



# Children- the World's Future



Child Survival, Health,  
and Nutrition



Protecting Children  
from Harm



Basic Education



# Children – The World's Future

Children are the world's future. For decades, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been helping developing countries increase opportunities for children to thrive and grow into healthy, productive adults.

USAID celebrates the past decade of achievement with a reaffirmation of its global commitment to:

- *Promote child survival, health, and nutrition*
- *Protect children from harm*
- *Provide children with basic education*

USAID fulfills its commitment by:

- Working shoulder-to-shoulder with local governments, communities, and families in developing countries to make sure that resources and programs work to make a difference for children
- Forming partnerships with governments, nongovernmental and faith-based organizations, universities, foundations, and the private sector to combine public
- Researching the problems that affect children around the world and developing interventions such as oral rehydration therapy, new vaccines, vitamin A supplementation, behavior change techniques, instructional technologies, and other advances that save and improve children's lives
- Developing technologies like non-reusable syringes for safe injections, vaccine vial monitors to keep vaccines potent, simple methods to detect anemia and malaria in areas where there are no laboratories, and other affordable and effective technologies for health and education
- Helping countries develop quality education programs that increase access, reduce dropout and repetition rates, and increase community participation at local and national levels
- Sharing America's abundance with others through the world's largest donated-food program for families and children in need



## Child Survival, Health, and Nutrition



Studies show that infant and child mortality rates have fallen to levels undreamed of 20 years ago. Today, 75 percent of the children in developing countries are adequately nourished, and 80 percent are enrolled in primary school. These advances are the result of investments supporting the goals of the 1990 World Summit for Children.

Yet, almost one of every 10 children and hundreds of thousands of mothers in developing countries still die from preventable causes. At least one child in four is

still undernourished. USAID continues to fight childhood infectious diseases; promote maternal, infant, and child health; and combat malnutrition and hunger in every child.



### Healthy Mothers, Healthy Children

Ensuring safe motherhood and the survival and health of newborn infants are the first steps in safeguarding the health and potential of each

child and promoting the health of women and families. USAID programs help improve maternal nutri-

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tion, provide health care during pregnancy, promote safe child-birth and child spacing, and improve the care of mothers and newborns. They focus on:

- Nutrition, including vitamin and mineral supplementation for pregnant women
- Birth preparedness, especially disease prevention and planning for safe births
- Recognition and management of pregnancy complications
- Skilled attendance at delivery
- Care of the mother and the newborn, including initiation of breastfeeding

A substantial increase in skilled birth attendance has occurred in most regions where USAID-supported maternal and newborn programs are underway.

### Childhood Infectious Diseases

Much of the drop in child deaths over the last decade was the result of cost-effective interventions that reduce mortality from the common infectious diseases of childhood – diarrheal diseases, respiratory infections, malaria, and vaccine-preventable diseases like measles, polio, and newborn tetanus. USAID’s contributions to this progress have included:

- Support for research that has made major contributions to the development of such interventions as oral rehydration therapy to prevent child death from diarrheal dehydration and simple antibiotic regimens to treat life-threatening pneumonia, even in the most remote villages
- On-the-ground program support that strengthens health systems, engages communities and private sector partners, builds national and local capacity, and reaches children with treatment, immunization, and other preventive services
- Leadership and partnerships in global initiatives such as Polio Eradication, Roll Back Malaria, and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
- Confronting the challenge of HIV/AIDS by developing approaches to prevent mother-to-child transmission, promoting AIDS prevention among young people, and supporting assistance and care for orphans and children and families affected by AIDS

### Nutrition

Although the world produces enough food to feed everyone, an estimated 2 billion people suffer from malnutrition. More than 100 million children worldwide are deficient in vitamin A. More than half the deaths among preschool children in developing countries are linked to malnutrition or improper breastfeeding. Anemia caused by lack of dietary iron affects more than 2 billion women and children and leads to diminished health and productivity.

USAID-supported programs work to improve nutrition, increase intake of essential vitamins and minerals, promote optimal breastfeeding, and increase the nutritional impact of food aid.



- **Vitamin A** – USAID was a major supporter of research showing that vitamin A supplementation can decrease child mortality by about one-fourth among children with vitamin A deficiency. Supplementation also prevents as many as 400,000 cases of childhood blindness each year. USAID is assisting supplementation programs in more than 50 countries. USAID also works to reduce deficiencies of other key vitamins and minerals, including iodine deficiency, which can lead to mental retardation, and iron deficiency.

- **Breastfeeding** -- USAID has established model programs in more than 50 countries to promote breastfeeding. USAID support has contributed to steady increases in the prevalence and duration of breastfeeding in all regions of the world.

- **Food Safety and Security** - In 2000, USAID provided approximately \$1 billion in emergency food aid and non-emergency food support to low-income countries with food deficits. By strengthening policies that affect the nutritional impact of Food for Peace food aid, USAID promotes improved dietary practices for young children and mothers.



