Goal
Access by all pregnant women to prenatal care, trained attendants during childbirth and referral facilities for high-risk pregnancies and obstetric emergencies.

Result
Apart from sub-Saharan Africa, where maternal mortality is highest, antenatal and delivery care have improved significantly in all regions, though not all countries have shared equally in such improvements.

… but
Delivery care coverage is 37 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and 29 per cent in South Asia; essential obstetric care coverage is even lower. Countries with the lowest levels of care for pregnant women need to invest in programmes that will give women accelerated access to antenatal delivery care.

Issue
Regular contact with a doctor, nurse or midwife during pregnancy allows women to receive advice on tetanus immunizations, good nutrition, hygiene and rest and allows health workers to detect potential complications. It is also an opportunity to provide services to help prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission, prevent and treat malaria and distribute micronutrient supplementation. Labour and delivery, too, should be supervised by doctors, midwives or nurses who have the skills to safely handle normal deliveries and to recognize the onset of complications requiring emergency care.