The interrelated health needs of women and newborns require integrated primary-health-care solutions.

delivered in integrated packages at critical points in the life cycle of mothers and children, in a dynamic health system that spans key locations, underpinned by an environment supportive of the rights of women and children.

The critical points for service delivery are adolescence, pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, birth, post-partum, neonatal, infancy and childhood.

The essential services for mothers, newborns and children include basic health care, quality maternal, newborn and child health care, adequate nutrition and improved water and sanitation facilities, and hygiene practices.

The key delivery modes for services are household and community, outreach and outpatient, and health facilities.²

The supportive environment requires respect for the rights of women and children; quality education; a decent standard of living; protection from abuse, exploitation, discrimination and violence; equal participation in home, community, social and political life; empowerment of women; and greater involvement of men in maternal and child care.

The continuum of care broadly reflects a set of strategic principles based on lessons learned from a century of evolving health-care systems and practices. These principles were explored in depth in The State of the World’s Children 2008 and are summarized here.

- Actions to improve the health of women, newborns and children are most effective and sustainable when they are integrated and delivered in convenient, cost-effective packages to communities and families.
- Health systems are most useful when they integrate dynamically the different modes of care – facility-based, outreach and outpatient services, and community and family care.
- Strengthening health systems to improve health outcomes for mothers and children requires combining and integrating the

Figure 2.1
The continuum of care

Connecting care during the lifecycle (A) and at places of caregiving (B). Adapted from Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, with permission.