

Ending Preventable Child and Maternal Deaths

Background

Over the past 25 years, the world has reduced child mortality by more than half and maternal mortality by nearly as much. We have made particular gains in areas with the world's most vulnerable populations, such as in Afghanistan, where the rate of women dying in child birth has dropped by more than half. This is one of the greatest success stories in international development.

In spite of this progress, nearly 15,000 children still die each day around the globe from preventable causes, such as diarrhea and pneumonia. A number of these children are excluded – growing up in the hardest to reach areas. And newborns make up a significant percentage of preventable child deaths. Almost one million newborns die on the day they are born, and close to two million newborns die in their first week after birth.



Moreover, 800 women die each day from complications during pregnancy or childbirth. The poorer the household, the greater the risk of maternal death, with 99 percent of the maternal deaths occurring in the developing world. A woman's risk of dying from childbirth in Sub Saharan Africa is 47 times greater than in the United States.

To continue progress toward ending preventable child and maternal deaths, a growing health service system that provides high-quality, equitable, and sustainable essential services to women and children in developing countries is required. Simple interventions such as birthing with a skilled health professional, vaccines, bednets, breastfeeding, and hand-washing with soap often make the difference between life and death.

U.S. Leadership

The U.S. government remains a world leader in global health, focusing on delivering meaningful results in three key areas: ending preventable child and maternal deaths, creating an AIDS free generation, and protecting communities from infectious disease. Child and maternal health is increasingly being recognized as a fiscal priority both globally and within countries themselves.

The U.S. has joined other world leaders in committing to end preventable child and maternal deaths by 2030. Since 2008, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has saved the lives of more than 5 million children and 200,000 women around the world in 25 priority countries. In 2017 alone, USAID helped 76 million women and children access essential health services. Furthermore, American leadership has encouraged more than 20 countries to develop concrete plans and increase their own resources for health and nutrition programs that reduce child and maternal deaths.

To end preventable child and maternal deaths, we must remain committed to scaling up high-impact, evidence-based interventions from household to hospital and improving outcomes for women and children around the world, including the most at risk and excluded populations.