

USAID

Highlights

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USAID: Building a Better Future for Children

Think about it. Every two seconds, a child under the age of 5 dies somewhere in the world. In the next 24 hours, 40,000 children will die. In the next 10 years, 150 million children will die.

They will die from diarrhea or measles or pneumonia or a host of other ailments. They will die from drinking dirty water. Or they will die because they simply do not have enough to eat.

These deaths are doubly tragic because most of these children could be saved with vaccines, medicines and other affordable technologies available today.

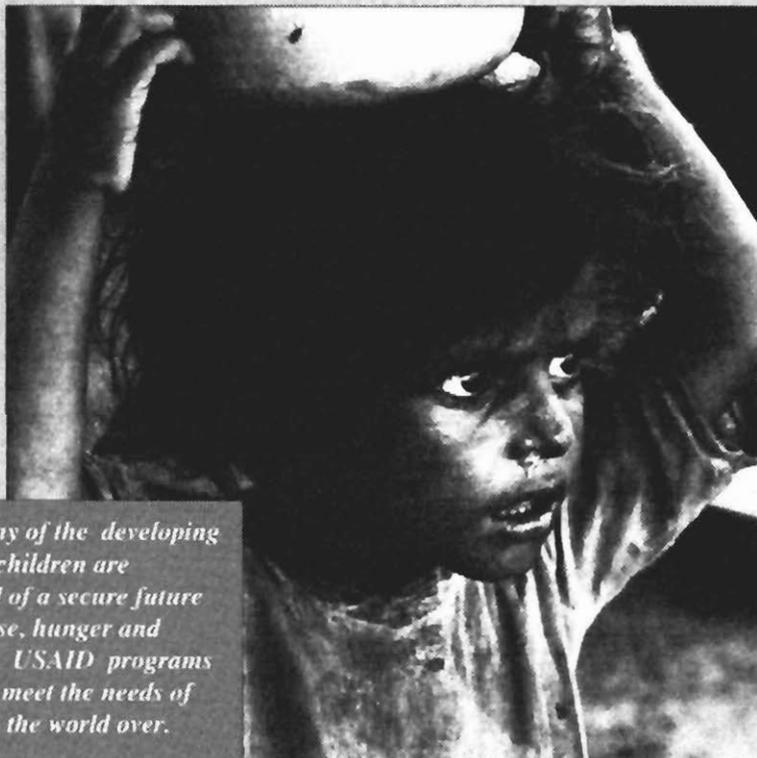
The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has long put improving the lot of the world's children high on its agenda.

"Our concern for children does not end with mere survival," says Administrator Ronald W. Roskens. "We are equally concerned about the preparation of children for school . . . for adulthood . . . and with helping families and communities to meet the needs of their children."

This kind of concern among global leaders brought together heads of state and chiefs of government from more than 70 countries for the first World Summit for Children. Held at the United Nations in New York City in September, the gathering marked the first time leaders from around the world had met to discuss children's issues.

The U.S. delegation was headed by President Bush, who emphasized international child survival and development in his speech and personal statement to the summit.

Too many of the developing world's children are deprived of a secure future by disease, hunger and disaster. USAID programs strive to meet the needs of children the world over.



USAID participated in summit preparations and will be involved in follow-up activities.

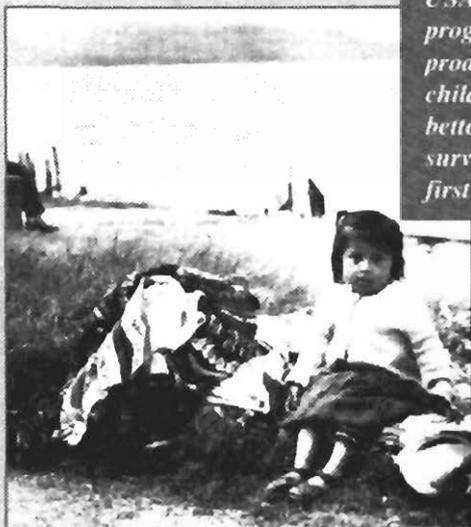
" . . . we should acknowledge that for many children, the only blessing they will ever know is their innocence," Bush said in his keynote address to the summit. "The facts are as stark as they are oppressive. There are almost 3 billion young people on Earth today—and more than 14 million of them will die this year. In the next hour alone, 1,000 babies will perish. But . . . we're all gathered here to defy these statistics.

" . . . let us affirm, in this historic summit, that these children can be saved. They can be saved when we live up to our responsibilities, not just as an assembly of governments, but as a world community of adults, of parents."

