

Patterns in early breastfeeding practices among mothers in urban Cambodia, Nepal, Senegal and Tanzania

Mary Champeny & the ARCH Research Team

Background

Early initiation of breastfeeding after delivery and the provision of only breastmilk to newborns within the first few days after delivery support longer-term breastfeeding outcomes. Sales of breastmilk substitutes (BMS) are increasing in low income countries, with research having shown the negative impact of health facility-based BMS promotion on breastfeeding initiation and duration.

Objective

To assess early breastfeeding and prelacteal feeding practices among mothers of newborns and their exposure to promotions for BMS within health facilities in four urban settings in different regions of the world.

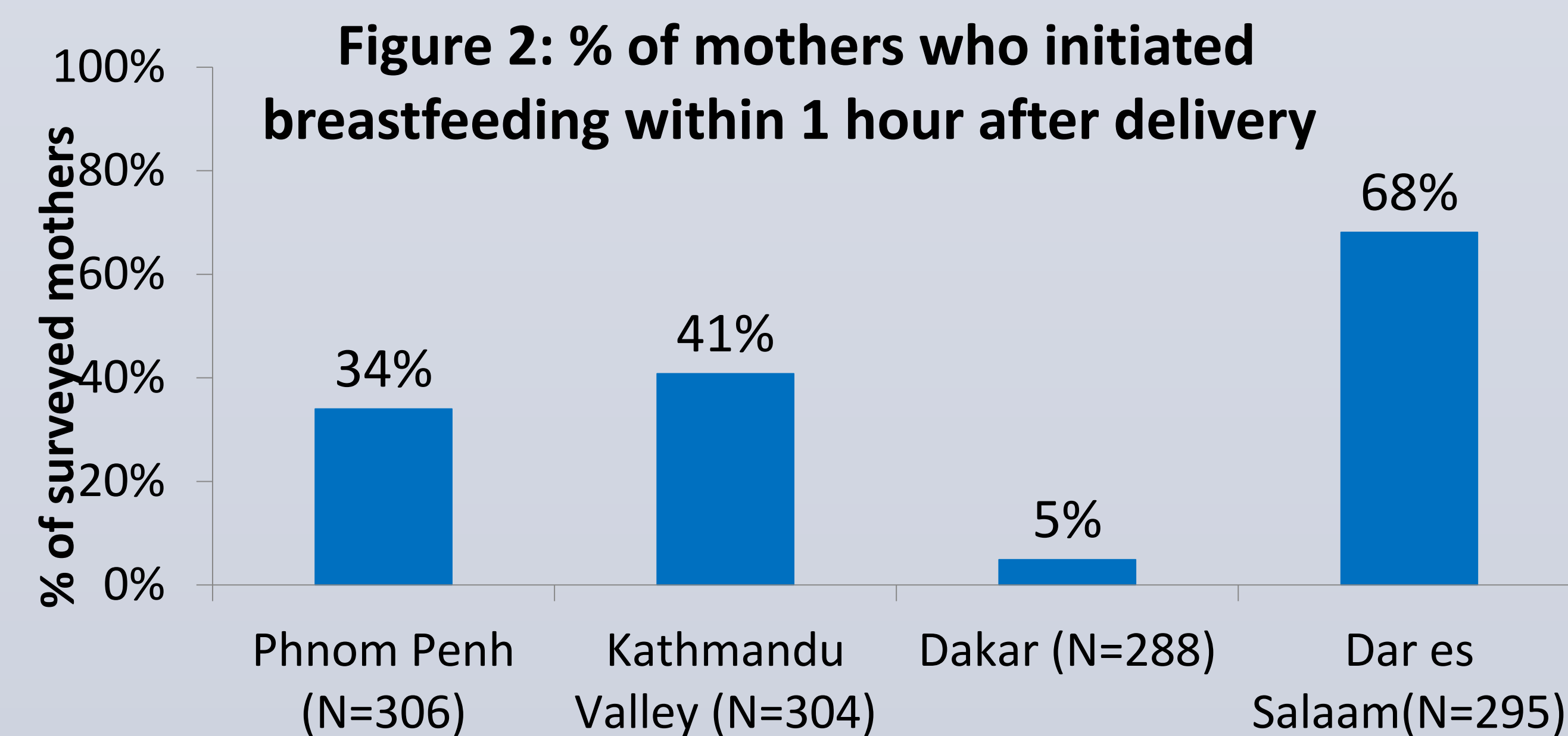
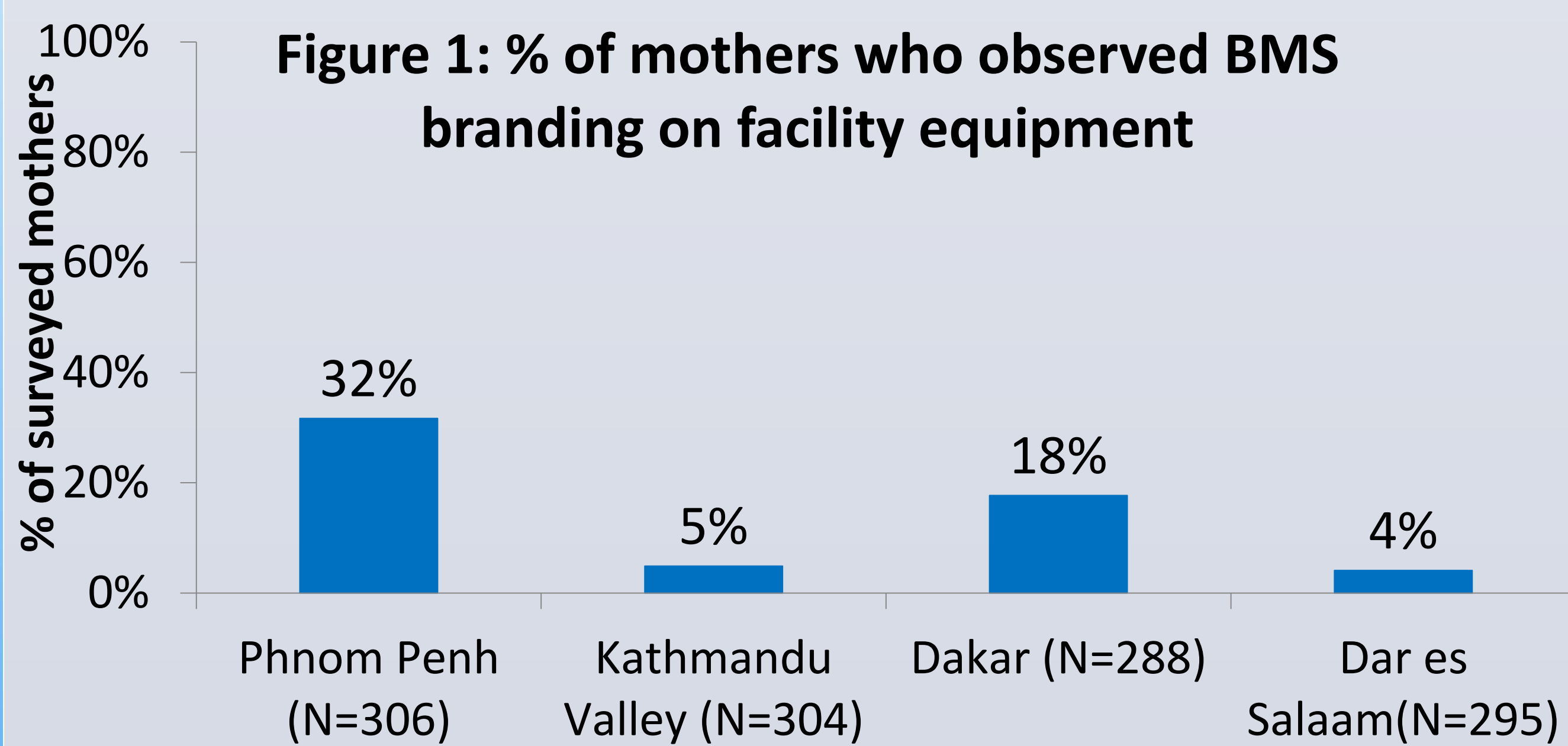
Methods

Structured interviews conducted as part of a cross-sectional, health facility-based survey among mothers being discharged after delivery of their newborns.

Sample size calculated to detect a 10% prevalence rate of exposure to BMS promotions within delivery facilities, with a measurement error of ± 5 , standard of error of 0.0255 and assuming a design effect of 2.

