



UNITED NATIONS

# WE CAN END POVERTY

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND BEYOND 2015

FACT SHEET

## GOAL 4

## Reduce child mortality

### TARGET

Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the mortality rate of children under five

### FAST FACTS

- ◇ Since 1990, the under-five mortality rate has dropped by 47 per cent.
- ◇ While around 17,000 fewer children are dying each day, 6.6 million children under five died in 2012—mostly from preventable diseases.
- ◇ More than 10 million lives have been saved through measles vaccines since 2000.
- ◇ In sub-Saharan Africa, one in ten children dies before age five, more than 15 times the average for developed regions.

### WHERE WE STAND

Gains have been made in child survival since 1990, making it possible to increase child survival for future generations. Worldwide, the mortality rate for children under five dropped by 47 per cent—from 90 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 48 in 2012.

Despite this accomplishment, more rapid progress is needed to meet the 2015 target of a two-thirds reduction in under-five mortality. In 2012, an estimated 6.6 million children—18,000 a day—died from mostly preventable diseases. These children tend to be among the poorest and most marginalized in society. Increasingly, child deaths are concentrated in the poorest regions—sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia accounted for 5.3 million (81 per cent) of the 6.6 million deaths in children under five worldwide.

The main killers are pneumonia, preterm birth complications, diarrhoea, intrapartum-related complications and malaria. The first month, and particularly the first 24 hours, are the most dangerous in a child's life. Newborns now account for almost half (44 per cent) of under-five deaths. Also, undernutrition contributes to 45 per cent of all under-five deaths. Children who are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life are 14 times more likely to survive than non-breastfed children.

Despite challenges, many countries with very high child death rates in 1990 are beating the odds and lowering under-five mortality rates, showing progress for all children is achievable. Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Liberia, Malawi, Nepal, Timor-Leste and United Republic of Tanzania have lowered under-five mortality rates by two-thirds or more since 1990.

Solutions don't have to be complicated. There are inexpensive and simple responses that save children's lives, by preventing and by treating illnesses. These interventions must be made available to those who need them the most.

### WHAT'S WORKING?

**Bangladesh: Breaking healthcare barriers prevents child deaths.** Over the past two decades, persistent UNICEF-supported local-level efforts, such as training community healthcare workers, have led to a sharp decline in maternal and child mortality in Bangladesh. Infant mortality declined from 100 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 33 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2012. In the same period, under-five mortality dropped by 72 per cent from 144 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 41 in 2012.

**Peru: Empowered farmers fight inequality. Indigenous children from Peru's remote regions are among the most disadvantaged in the world.**

In some areas, half the children suffer from chronic malnutrition and many are anaemic and Vitamin A-deficient. Extreme inequalities, lack of services, and poor roads and schools make grim prospects for children. Rural families are now getting assistance from the [MDG-Fund](#) for Farmers Field Schools, a programme that provides training on agricultural and management techniques to farmers to improve their children's health and nutrition.

**Chad: Children have better chances to reach their fifth birthday.** Chad has one of the lowest vaccination rates in the world. With support from UNICEF, an expanded immunization programme is reaching more children using community outreach workers, radio broadcasts and campaigns.

**Nigeria: Saving One Million Lives.** In 2012, the Nigerian Government launched [Saving One Million Lives](#) by 2015, an ambitious initiative to expand access to essential primary health services to women and children, including telephone lines for health workers, equipment to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission, bed nets and other life-saving tools.

**India: Newborns saved by rural healthcare.** Madhya Pradesh, the second-largest state in India, has the highest infant mortality rate in the country. The state government and UNICEF are turning things around by setting up healthcare facilities linking rural communities to district hospitals, and establishing health centres where there were none. The Special Newborn Care Unit of the Shivpuri District Hospital has alone saved more than 6,000 children.

**Cambodia: Efforts target measles in hard-to-reach communities.** Measles travels fast and is a major killer of young children. The number of children under 1 year of age immunized against measles in Cambodia between 2000 and 2012 went up by 71 per cent, but 7 per cent were still not being reached. In 2011, the World Health Organization

helped the national immunization programme identify communities at high risk of missing out on vaccines. Measles immunization sessions were then held in market places and village leaders' homes in those communities. Cambodia reported no measles cases for a full 12 months in 2012, down from 722 cases the previous year.

## PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

Launched at the UN MDG Summit in 2010, [Every Woman Every Child](#) is an unprecedented global movement, spearheaded by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, to mobilize and intensify global action to save the lives of 16 million women and children around the world and improve the health and lives of millions more. Working with leaders from over 70 governments, multilateral organizations, the private sector and civil society, Every Woman Every Child has secured commitments from over 280 partners.

In support of *Every Woman Every Child*, a total of 176 governments have renewed their promise to children by pledging to redouble efforts on child survival since the *Child Survival Call to Action* in 2012. Through the Call to Action, launched by the Governments of *Ethiopia, India* and the *United States*, with support from UNICEF, as well as hundreds of civil society, private sector and non-governmental organizations, '[Committing to Child Survival: A Promise Renewed](#)' was launched as a sustained, global effort to save children's lives. Partners are pledging to work together to scale up high-impact strategies, monitor progress and mobilize grassroots action and advocacy aimed at ending preventable deaths among children under five by 2035.

Sources: The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013, United Nations; [A Promise Renewed](#), *Committing to Child Survival: A Promise Renewed* Newsletter, Issue 1, May 2013, MDG-Fund ([Peru](#)), [Saving One Million Lives](#), UNICEF ([Chad](#), [India](#)); [Every Woman Every Child](#).



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Issued by the UN Department of Public Information, September 2013

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