Participants at the World Summit for Children pledged to make life better for children in the 1990s by enhancing children's health; improving growth and development in childhood; strengthening the role and status of

women; enhancing the role of the family in providing for children; reducing illiteracy and providing educational opportunities for all children; helping children orphaned or disabled by famine, war or disaster; protecting children from armed conflict; protecting the environment to ensure a safer future for all children; and attacking poverty to protect children and improve their welfare.

"At the summit, it was reiterated that while there are few new funds available for development assistance programs, a larger portion of the total could be directed toward the needs of children, and much better use can be made of what is available," says Nancy Pielemeier, deputy



USAID nutrition programs help produce healthy children who have a better chance of surviving the critical first five years.

director of the Agency's Office of Health.

Even though much remains to be done for the world's children, Agency programs have contributed to a great deal of

progress. Immunization programs and treatment of diarrheal diseases are saving the lives of some 3 million children a year. In this decade, vaccinations of infants have increased 400 percent. Polio is on the threshold of eradication in the Americas. USAID projects have increased school enrollment and educational opportunities in the developing world.

Child Survival

USAID recognizes that broad-based economic growth offers the most hope for improving the lives of children in the developing world, but specific programs promoting their well-being also are important. Since 1985, USAID has committed more than \$1 billion for child survival efforts in more than 60 countries.

One of the Agency's greatest child survival success stories is low-cost oral rehydration therapy.

The Agency's child survival strategy to improve infant and child health is built around inexpensive, proven technologies, such as immunization against childhood diseases, oral rehydration therapy (ORT) to prevent death from diarrhea, a focused nutrition program emphasizing breastfeeding and proper infant and child feeding, and reduction of high-risk births.

USAID involves the voluntary and for-profit private sectors in delivering services and producing and distributing commodities. On the global and country levels, USAID works with other governments, donors and international organizations, including UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), and with U.S. technical experts to support country programs.

One of the Agency's greatest child survival success stories is low-cost oral rehydration therapy, a simple solution of salt, sugar and potassium. In 1980, dehydration caused by diarrhea claimed nearly 10,000 young lives every day. Today, more than 25 percent of the developing world's families are using ORT, enabling them to treat dehydration at home. The use of ORT saves almost 1 million children every year.

Studying child survival programs can yield valuable information on how those programs can be made to work more efficiently and cost-effectively. In Zaire, for example, an

Agency-funded project set out to examine the workings of the country's health-care system.

"The systems analysis that was carried out in Zaire helped us to identify a large number of problems and understand better the health system that we work in," says Dr. Makamba Mbonariba, director of the *Santé Pour Tous* (Health for All) project.

Among its findings, the Zaire study discovered that although mothers were bringing their children to a weighing center, health workers were not explaining to women the significance of their children's weights. After the study, managers restructured services so that health workers spent more time with mothers of malnourished or underweight children. Mothers who know more about nutrition have healthier children.

Breastfeeding

Encouraging breastfeeding is one of the ways in which Agency programs work to ensure good infant nutrition. Breastfeeding is a cornerstone of child survival. Infants exclusively breastfed are two-and-a-half times less likely to become ill and almost two times less likely to die than infants who are not breastfed. More than 1 million infants could be saved each year if all babies were breastfed exclusively in the first 4-6 months of life. Breastfeeding is also crucial to nutrition, diarrheal disease control, immunization and child spacing.

The USAID-funded WELLSTART Program works with health personnel in developing countries to promote the initiation of breastfeeding in hospitals. In 1989, 41 health-care providers received WELLSTART training and passed on information to 9,000 doctors and nurses in their home countries. In one hospital in Indonesia, infant mortality from infections declined 60 percent and infant morbidity from diarrhea dropped 86 percent in the six months after breastfeeding programs were instituted.

Maternal Health

Ensuring a mother's health and well-being is vital to her child's survival. Maternal mortality rates in the developing world are commonly 200 times higher than those in North America and Europe. In large areas of sub-Saharan Africa, a woman's risk of dying from pregnancy-related causes is greater than one in 25 during her lifetime, in stark contrast to the lifetime risk of one in 15,000 in the United States.

In 1988, USAID launched MotherCare, a five-year, \$17.5 million project to assist countries, communities and individuals to identify and carry out solutions to problems affecting maternal and neonatal health and nutrition.

A mother's age, the number of children she has borne and the time elapsed since her previous pregnancy all have an important effect on an infant's health and survival. Of all the factors related to high-risk births,

Agency projects help provide the safe, accessible water supplies vital to child survival. Most diarrheal diseases are caused by drinking unsafe water, and more than 1.1 billion people do not have access to potable water.



child spacing has the greatest impact on child survival. If all births were spaced two years apart, the infant mortality rate would decline by 10 percent.

