half of women went to a health center for a postnatal visit in the two days following delivery for their newborns (23%) and for themselves (22%). The majority of women and newborns were not consulted (71%).

Type of exam or advice received during postnatal visits for babies	
Temperature taken	85%
Cord examined	90%
Other exam conducted	6%
Received breastfeeding advice	63%
Counseled on danger signs	34%
Received other advice	1%

About 36% of women breastfed their babies exclusively for the first six months.

Care for newborns born with less than the average birth weight



Recommendations :

- Three quarters of women receive antenatal care, but not all services are provided. Also, more than one visit is important to prevent tetanus toxoid and malaria. Antenatal care should also include key newborn health messages.
- Quality of care in health centers needs to be improved.
- Mothers need to be taught about the advantages of delivering with a trained provider.
- All mothers and babies need to be reached with routine postnatal visits within the first two days after birth, whether at home or in a health center.
- Advice on danger sign recognition and the importance of prompt care seeking and referrals need to be included in prenatal and postnatal consultations as well as promoted through community health agents.
- Health providers and community health volunteers need to create awareness about the importance of immediate and exclusive breastfeeding.
- Essential Newborn Care should be promoted at all levels of facilities and health care providers need to be trained to mitigate the high rates of poor umbilical cord care, bathing and poor breastfeeding practices.
- Low birth weight babies pose real risks in Mali; all babies need to be weighed and extra care provided to small babies. Kangaroo Mother Care services should be established and health providers trained in skin-to-skin care and Kangaroo Mother Care.
- To reduce maternal and neonatal mortality, it is important to work together at all levels—from community health volunteers up to facility-based providers. Also, it is necessary to provide a continuum of care for mothers, newborns and children.