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Saving Children's Lives: USAID's Support for Immunization

Immunization is a central strategy to end preventable child and maternal deaths. USAID works closely with partners around the world including national governments, UNICEF, WHO, the GAVI Alliance and others to extend access to life-saving vaccines. Strong support for GAVI and provision of technical support is one way the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) ensures children do not die from vaccine-preventable deaths. In addition to providing funds directly to GAVI, USAID provides complementary assistance to country implementers – predominantly through immunization systems strengthening – to strengthen local capacity to vaccinate effectively at public health scale.

GAVI co-financing of new and underutilized vaccines (NUVI) and USAID support of immunization and health systems go hand in hand. The majority of GAVI support goes to purchase vaccines, while USAID technical aid supports the necessary systems improvements to deliver GAVI-financed and other vaccines to populations in need. For example, since 2009 the Maternal Child Health Integrated Program (MCHIP), USAID's global flagship implementation partner for immunization, contributed to new vaccine introductions by:

- Providing technical assistance for 17 GAVI proposals in eight countries
- Supporting 10 countries to prepare for 20 new vaccine introductions, which begins 6–12 months in advance of the official launch, including upgrading the cold chain, developing learning materials and conducting technical training, revising and distributing management tools and developing communications strategies and key messages
- Participating in 17 vaccine launches by supporting public events, monitoring and responding to reported adverse events and providing supportive supervision at service delivery sites
- Conducting 12 post-introduction follow-up assessments and 10 post-introduction evaluations
- Supporting nine Expanded Program on Immunization reviews to identify opportunities for improvement

USAID flagship programs over the past three decades have worked with partners to build capacity to overcome barriers to immunization and effective use of vaccines and to improve the quality of services, including the following.

1. **Vaccine and immunization financing.** Increase domestic contributions to immunization programs by providing technical assistance to improve national budget transparency and financial planning processes.
2. **Supply chain.** Conduct assessments to identify and address cold chain and logistics needs at all levels; these activities help ensure that vaccines procured by GAVI and others are safely stored, transported and handled from the manufacturer to the service delivery points.
3. **Service delivery.** Help health ministry's reach all those who need vaccines, including hard-to-reach and under-immunized populations by training health workers and supervisory staff.
4. **Demand generation and community partnerships.** Work with civil society and other actors to partner with local leaders and communities to raise and satisfy demand for immunization services.
5. **Data for decision making.** Improve data systems, analysis, tools and equipment, and support the use of health information, at all levels to improve service delivery and better inform decision-makers.
6. **Leadership, accountability, management and coordination.** Educate decision-makers on the need for improved policies and investment of financial and programmatic resources in support of immunization programs.
7. **Surveillance.** Coordinate and support investments in surveillance activities, including training for laboratory staff and surveillance officers, as well as training in adverse event monitoring, reporting and response.
8. **Operations research and application of appropriate technologies.** Apply research results to improve program efficiency and effectiveness, and use innovative approaches and technologies to improve program sustainability and integration with other services.

USAID also supports strengthening national regulatory authorities and core national regulatory functions in countries.