The USAID-funded National Family Planning Services Project in Bangladesh targets child-spacing messages to young women with closely spaced births and to women over 40 who have several children. About 30 percent of these women now are using contraception to space or prevent births. USAID estimates that the country's population growth rate has fallen from 2.8 percent to 2.4 percent—a level previous estimates expected would not be achieved until the year 2005.

AIDS

The spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) affects the survival of children, especially in Africa. Mothers infected with the AIDS virus can pass the infection to their unborn children. According to WHO, 10 million children will be infected with the AIDS virus by the year 2000.

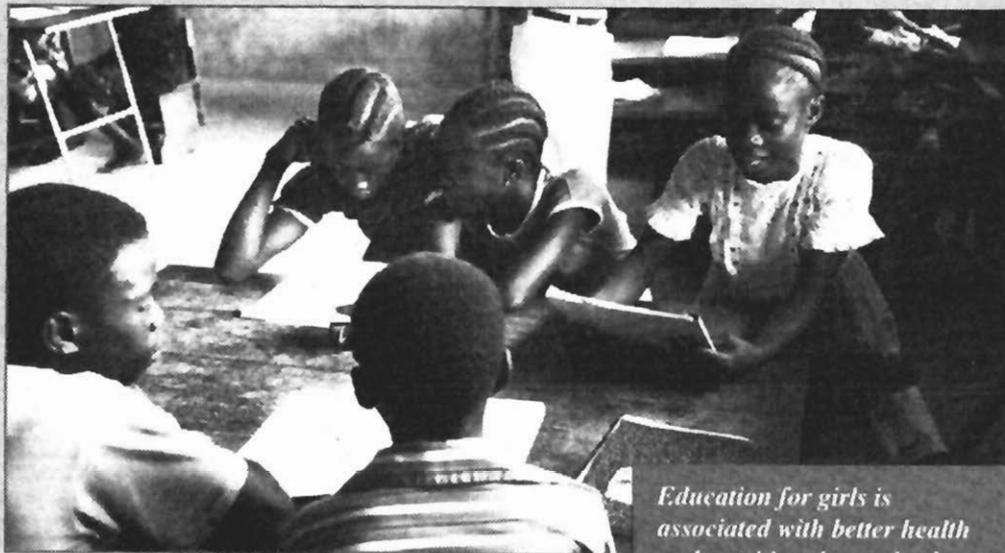
In some cities in Africa, as many as one child in 10 is born infected with the human immunodeficiency virus, and nearly all babies contracting full-blown AIDS will die before reaching the age of 2. Child mortality rates may grow by as much as 50 percent in some African cities during the 1990s. More and more children are becoming AIDS orphans—left parentless, some shortly after birth, because their parents are dying of AIDS.

The Agency is fighting the spread of AIDS worldwide through education and health programs to help people understand how the disease is contracted and how to prevent it. USAID also is the major contributor to WHO's Global Programme on AIDS.

An Agency-funded, six-week mass media campaign in Peru used TV and radio spots as well as print media to educate the public about AIDS prevention. As a result, condom use to prevent AIDS increased 14 percent and awareness of the role of used needles in the spread of AIDS increased 13 percent. Also, in response to growing demand generated by AIDS awareness, USAID has increased condom shipments to Africa from 33 million in 1987 to 164 million in 1990.

Immunization

Although there is no vaccine yet available to protect against infection with the AIDS virus, many childhood diseases are preventable. In the early 1980s, vaccines were reaching only 10-20 percent of the developing world's children. Today, through a massive global coalition, immunization coverage in the developing



Education for girls is associated with better health and nutrition, lower death and birth rates and more rapid economic development. USAID programs have helped increase enrollment of girls in primary school in the developing world.

world has increased to more than 60 percent.

In developing countries, fully 67 percent of children now are vaccinated by their first birthday against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and polio; 74 percent are protected against tuberculosis; 60 percent are vaccinated against measles; and 30 percent of women are vaccinated against tetanus, protecting infants against neonatal tetanus associated with unsanitary conditions during birth.

At these levels, WHO estimates that immunization prevents 2.2 million child deaths each year from measles, neonatal tetanus and whooping cough, as well as 360,000 cases of polio.

Measles kills more than 1.5 million children each year and is the leading killer among the vaccine-preventable diseases. In September, USAID announced a five-year, \$50 million assault on measles among children in developing countries. A recent study in Bangladesh found that measles immunization reduces mortality from all causes by more than 40 percent for children under age 5.

In March, Costa Rica, Egypt, Zambia and Pakistan were among the 11 USAID-assisted countries that attained 80 percent target immunization coverage for the six major vaccine-preventable diseases.

Education

Basic education is necessary to the growth and development of nations as well as individuals. Skills acquired in primary school are the building blocks of progress. Yet, more than 100 million children will never learn to read, write or count. If the current trend continues, the number of unschooled children will be more than 165 million by the end of the century. The number of adult illiterates will continue to grow.

