

South Asia Health Atlas Provides Evidence on the Urgency to Reach the Most Disadvantaged Children in the Region

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PRESS RELEASE

KATHMANDU, 24 November 2016 – UNICEF in South Asia is releasing a new South Asia Health Atlas to highlight the importance of two major health problems: tackling newborn deaths and ensuring children are fully immunised in the region. Using the relatively under-used, innovative technique of ring mapping, the Atlas shows deprivations and underlying contributing factors of immunisation and newborn deaths across and within countries in the region.

Despite making remarkable progress in decreasing the number of newborn deaths by half from 1990 to 2015, South Asia has the highest number of newborn deaths (more than 1 million in 2015) in the world. Furthermore, 1 in 7 children in South Asia are under-immunised with most living in Pakistan, India and Afghanistan.

“UNICEF strongly believes that no child should die of preventable causes and that all children, no matter where they live or what their circumstances are, have the right to survive and thrive. However, the reality is huge inequities exist in South Asia and not enough women and their newborns benefit from quality care. Also, there are significant disparities in immunisation coverage that has contributed to 5 million under-immunised children in the region,” said Jean Gough, UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia.

The South Asia Health Atlas reveals that challenges relating to newborn health, and also to under-immunisation remain in the region. Mapping offers a quick and accessible insight into these problems and possible associations, for example, between adolescent birth rates and newborn deaths; immunisation and under five deaths; and how countries with the highest newborn death rates struggle with financing the health system.

The Atlas also highlights the usefulness of geospatial mapping for policy making, especially in today’s world where policy makers are flooded with information and data. This Atlas aims to help them prioritise and make evidence-based decisions in allocating resources to the neediest in the region.

The UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia added, “This Atlas reminds us that unless we accelerate progress on newborn deaths, South Asia will not achieve the Sustainable Development Goal target by 2030. We must ensure that countries in South Asia recommit to saving children and newborns through policies and fiscal plans that address the priority issues, such as immunisation and newborn health, with a focus on the poorest.”

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**EMBARGO 3:15 AM
GMT/9:00 AM Nepal Time
24 November 2016**

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Notes to editors

Download South Asia Health Atlas:
<http://bit.ly/2f19cES>

About UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

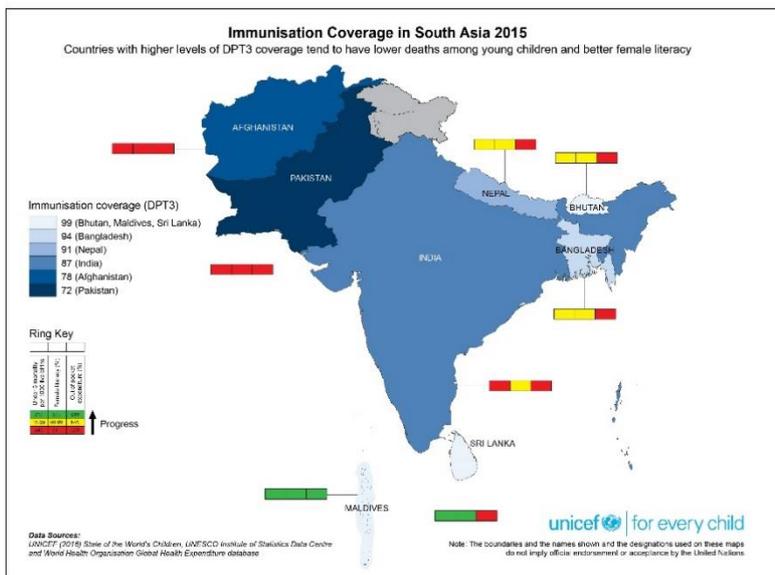
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From the South Asia Health Atlas:

Immunisation Coverage in South Asia 2015: Countries with higher levels of DPT3 Coverage tend to have lower deaths among young children and better female literacy



Newborn Mortality in South Asia 2015: South Asia countries with high newborn mortality also have problems with adolescent births

