South Asia is far from achieving universal coverage of essential health and nutrition interventions: examining coverage, trends and inequities, 2005 to 2018.

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BACKGROUND

South Asia carries the largest burden of malnutrition globally. Tracking coverage of health and nutrition interventions is a critical step in designing effective nutrition policies and monitoring progress in the region.

OBJECTIVES

This paper examines coverage and trends of 21 health and nutrition interventions for South Asian countries and region. We also report inequities in intervention coverage by wealth, place of residence, women age and women education.

METHODS


We examined health and nutrition interventions spanning the continuum of care: 2 in the pre-conception period, 6 in pregnancy, 4 in postpartum and 12 in childhood and 1 in household environment.

We report sample weighted mean coverage for all interventions for each country-round and population weighted median for the South Asian region.

To examine trends and inequities we calculate concentration indices in Composite Coverage Index (CCI) and Co-coverage Index.

RESULTS

The median coverage for most health and nutrition interventions has improved for the South Asian region between 2006 and 2018.

Coverage has decreased over time for two indicators, i.e. Demand for Family Planning and 6 in pregnancy.

Median for co-coverage index is around 30% for at least 3 interventions. Wealth inequity seems to have decreased for Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite improvements in health and nutrition intervention coverage since 2005, universal coverage is still far from reality for South Asia at the country and regional level.

Inequities in coverage by wealth and residence have decreased the most in India and Nepal, with less progress in Bangladesh and Pakistan, but are still large for all countries.

Figure 1: South Asia’s median coverage of Interventions between time periods 2006-2013 and 2014-2018 (population weighted)

Figure 2: South Asia regional maps for Composite Coverage Index (latest DHS round)

Figure 3: South Asia regional maps for Co-Coverage Index (no. of interventions >=3)

Figure 4: Inequity for Composite Coverage Index (by wealth and place of residence)

Table 5: Inequity for Co-Coverage Index (by wealth and place of residence)