

## Maternal Health and Child Survival

### USAID Global Health



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A child's best hope for survival begins with the health of the mother. If a mother dies, is incapacitated by illness, or is weighed down by the needs of many children, the child's life is at serious risk. Too often children are lost. Complications from hemorrhage, hypertension, infections, anemia, and prolonged labor account for two-thirds of maternal mortality. These major causes of maternal death are preventable and treatable with low-cost treatments and care, the targets of USAID efforts.

Essential to maternal health is the care mothers receive during pregnancy and childbirth. Strengthening the capabilities and number of skilled birth attendants; promoting home-based, critical newborn care; and improving health information systems have helped reduce maternal deaths dramatically. In 15 USAID-supported countries, there has been an average 32 percent reduction in maternal deaths as a result of the promotion of family planning. Across all USAID-assisted countries, skilled attendance has increased from an average of 37 percent in 1990 to 51 percent in 2005. The greatest increase is in the Asia and Near East region, from 21 to 48 percent.

Globally, child death rates reached a record low in 2006, falling from 13 million in 1990 to 9.7 million in 2007. This is the lowest level since record keeping began in 1960. Tragically, these deaths are mostly preventable. They occur largely in the developing world.

Since 1990, USAID has spent more than \$6 billion on child survival programs in about 80 countries. Much of the progress is the result of the widespread adoption of basic health treatments, such as early and exclusive breastfeeding, measles immunization, Vitamin A supplementation, treatment of child illness, and use of insecticide-treated nets to prevent malaria. In collaboration with international, national, and private-sector partners, this effort has yielded public health successes on an unprecedented global scale.

Almost 1 billion episodes of child diarrhea are treated successfully each year. Death from diarrheal disease has been reduced by more than 50 percent since 1990. With USAID assistance, more than 100 million children receive basic immunizations annually. Tens of millions more receive supplemental immunizations against polio, measles, and other diseases that kill.

Trained health workers successfully treat more than 75 million cases of infant and child pneumonia annually. A 25 percent reduction – from one in three to one in four – in malnutrition among children under age 5 has been achieved. An estimated 5 million children have been saved from death or paralysis due to polio.

Measles control efforts have saved more than 2 million children's lives since 1999. In 2007 alone, about a half a million more children survived as a result of micronutrient supplementation programs.

USAID has worked to strengthen health systems and expand the capacities of developing country institutions to reduce preventable illnesses in mothers and children. The Agency supports provision of widespread, affordable, sustainable health services in its efforts to address the health needs of the most vulnerable populations in impoverished nations.

Annually, 4 million newborns fail to survive even the first month of life, despite the improvements in maternal health and child survival. Each year, half a million mothers lose their lives in the process of giving birth. Millions more suffer complications that produce lifelong disability. Consequently, USAID Global Health continues its extensive efforts to provide an effective continuum of care essential for maternal and child well-being and longevity for impoverished families throughout the world.

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**Web site**

[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/global\\_health/mch/index.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/mch/index.html)

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