

Goal

Reduction by 50 per cent in the deaths due to diarrhoea in children under the age of five years and 25 per cent reduction in the diarrhoea incidence rate

» Diarrhoeal Disease



Result

Diarrhoea was estimated to be the number one killer of children under five at the beginning of the decade. By 2000, the goal had been achieved with diarrhoea-related deaths declining by half. It is estimated that more than 1 million deaths may have been prevented every year. Success can be attributed to the promotion and use of oral rehydration therapy.

... but

Despite the major decline in diarrhoea mortality, it continues to exact a high toll. Continued reduction depends on family knowledge and behaviour for the effective home treatment of diarrhoea and the use of appropriate health services when children require additional care. Increased access to clean water and to improved sanitation also contribute to reducing diarrhoeal disease.

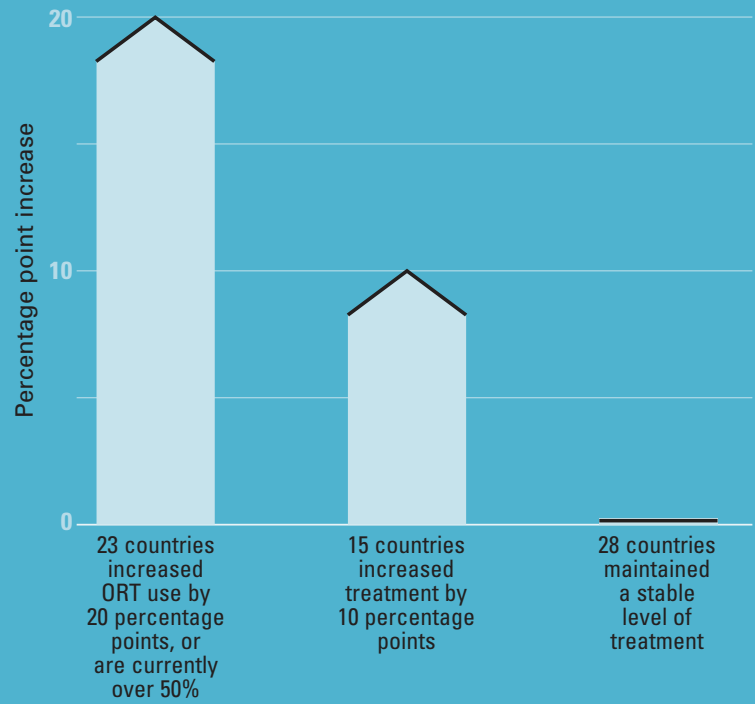
Issue

Most diarrhoea-related deaths result from dehydration – the loss of large quantities of water and salt from the body. Many deaths can be prevented with the use of oral rehydration therapy.

MAJOR GLOBAL PROGRESS

ORT use increased or was maintained in many countries, 1990-2000

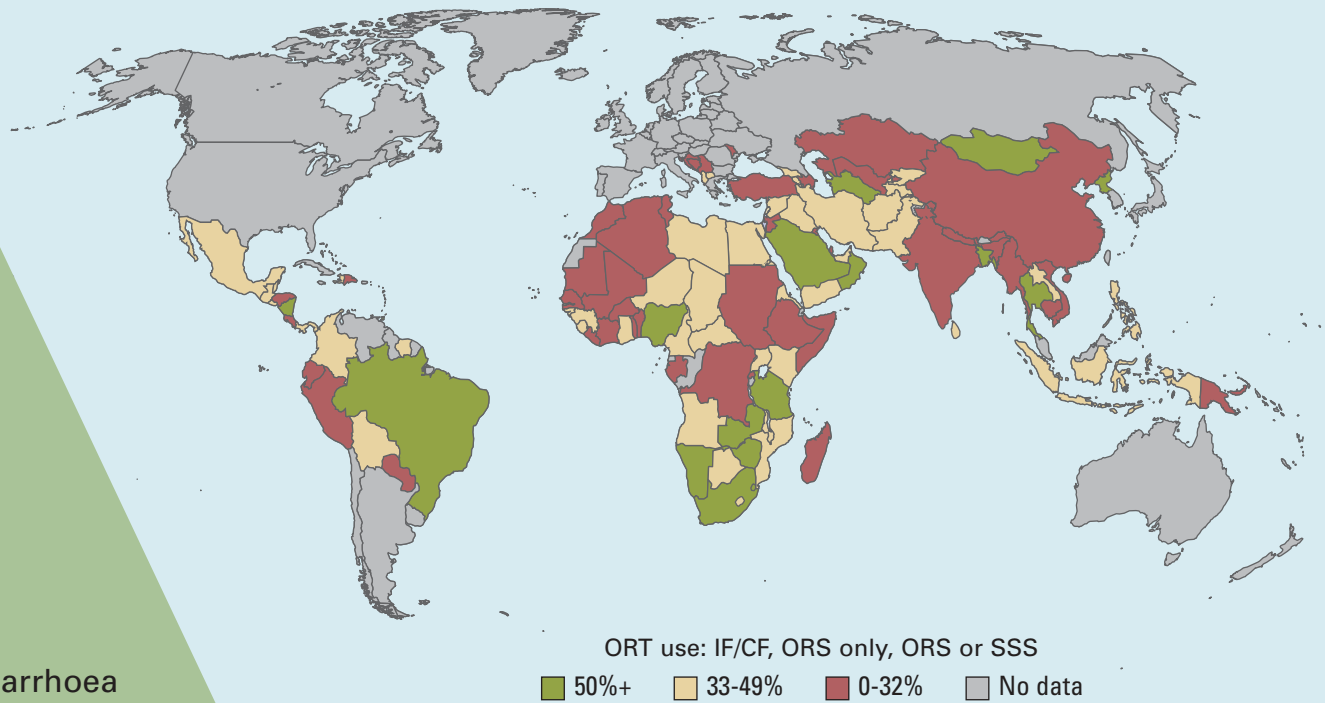
Source: UNICEF, 2001.



Widespread treatment of diarrhoea

Percentage of children with diarrhoea who received ORT*, 1990-2000**

Source: UNICEF, 2001.



*ORT use in each country is measured according to the highest percentage of three indicators of ORT: IF/CF, ORS only, and ORS or SSS.

**Refers to children who received ORT in the two weeks prior to the survey.

Oral rehydration therapy: A changing definition

Oral rehydration therapy (ORT) is the cornerstone of programmes to control diarrhoeal disease. Recommendations on the use of ORT, however, have changed over time, based on scientific progress in the home management of diarrhoea and on considerations of feasible treatment. Varying definitions of ORT have been adopted and promoted by countries at different times. While the current WHO/UNICEF recommendation for ORT is "increased fluids plus continued feeding" (IF/CF), several countries have high rates of ORT use according to previous definitions, which include oral rehydration salts (ORS) and home-made sugar/salt/water solutions (SSS). Until all countries have fully adopted the currently recommended ORT regimen, it will be difficult to accurately compare use rates.