Worldwide, at least 50 percent of adult women and 30 percent of adult men are illiterate. Yet, education, especially for girls, is strongly associated with better health and nutrition, lower death and birth rates and more rapid economic development.



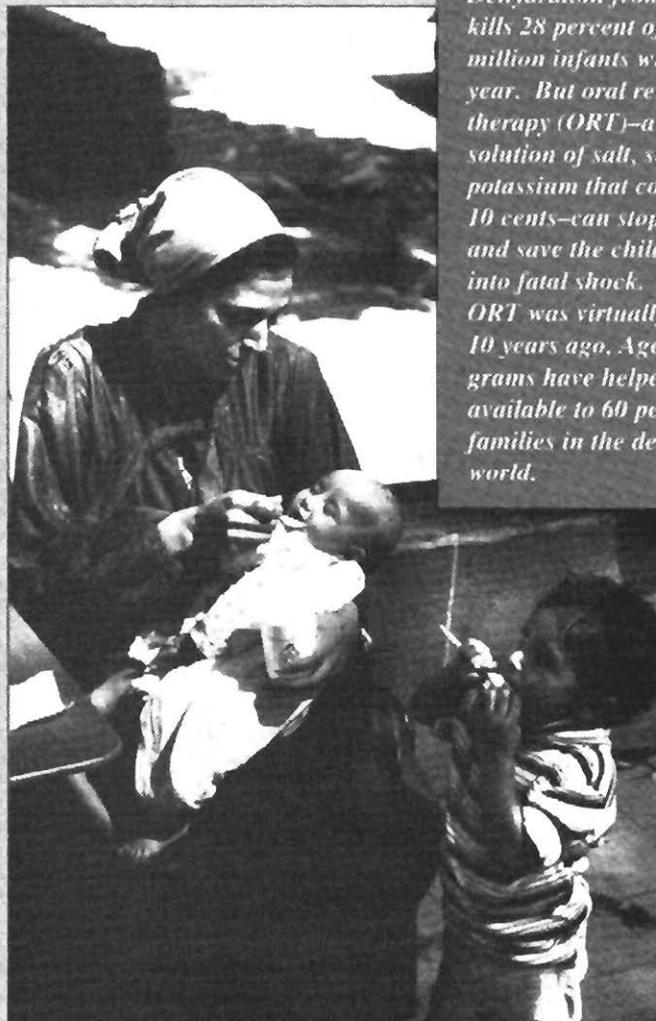
"Of the 100 million children not in school, two-thirds are girls," says Frank Method of the Agency's Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination. "They are the mothers of the next generation. They and their children will be victims—trapped in the vicious cycle of illiteracy, poverty and poor health."

Agency programs are making headway. USAID works in partnership with governments worldwide to improve basic education by seeking ways to educate more students for the same cost through more efficient use of available resources and providing better teaching materials and methods.

In rural Egypt, primary school construction has increased girls' enrollment by 29 percent and reduced school dropouts by 17 percent. In Honduras, teacher training, textbooks and interactive radio instruction have more than doubled the number of first-grade students competent in mathematics.

Special Circumstances

Poverty, war, famine and pestilence drive children from their homes and often leave them parentless. The majority of the world's refugees are children. In 10 East and Central African countries alone, UNICEF estimates that by the year 2000 there will be 5 million children under 15 years of age whose mothers have died of AIDS. CHILDHOPE, a U.S.-based organization that helps street children, estimates the street children population to be 100 million, of which approximately 40 million are located in Latin America, 25-30 million are in Asia and 10 million or more are in Africa.



Dehydration from diarrhea kills 28 percent of the 14 million infants who die each year. But oral rehydration therapy (ORT)—a simple solution of salt, sugar and potassium that costs less than 10 cents—can stop diarrhea and save the child from going into fatal shock. Although ORT was virtually unknown 10 years ago, Agency programs have helped make it available to 60 percent of families in the developing world.

USAID works to find solutions to the special problems these children face. Agency programs in Cambodia and Nicaragua, for example, provide food, medical and psychological care and education for

orphaned or disabled children. And, through USAID, the United States is providing \$4 million to help Romanian children living in terrible conditions created under the Ceausescu regime.

The World Summit for Children focused the world's attention on the plight of children around the globe. The nations gathered for the summit signed a plan of action for the survival, protection and development

of children in the 1990s. They pledged their combined efforts "not only for the present generation, but for all generations to come There can be no task nobler than giving every child a better future."

USAID continues working to make its projects for children more effective. Bringing better health, nutrition and education to all the world's children is a goal USAID shares with concerned people around the globe.

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