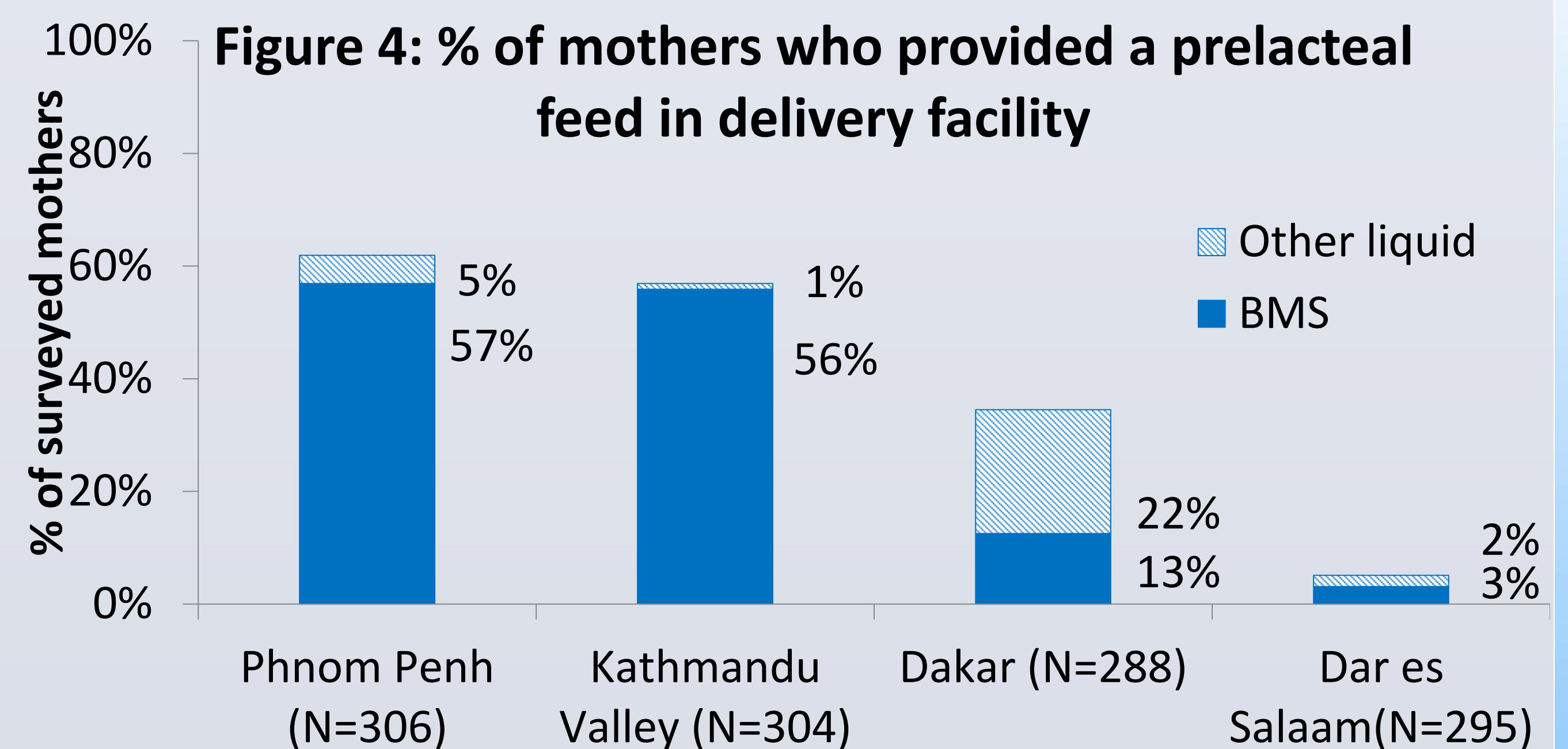
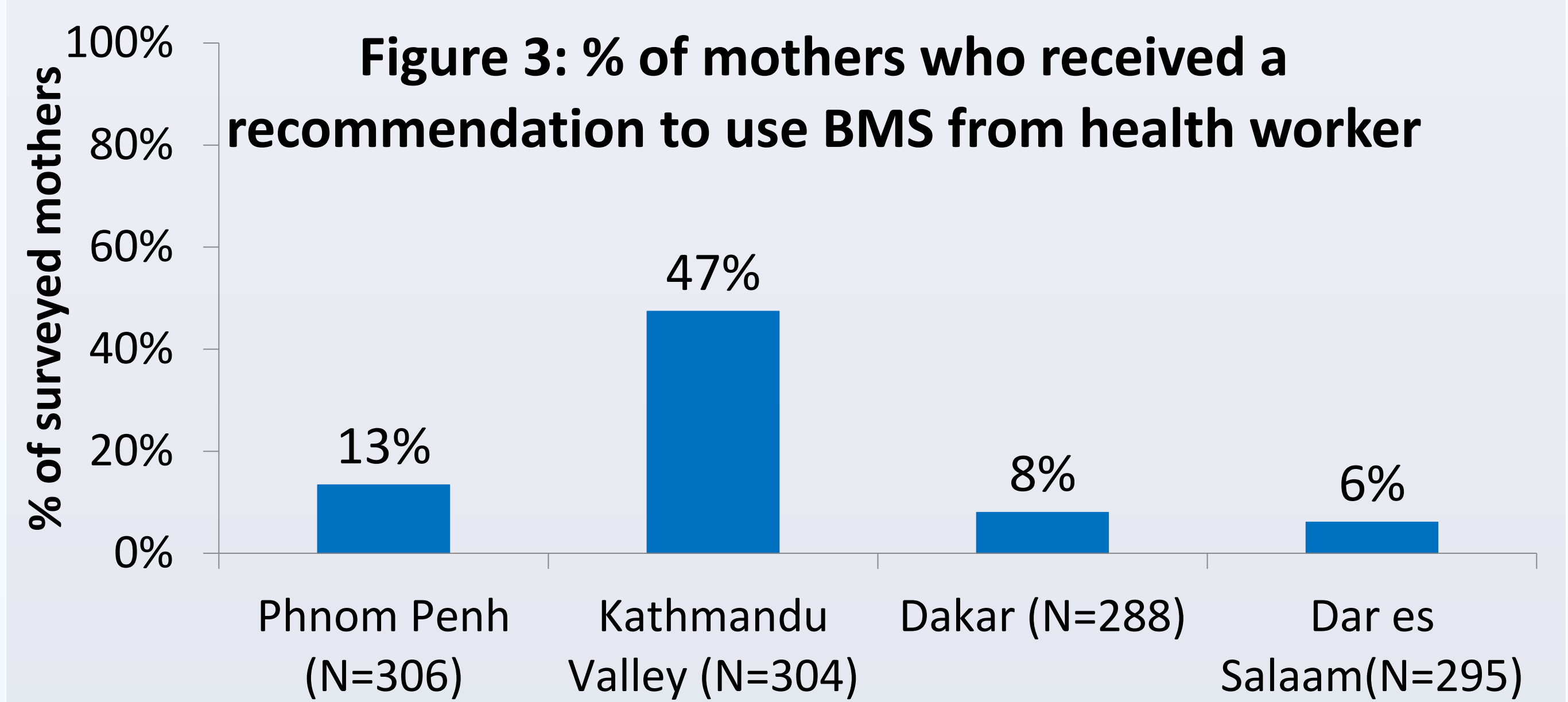
Results

Maternal reports point to varied experiences in health facilities during delivery stay.



Results Continued

In Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Kathmandu, Nepal and Dakar, Senegal, receiving a health worker's recommendation to use BMS was associated with prelacteal feeding of BMS among mothers ($p < 0.001$). In Kathmandu, where around half of mothers reported receiving such a recommendation from a health worker, these mothers had 20x higher odds of feeding BMS as a prelacteal feed, compared to mothers that did not.



Mothers were interviewed upon health facility discharge. Results do not present a comprehensive view of feeding practices in the first three days of life for mothers discharged early.

Conclusions

Prelacteal feeding of BMS was highly associated with mothers' reports of health worker recommendations. Instead of recommendations to use BMS as a prelacteal feed, women should be provided with skilled support to initiate breastfeeding prior to discharge after delivery. Further research into the reasons why health workers recommend prelacteal feeds of BMS may help in focusing efforts to improve early breastfeeding practices in these study sites.