

Effective Integrated Programs Improve Child Survival

Briefing for Foundations and Donors from the BabyWASH Coalition

During the past thirty years we have witnessed remarkable improvements in the health of children worldwide. Millions more children are surviving and thriving thanks to investments that prioritized access to health care. However, the job is not complete. The challenges that we face today are multifaceted and will only be overcome with the collaboration of diverse experts and institutions. In order to reach every child by 2030, we must employ new approaches that harness efficiency and effectiveness.

The Situation:

- More than 500,000 children die annually from diarrheaⁱ; more than 900,000 die from pneumoniaⁱⁱ, many of them less than two years old.
- 159 million children under 5 are stunted as a result of chronic malnutrition and repeated bouts of diarrhea and other diseases. Stunting impacts a child's cognitive and physical development, and leaves her more susceptible to diseaseⁱⁱⁱ.
- Due to poverty and stunting, 43% of all children under-five in low- and middle-income countries are at risk of failing to reach their full developmental potential^{iv}.
- Worldwide, 2.4 billion people lack access to improved sanitation facilities, exposing them to harmful pathogens and making them susceptible to disease^v.
- Children in the first 1,000 days are most at risk as this is when the brain is developing the fastest.

The Solution:

- Integrated programs should take a holistic approach to ensure children not only survive, but thrive. Integrated programs bring together water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), early childhood development, and maternal, newborn, and child health to ensure an enabling policy and programming environment in which children can reach their full cognitive and economic potential.
- Health and nutrition experts must work together, alongside education professionals, agricultural workers, and WASH specialists to have the most impact on children's wellbeing and to effectively achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- National and sub-national budgets must include resources for integrated programs that reach even the most rural communities.

Call to Action:

- Provide more flexible, long term funding to partner countries in support of integrated priorities, and for learning and adaptation as part of multi-sectoral approaches.
- Incentivize, encourage and facilitate cross-government coordination, ensuring that all relevant ministries are represented in planning, financing, implementing and evaluating programmes.
- Improve the tracking of cross-sectoral investments to better understand return on investment and enable stronger accountability (for example, improve the coding of 'nutrition-sensitive' ODA spending in OECD DAC reporting).
- Fund research to add to the evidence base for the effectiveness of an integrated approach.

ⁱ UNICEF Data (2015). <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-health/diarrhoeal-disease/>

ⁱⁱ UNICEF Data (2015). <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-health/pneumonia/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Global Nutrition Report (2016) *From Promise to Impact: Ending malnutrition by 2030*. <http://ebrary.ifpri.org/utils/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/130354/file/130565.pdf>

^{iv} Black (2016) *Early Childhood Development Coming of Age: Science through the life course*. The Lancet. [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(16\)31389-7/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)31389-7/fulltext)

^v JMP Report (2015) http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/jmp-2015-key-facts/en/