

PREVENT, PROTECT, AND TREAT: COMBATING CHILDHOOD PNEUMONIA

USAID has supported child survival for over 50 years through evidence-based interventions that address dangerous childhood diseases, like pneumonia.



Photo: Kelley Lynch

USAID'S APPROACH TO THE GLOBAL BURDEN

USAID's child survival programs help prevent life-threatening illnesses and infections among newborns and young children. Pneumonia is the leading infectious killer of children under five years old, with the majority of deaths occurring in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.¹ To tackle the threat of child pneumonia in these countries, USAID takes a three-pronged approach: prevent, protect, and treat.

PREVENT

HANDWASHING

Handwashing with soap can reduce the risk of respiratory infections, including pneumonia, by up to 21 percent.² Yet across USAID's 25 focus countries, households with a designated handwashing station range from only five percent in Rwanda to 94 percent in Indonesia. USAID works with governments, health facilities, schools, and communities to promote regular handwashing with soap and water and to increase the number of handwashing stations at critical locations (by latrines or where food is prepared).

RESULTS SPOTLIGHT:

Through USAID's support, nearly **4 million** people gained access to sustainable water services. Women and girls made up **51 percent** of those who gained access to sustainable water and sanitation services.

IMMUNIZATION

Vaccines reduce preventable diseases and the cost of subsequent treatment. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related service delivery disruptions in 2021, 18 million children did not receive any vaccines, an increase of 5 million

Photo: Kelley Lynch

(up 28 percent) from 2019, which increases the risk of pneumonia and other life-threatening conditions that are largely preventable. Between 2000-2019, pneumonia-fighting vaccines contributed to a decline in pneumonia-related deaths by 14 percent. Moreover, vaccines that prevent pneumonia not only prevent child deaths but also reduce antibiotic use, which helps stop the spread of deadly antimicrobial-resistant bacteria. That's why USAID supports countries through technical assistance and critical partnerships, such as that with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to expand access to vaccines around the globe.

RESULTS SPOTLIGHT:

Through the U.S. Government's investments in Gavi and support for national immunization programs, USAID has helped immunize more than **980 million children** against pneumonia and other vaccine-preventable diseases since 2000.

AIR QUALITY

According to a 2020 report, an estimated 90 percent of children worldwide breathe in poisonous air every day.³ Globally, half of childhood pneumonia deaths can be attributed to household air pollution, which increases the risk and severity of the illness through lung damage and inflammation. The risk of developing pneumonia in children is doubled following exposure to air pollution, which accounts for over 800,000 deaths caused by pneumonia.⁴ To address poor air quality, USAID promotes clean household air practices and supports research on the health impacts of air pollution and the benefits of reduced exposure.

RESULTS SPOTLIGHT:

In Nepal, USAID programs improve government and civil society capacities; promote citizen engagement; and enhance private sector involvement and investment in addressing air pollution issues. USAID also started a program in India to improve air pollution mitigation and reduce air pollution exposure in selected areas.

PROTECT

EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING

Exclusive breastfeeding for an infant's first six months of life is the most effective way to protect newborns against infectious diseases, like pneumonia. Infants that are exclusively breastfed are 15 times less likely to die from pneumonia than those who are not.⁵ USAID builds support systems for breastfeeding and implements training programs for health care workers to educate pregnant women and their families on proper breastfeeding techniques.

RESULTS SPOTLIGHT:

In 2021, USAID reached **11 million pregnant women** with breastfeeding counseling and support.



Pneumonia is the **#1** infectious disease among **children under 5 years of age**.⁶



One out of every **71 children** is diagnosed with pneumonia annually.⁷



Pneumonia kills an estimated **700,000 children** each year, claiming the lives of nearly **2,000 children** each day.



We are making progress, today there are **900,000 fewer pneumonia deaths** than there were in 2000 (1.6M).⁸



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF MALNUTRITION

Malnutrition inhibits the immune system's ability to fight infections and illnesses, like pneumonia. USAID works to prevent and treat malnutrition through programs and partnerships that strengthen child nutrition services, increase country capacity, and galvanize investment to improve nutrition.

RESULTS SPOTLIGHT:

In 2021, over **30 million children** were reached by USAID's nutrition programs, contributing to fewer deaths from pneumonia.

TREAT

IMPROVE COMMUNITY- AND FACILITY-BASED TREATMENT

Worldwide, less than 60 percent of children under five with pneumonia symptoms visit a health care provider who can diagnose and/or treat pneumonia. That's why USAID supports countries in implementing integrated community case management, which expands pneumonia care to populations with limited access to facility-based health care providers. USAID seeks to improve facility care through strengthening access to and quality of integrated management of childhood illness to properly assess and treat children with pneumonia-related symptoms and to educate parents on preventative measures.

RESULTS SPOTLIGHT:

In 2021, USAID supported **4.5 million treatments** for childhood pneumonia.⁹

ENHANCE ACCESS TO AMOXICILLIN

Amoxicillin is the first-line treatment for pneumonia in children under five, but many countries face challenges when it comes to accessing and using this life-saving treatment. One of the challenges related to the use of amoxicillin is for caregivers to know how to administer the preferred formulation, dispersible tablets, and continue treatment to the end of the course. USAID supports caregivers and health care providers with education on dispensing amoxicillin for children with pneumonia.

SUPPORT THE ADEQUATE SUPPLY AND APPROPRIATE USE OF MEDICAL OXYGEN

Over 30 percent of children with pneumonia need access to oxygen to survive. USAID supports increasing access to oxygen in health facilities by training health care workers and building the capacity of countries to operate and maintain oxygen systems. Further, USAID is employing market-based approaches that lower the price of oxygen. By working with the private sector, these approaches aim to make the future purchase of oxygen more affordable for governments.

► **Learn more at:**
[USAID.gov/global-health/health-areas/maternal-and-child-health](https://www.usaid.gov/global-health/health-areas/maternal-and-child-health)

¹ "Pneumonia in Children Statistics," UNICEF DATA (UNICEF, August 17, 2022), <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-health/pneumonia/>.

² "Show Me the Science - Why Wash Your Hands?," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, September 10, 2020), <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/why-handwashing.html#s3-three>.

³ "State of Global Air 2020" (Boston, MA: Health Effects Institute, 2020).

⁴ "Pneumonia in Children Statistics," UNICEF DATA.

⁵ Laura M Lamberti et al., "Breastfeeding for Reducing the Risk of Pneumonia Morbidity and Mortality in Children under Two: A Systematic Literature Review and Meta-Analysis," BMC public health (BioMed Central, 2013), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3847465/>.

⁶ "Pneumonia in Children Statistics," UNICEF DATA.

⁷⁻⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Lamberti LM; Zakarija-Grković I; Fischer Walker CL; Theodoratou E; Nair H; Campbell H; Black RE; "Breastfeeding for Reducing the Risk of Pneumonia Morbidity and Mortality in Children under Two: A Systematic Literature Review and Meta-Analysis," BMC public health (U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2013), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24564728/>.

