

# Improving health for families everywhere

PATH reaches mothers, children, and communities  
with key innovations for strong futures



THE HEALTH OF FAMILIES IS VITAL for building and supporting strong communities. Every year, millions of mothers, children, and newborns in developing countries die needlessly from preventable or treatable causes. While these numbers are decreasing in many countries, critical lifesaving interventions still don't reach those most in need.

For more than 30 years, PATH has worked to improve maternal and child health, nutrition, and family planning in developing countries. We apply proven approaches and develop innovative technologies to address the leading causes of maternal and child death, enhance nutrition for mothers and their children, and ensure access to contraception and reproductive health tools. PATH's integrated approach focuses on reaching some of the hardest-to-reach populations with affordable, appropriate, and sustainable solutions for improved health.

## PROTECTING MOTHERS' HEALTH

An estimated 342,000 women die each year during pregnancy, childbirth, or the six weeks following birth. Recently released figures show the rate of maternal deaths has declined on the global level in the last decade.<sup>1</sup> But the burden of maternal mortality remains high, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia.

Excessive bleeding after childbirth is the single greatest cause of maternal mortality. PATH emphasizes community-based approaches, builds birth attendants' skills, and shapes supportive policies to expand the practice of active management of the third stage of labor (AMTSL), a proven and effective method for preventing many cases of postpartum hemorrhage. We are building evidence for the safe use of the drug oxytocin, a key component of AMTSL, and advancing its use in the prefilled, autodisable Uniject® injection device to create an easy-to-use, affordable solution for delivering the drug in home births and other non-hospital settings.

To address maternal infection, which can have severe consequences for both a mother and her newborn, PATH is evaluating diagnostic tools that can identify and manage these conditions in low-resource settings. We are also examining the potential for affordable tools to diagnose common infections and other illnesses among pregnant women and new mothers.

### Reaching HIV-positive mothers

In Kenya, poor infant feeding practices put HIV-exposed babies at increased risk of HIV infection and other childhood illnesses. In 2009, PATH and our partners trained more than 400 volunteer counselors on improving infant feeding practices. The counselors reached more than 34,000 community members with infant feeding messages and continue to provide critical nutrition counseling to mothers.





## SAFEGUARDING YOUNG LIVES

A child's health is delicate during its first five years. A newborn's first days can be especially tenuous, particularly in developing countries. More than one-third of all child deaths occur during a child's first month, mostly in the first week. Simple, low-cost interventions could prevent many of these deaths.

PATH advances affordable technologies, ranging from neonatal resuscitators to help manage newborns' breathing problems at birth to vaccines that protect against influenza, pneumococcal disease, and other common childhood illnesses. We work with developing-country health programs to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV through interventions such as counseling and testing for women and promotion of optimal infant feeding practices. We mobilize women to access health services for care during pregnancy, delivery, and after birth. We facilitate the scale-up of evidence-based interventions, and we manage community-led mothers' groups to counsel women and their families in simple practices for keeping babies healthy.



## GOOD NUTRITION FOR HEALTHY FUTURES

Malnutrition contributes to more than one-third of child deaths in poor countries and increases a child's risk of stunted growth and severe illness. Furthermore, women's health and nutrition during pregnancy can have a direct impact on the development of their babies.

To support good nutrition, PATH encourages healthy feeding behaviors, increases access to nutrients in staple foods, and works with countries to bolster systems and policies for better nutrition. In collaboration with our partners, for example, we reach health workers, communities, and families to prevent malnutrition for mothers and promote optimal infant feeding practices. Among communities most vulnerable to malnutrition, our work includes introducing Ultra Rice®, a manufactured grain made of rice flour, fortified with iron or other nutrients, and blended with local rice for enhanced nutritional value. We also work within health systems to train health workers, share good practices, and provide guidance on national policies to combat malnutrition.

### Expanding access to oxytocin in Mali

In 2007, PATH worked with semiskilled birth attendants in Mali under a pilot study on preventing postpartum hemorrhage. PATH distributed 15,000 doses of oxytocin in the Uniject device to the attendants, who successfully administered the drug to their clients, many of whom were giving birth in rural settings. Based on the study findings, the Government of Mali changed its policies to permit semiskilled attendants to use oxytocin at birth, allowing the medicine to reach women in emergency situations and remote locations.

## TOOLS FOR FAMILY PLANNING

The unmet need for family planning products and services remains high in many parts of the developing world. To help meet this need, we work to increase the availability and accessibility of contraceptives and other family planning tools, helping women and families protect against unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. We find creative ways to educate communities about family planning options and healthy behaviors, foster communication, and build health care providers' knowledge and skills to deliver important services.

PATH develops, adapts, and introduces women-centered reproductive health technologies, such as a woman's condom and an injectable contraceptive delivered in the Uniject device, that incorporate feedback from women and their partners to ensure the designs are comfortable and appropriate. We work with countries to prepare for the introduction of new products and to sustain existing family planning programs and services. PATH's collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) helped raise the profile of reproductive health medicines to ensure developing countries have access to good-quality, essential medicines and devices. We also have played a central role in increasing access to emergency contraception worldwide.

## STRENGTHENING HEALTH SYSTEMS

Across all of these efforts to support the health of mothers, newborns, and children in developing countries, PATH works to improve the health systems on which these efforts depend. We help to strengthen governance, enhance policies, build health information systems, procure supplies, manage the cold chain for proper vaccine storage, and train and supervise health workers to expand the scope and availability of family health services.

Uniject is a registered trademark of BD.

Ultra Rice is a registered trademark in the United States of Bon Dente International, Inc.

### REFERENCE

1. Hogan MC, Foreman KJ, Naghavi M, et al. Maternal mortality for 181 countries, 1980–2008: a systematic analysis of progress towards Millennium Development Goal 5. *The Lancet*. 2010;375(9726):1609–1623. Available at: [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(10\)60518-1/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(10)60518-1/abstract).

## Setting the stage for vaccine introduction

Rotavirus is the most common cause of severe diarrhea and kills more than 500,000 young children each year. As part of an integrated approach to diarrheal disease control, PATH helped lay the groundwork for Nicaragua's introduction of rotavirus vaccine in 2006, marking the first time a new vaccine reached the developing world and the United States in the same year. Our research findings from key clinical trials helped inform WHO's 2009 recommendation to include rotavirus vaccine in all national immunization programs.



PATH is an international nonprofit organization that creates sustainable, culturally relevant solutions, enabling communities worldwide to break longstanding cycles of poor health. By collaborating with diverse public- and private-sector partners, PATH helps provide appropriate health technologies and vital strategies that change the way people think and act. PATH's work improves global health and well-being.

For more information, please visit [www.path.org](http://www.path.org).

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