



SUCCESSES IN GLOBAL HEALTH

PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DISEASE

THE
LIVING
PROOF
PROJECT

U.S. investments in global health are working.

In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in attention, resources, and commitment to improving health in poor countries, including significant new investments from the U.S. government. Today, these investments are delivering real results. Global health programs are saving millions of lives and empowering people to build better futures for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Some of the most striking signs of progress include:

- Major declines in child mortality: The number of children who die before age 5 has been halved since 1960—from 20 million to less than 9 million per year—even as the number of births increased by more than 20 percent. The death rate declined by more than a quarter (27 percent) from 1990 to 2007 alone.^{1,2}
- Increasing life expectancy: The United Nations Population Division estimates that if recent progress against HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases continues, life expectancy in the world's poorest countries will increase from 56 years today to 69 years in 2050.³

These advances are just the beginning. New knowledge and tools are making it possible to accelerate progress against a wide range of diseases that disproportionately affect the world's poor. A growing number of success stories illustrate the potential to continue improving health through financial commitment and leadership from both developed and developing countries.

Recent successes in global health include:

Childhood immunization:

- In less than 10 years since its founding, the GAVI Alliance (formerly the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization)—a global partnership that funds expanded immunization for children in poor countries—has helped prevent an estimated 3.4 million deaths, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).⁴
- Aggressive measles immunization campaigns are saving children's lives in poor countries at a cost of about \$1 (U.S.) per child.⁵ Thanks to these efforts, the number of people who died of measles worldwide fell by 75 percent between 2000 and 2007. Much of the decline is due to progress in Africa, where measles deaths fell by 89 percent.⁶

Polio:

- After two decades of remarkable progress, the world now has the opportunity to eradicate polio. In 1988, more than 1,000 children became sick with polio each day. As a result of polio immunization campaigns, that number dropped to fewer than five per day by 2008—a decline of 99 percent in just 20 years.⁷
- Between 1988 and 2008, global eradication efforts averted some 250,000 deaths from polio, and protected more than 5 million people who would otherwise have been paralyzed and incapacitated by the disease.⁸
- Donors and countries hard-hit by polio are now making a renewed push to complete the final, difficult stages of polio eradication, with new financial resources, more effective vaccines, and stronger political commitments in the countries that remain most affected.

Malaria:

- The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) has brought urgently needed new resources to the fight against malaria. Its support has helped deliver 88 million insecticide-treated bed nets—which can help significantly reduce malaria transmission at a total cost of about \$10 (U.S.) per net—as well as 74 million malaria drug treatments.⁹
- The U.S. President's Malaria Initiative, an ambitious new effort to strengthen malaria control programs in key African countries, reached an estimated 32 million people with life saving malaria prevention and treatment services in 2008, its third year in operation. For example, it protected nearly 25 million people from malaria through residual insecticide spraying.¹⁰
- Renewed attention and resources have had a significant impact on the burden of malaria. Since 2000, reported malaria cases and/or deaths have declined by at least half in 25 countries around the world.¹¹

HIV/AIDS:

- The U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has helped rapidly expand HIV prevention and treatment programs in poor countries, and is estimated to have saved 1.2 million lives over the last five years.¹²
- PEPFAR estimates that by providing HIV prevention services during 16 million pregnancies, it has enabled 240,000 infants to be born free from HIV infection.¹³
- The combined efforts of PEPFAR and the Global Fund have dramatically increased access to HIV treatment in low- and middle-income countries. PEPFAR estimates that the number of people receiving life saving anti-retroviral treatment (ART) through these two programs increased more than twelvefold in just four years—from 240,000 in 2004 to nearly 3 million in 2008.¹⁴
- In Sub-Saharan Africa, the region hardest hit by HIV/AIDS, the number of people receiving ART (from all funding sources) grew from 100,000 in 2003 to 2.1 million in 2007, according to WHO.¹⁵
- Globally, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimates that the number of annual AIDS-related deaths recently declined for the first time ever, from 2.2 million in 2005 to 2 million in 2007, largely due to expanded access to ART.¹⁶

Tuberculosis:

- With renewed attention to the global threat of tuberculosis (TB) in recent years, the world is making progress against this long-neglected disease. Following increases throughout

the 1990s, WHO reports that TB death rates are now declining in every region of the world.¹⁷

- By mid-2009, programs supported by the Global Fund were estimated to have detected and treated 5.4 million cases of TB worldwide—a 38 percent increase in the last year alone.¹⁸

Nutrition:

- The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), a public-private alliance focused on ending malnutrition, is improving health by partnering with the food industry to fortify staple foods—from wheat flour to soy sauce—with essential micronutrients.
- GAIN is currently improving nutrition for an estimated 160 million people in 18 countries.¹⁹
- Overall, efforts to improve nutrition have made steady progress. Between 1990 and 2005, the proportion of children worldwide under age 5 who suffered from undernutrition declined from 27 percent to 20 percent, according to WHO.²⁰

Neglected tropical diseases:

- The campaign to eradicate Guinea worm—a painful and debilitating parasitic disease—is one of the greatest success stories in global health. Thanks in large part to the leadership of the Carter Center, Guinea worm cases fell from almost 3.5 million per year in the 1980s to fewer than 5,000 in 2008.²¹
- A global effort to eliminate river blindness, led by public-private partnerships in Africa and Latin America, has delivered more than 100 million treatments for this historically neglected disease.²²

Endnotes

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