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# Protecting Children from Harm



**A**t least 135 million children in developing countries struggle to survive without the support and protection of parents or family units. These vulnerable children are victims of social and economic distress, natural disasters, maternal mortality, disease, armed conflict, and exploitation. Globally, more than 400,000 unaccompanied refugees and internally displaced persons are children, and 15.7 million children have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS. In the past decade, more than 2 million children were killed in armed conflicts and more than 6 million injured or disabled. There are more than 300,000 child soldiers in the world today.

USAID assists in providing care, support, and protection for these children around the world. Programs help families and communities meet children's health care, education, security, housing, and psychosocial needs.

**Children Affected by Conflict.** USAID programs help children affected by conflict by meeting their basic needs of food, shelter, health care, and emergency education. Programs help reunite displaced children with families (including children who have been abducted or forced to serve as soldiers), provide counseling and education, and build community capacity to address children's needs.

**Street Children.** Street children end up homeless as a result of social or financial distress in their families or political or economic upheavals. USAID programs focus on preventing family dissolution and child abandonment and attempt to reach street children with education, training, and community support. Programs stress the importance of families and community-based care and protection as the first line of defense.

**Children with Disabilities.** In 1999, USAID began to address the needs of children with disabilities. Many children with disabilities are stigmatized and placed in institutions away from their communities. USAID supports community-based approaches to include, wherever possible, disabled children in mainstream schools and to provide them with care, education, and training in life skills.

**Children in Natural Disasters.** Over the past 10 years, child victims of natural disasters benefited from \$4.7 billion of USAID emergency food aid, potable water, health care, and shelter.

**Children Affected by HIV/AIDS.** HIV/AIDS is undermining the safety and well-being of children on a staggering scale. By 2010, the number of orphans worldwide is projected to reach 44 million, most of them orphaned by AIDS. Millions have already been orphaned or are living with parents who are ill. USAID currently funds more than 50 activities for children affected by HIV/AIDS in 19 countries and is expanding its efforts. These efforts focus on strengthening the ability of families and communities to provide care and support; creating social and policy environments to help countries provide services and protect the interests of these children; and supporting research and information-sharing to enable nations and donors to establish effective programs.



# Basic Education



**W**orldwide, 113 million children are not in school. New and long-standing challenges, including natural disasters, civil wars, and abusive child labor practices, continue to keep many children out of school. School enrollment is particularly challenged by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which decreases the ability of countries to provide education services, limits household resources for school, and changes social support networks.

Children who do enroll in primary school often fail to meet basic literacy and education achievement standards, suffer extensive grade repetition, and eventually drop out of school before acquiring basic skills. In some countries, fewer than 30 percent of children who begin first grade graduate from the sixth grade, and repetition rates are high. Limited access and poor quality schools often affect girls more severely than boys.

USAID works in four areas to expand access to quality basic education, especially for girls and other underserved populations:

- **Policy Reform** – Allocating adequate resources for education, decentralizing decision making, and removing barriers to girls' access to schools
- **Institutional Development** – Strengthening the ability of public- and private-sector institutions to promote primary education, especially for girls; to manage information systems; and to develop and implement education plans
- **Educational Practices** – Improving the quality of education through teacher training on innovative and participatory teaching methods; learning material development and restructured educational cur-

ricula; enhanced awareness of gender issues; and increased access to and appropriate use of educational technologies

- **Community Participation** – Increasing the involvement of parents and communities in educational decision making

Access to education has increased in countries with USAID-assisted basic education programs, and school enrollment rates have increased for both boys and girls. More girls are enrolling and staying longer in school than they were before. Between 1995 and 1999, the Morocco Education for Girls project raised the percentage of girls reaching sixth grade in target schools from 16 percent to 34 percent. As a result of the project's success, its educational materials are mandated nationally. Teacher-training institutes have adopted new student-centered learning techniques, and Ministry of Education regulations and practices have been changed.

USAID-supported teacher-training programs also have improved educational quality in several countries. In Nicaragua, for example, the use of effective teaching methods and increased parental involvement generated results 5 to 10 percentage points higher than national averages in performance, attendance, awareness of civic rights and duties, and completion rates.

Other USAID programs use computers, radio, and the Internet, especially in rural areas, to increase teacher capacities, enrich classroom content, and provide students with skills and knowledge for modern workforce needs. In Namibia, for example, USAID used computer networks to link four rural teacher colleges and two regional education offices to improve primary teacher training with multimedia content.

**T**he world has made great strides in improving children's well-being, but much remains to be done. USAID is committed to the health, protection, and education of children in developing countries. This commitment is growing, fueled by advances in science, technology, and knowledge. With growing support and partnerships with the voluntary, nongovernmental, and private sectors, USAID will continue in its efforts to improve the lives of children worldwide.



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