



Children's Health | Support from the Ground Up



UNITED NATIONS  
FOUNDATION



The United Nations Foundation (UNF) is committed to working with the United Nations to improve the well-being of children throughout the world. Children represent the hope and future of every country and culture. Improving their health, ensuring their well-being and building their community's capacity to protect them is central to the future of their families, communities and our world. The UN Foundation places particular emphasis on supporting UN programs designed to strengthen community health activities to improve the well-being and health of children worldwide. Our goal is to promote long-term and sustainable development of the local infrastructure necessary to ensure all children the right to a healthy and productive life.



There are 2.1 billion children in the world—35% of the world's population.

**Empowering change** Each year, worldwide, more than 11 million children die before they reach the age of five. 70% of these childhood deaths are caused by five common, preventable, or easily treated childhood illnesses: pneumonia; diarrhea; measles; malaria; and malnutrition. Throughout the developing world, families lack access to basic resources to prevent these illnesses and to the simple treatments that prevent childhood morbidity and mortality. With appropriate information, tools, and skills, however, communities are empowered to identify and change the risks and behaviors that are detrimental to children's health. This enables communities to seek local improvements in immunization services, mosquito-bite prevention, sanitation, oral rehydration programs, nutrition and breastfeeding counseling, tobacco prevention among youth and other primary health care activities.

In addition to mothers, fathers and extended family members, elected officials, tribal and religious leaders, teachers and other community figures are often the primary instruments of social and behavioral change. As informal or formal community "communicators," these individuals can promote the changes that will improve and sustain the health of children.



Immunization programs save three million lives annually.

**A local approach to global results** Too often development has been linked to “imposed solutions” for developing countries. The UN Foundation promotes local problem-solving whenever possible by encouraging local actions that change individual behavior. Protecting children from illness and disease begins by changing the attitudes and practices of caretakers, families and communities. From mother to mother, family to family, and community to community, a network of positive change begins—reducing children’s morbidity and mortality rates locally, nationally and globally.

Yet, individuals and their communities can only take charge of their health with the knowledge of and access to public health services. Individual actions must be supported with resources and systems that protect children from the diseases that threaten their survival and development. Through active UN agency collaboration with local NGOs, elected officials, and tribal and religious leaders, the UN Foundation helps communities work from the inside out to identify behavioral risks and promote behavioral changes that are critical to the prevention of childhood illnesses. In doing so, the UN Foundation helps communities to be knowledgeable, empowered and proactive in combating these threats to children’s well-being and health.

In its Children’s Health program, the UN Foundation fosters the necessary partnerships between UN agencies, national governments and on-the-ground community leaders for sustainable community health and well-being. In addition, the UN Foundation supports the dissemination of “lessons learned” and “best practices” among communities, countries and regions of the world.

**A point of departure** The UN Foundation is committed to strengthening the capacity of local communities and national governments to improve children's health and well-being. For example, the UNF-supported New Nigeria Foundation is helping local communities design packages of community-based preventive health services focused on children and adolescent girls. With UN Foundation support, these Nigerian communities have started to manage health intervention programs—thus empowering them to make their own decisions about the best ways to improve health within their own community.

**A show of support** Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, the UN Foundation has funded specific UNICEF programs aimed at lowering the rates of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. In addition, the UN Foundation supports programs that offer voluntary HIV testing and counseling services in communities for men, women and adolescents. These HIV/AIDS programs are specifically designed to encourage the participation of youth who help craft and deliver community-wide prevention messages. The UN Foundation is also a major funder of the World Health Organization's (WHO) aggressive, global anti-tobacco campaign. For the past three years, the UN Foundation has underwritten WHO's efforts to prevent and discourage adolescents and youth from using tobacco products. With UN Foundation support, community leaders, NGOs, educators and youth groups are developing outreach programs to educate children on the adverse health effects of tobacco use. These WHO programs advocate legislative and economic changes to prevent tobacco use, such as bans on advertising and sponsorship of sporting events, as well as taxes on tobacco products. A key component of this effort is the development and ratification of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

**The road ahead** Community-based approaches to children's health are effective. As evidenced by the successful Global Polio Eradication Initiative—less than 3,500 polio cases were reported in 2000—Rotary International and other private groups have contributed to the mobilization of community leaders who play a vital role in communicating the importance of immunizations to caretakers, educators and other community members.

Building on the significant results of these activities, the UN Foundation plans to continue to focus on targeted community-based health initiatives that aim to reduce the incidence of preventable childhood diseases, including malaria, measles, parasitic infections and HIV/AIDS.

**Partnership opportunities** The UN Foundation is helping make a difference in the lives of children around the world. Our investments in UN projects and programs—from strengthening immunization services throughout Africa to discouraging tobacco use among Brazilian youth—are working to ensure that each and every child's human rights are realized and their basic needs are met.

Yet with every child reached, there are thousands left behind. For this reason, the United Nations Foundation is working to facilitate resource partnerships among United Nations agencies, the private sector and other philanthropic organizations. Only through a coordinated, global response can each child be guaranteed the most basic human right—a healthy and productive life.



**US \$1 billion will help deliver 6 billion doses of vaccine to 600 million children by 2005.**



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