

Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health

Fact Sheet



Effective interventions can save mothers' and children's lives. Why, then, do developing countries still account for 99 percent of deaths from maternally related causes? Why, in some countries, do more than 25 percent of children die before age five? The gap between the actual and the possible is a call to action. How do we deliver life-saving interventions to people who typically have been marginalized—those in the lowest economic strata, in remote areas, or in post-conflict countries? MSH answers the call, working around the world to meet this challenge.

In 30 countries, MSH works closely with ministries of health, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other partners to expand the use of health interventions that are known to save lives and improve maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH). Our expertise spans the four broad areas outlined here.

We Play a Leadership Role in Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health

We mobilize resources and align donor strategies to maximize the impact of health investments. MSH is a member of the Partnership for Child Health Care, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health, and the U.S. Coalition for Child Survival.

We Expand Access to MNCH Services

To reach the most vulnerable women and children, MSH promotes community-based approaches to MNCH. We are expanding care during childbirth; ensuring postpartum follow-up for mothers and infants; and promoting community-based prevention, treatment, and care for common illnesses, such as pneumonia, diarrhea, and malaria.

We Integrate MNCH into Other Health Services

MSH helps countries make the most of limited resources while enabling providers to meet the health needs of women and children in a more holistic way by

- Using routine health care encounters, including postpartum, infant, and early childhood care, to promote healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies
- Incorporating newborn care into programs for Integrated Management of Childhood Illness and prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission
- Improving the prevention and treatment of child malnutrition through education and the promotion of breastfeeding and appropriate supplementary feeding

We Strengthen MNCH Health Systems and Services

MSH helps governments rebuild health systems and strengthen the quality of health services. Areas of our expertise include improving the quality of newborn and child health care in primary care clinics and hospitals; increasing both the earlier diagnosis of HIV in infants and children and the delivery of lifesaving preventions, as well as antiretroviral therapy, care, and support; and enhancing the quality and timeliness of emergency obstetric care, including improving transport.

Progress to Date

Saving young lives with low-cost treatment for diarrhea—

Every year, acute diarrhea causes more than 1.5 million deaths of children age five or younger. Working through the USAID-funded BASICS program, MSH helped introduce and expand the use of zinc and oral rehydration therapy at the community level and in health facilities in 10 countries.

Improving child health in Haiti—Working with a network of NGOs, MSH helped improve the efficiency and quality of health services, enabling the NGOs to provide services to more people. For example, the percentage of children completely vaccinated before their first birthday tripled from 21 percent to 63 percent in just three years.

Reaching out to mothers and children in Afghanistan—In 13 provinces, MSH and its partners in the REACH Program helped to dramatically expand primary health care. In just two years, the use of modern contraceptives rose from 16 percent to 26 percent, the number of births attended by a skilled provider doubled from 12 to 23 percent, and the number of children who received a full schedule of immunizations grew from 15 to 37 percent.

A Snapshot of MSH in Action: Reducing Maternal-Child Mortality in Malawi

Over a four-year period, MSH played a key role in a USAID-funded program in Malawi that helped reduce maternal and childhood mortality and illness, primarily by strengthening health systems and community-based care. Among many accomplishments were:

- The Pediatric Hospital Initiative improved emergency care and treatment of children admitted to hospitals, thereby lowering the number of child deaths.
- MSH supported development of a national policy and a five-year plan for the integrated management of childhood illness.
- MSH helped expand HIV testing and counseling, reaching 243,775 people and establishing 48 sites that offer services for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The number of new prenatal patients who were tested increased from 4 percent to more than 85 percent.

Maternal mortality rates in Malawi are among the highest in southern Africa. MSH worked with District Health Teams to identify and implement low-cost but highly effective measures focused on ambulance services and training of traditional birth attendants. The impact was noticeable. With improved emergency referral services, renewed commitment to customer satisfaction, and formal partnerships with local communities, Kasungu District Hospital recorded a dramatic reduction in maternal mortality in just one year, from 52 maternal deaths (1.2 of all mothers delivering) to 29 (0.8 percent).



MSH's APPROACH

MSH supports partnerships and programs to:

- *develop national health policies;*
- *strengthen national planning, budgeting, and implementation;*
- *strengthen health care delivery systems and pharmaceutical and laboratory systems;*
- *introduce performance-based financing;*
- *improve quality of care, scaling up, and documentation to show results;*
- *build leadership and capacity to sustain health advances;*
- *ensure that quality medicines and supplies (such as contraceptives, vaccines, and micronutrients) are reliably available and appropriately used.*

For additional information, go to www.msh.org, or contact Jennifer Litzow, Center for Health Services, at +1.617.250.9500, or jlitzow@msh.org.