

The U.S. government has committed to saving the lives of 15 million children and nearly 600,000 women by 2020, as a milestone toward helping to end preventable maternal and child deaths by 2035. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) report *Acting on the Call* provides an evidence-based strategy for achieving these results, with low-income countries themselves taking the lead. U.S. commitments with Ethiopia and India helped to galvanize an international movement, *A Promise Renewed*, and align with the global strategy, the *Every Newborn Action Plan*.

## The Global Need

Both the mortality rate and the number of under-five deaths have fallen by more than half since 1990. Of the 5.9 million childhood deaths in 2014, 45% occurred during the first 28 days of life. In addition, there are about 3 million stillbirths each year. Deaths of women during childbirth have declined by 45% since 1990, to 289,000 in 2013.

The leading causes of newborn deaths are preventable and treatable:

1. Complications from prematurity (35%)
2. Complications during childbirth (including birth asphyxia, or lack of oxygen; 24%)
3. Newborn infections (15%)

## Proven Solutions

- *Helping Babies Breathe*: When newborn babies aren't breathing, there is a 60 second window during which they can often be resuscitated. Most babies start to breathe on their own, but approximately 10 million newborns need some assistance. *Helping Babies Breathe*, a low-literacy curriculum developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), has been introduced through newborn resuscitation programs that have trained more than 300,000 birth attendants in 77 countries since 2010. Over 50 of the programs are coordinated by national governments. Studies have shown early newborn mortality reductions of nearly 50% in Tanzania and Nepal.
- *Trained birth attendants*: The health of mothers and newborns is linked, and care by trained birth attendants in the 24 hours preceding and following childbirth is key to eliminating newborn deaths.
- *Nutrition*: Nutrition is critical to newborn health and survival. An infant is 14 times as likely to survive the first six months of life if he or she is exclusively breastfed. A mother's good nutrition before and during pregnancy also contributes to a healthy birth weight, which is closely correlated with a newborn's chances for survival and long-term development.
- *Other interventions*: Other critical interventions include immediate essential newborn care; prevention and management of newborn and healthcare-acquired infections; prevention and management of preterm/low-birth weight newborns; newborn screening; and strengthening routine care systems. The USAID-supported partnership *Helping 100,000 Babies Survive and Thrive* is designed to help low-income country health systems address these needs.

## A Shared Commitment

- The AAP has partnered with the pediatric associations of Ethiopia, India and Nigeria to save at least 100,000 additional newborn babies every year through the USAID and private sector-supported initiative *Helping 100,000 Babies Survive and Thrive*.
- The AAP supports the Reach Every Mother and Child Act (H.R. 3706 in the House and S. 1911 in the Senate) to authorize USAID's maternal and child survival strategy, support alignment across interventions and leverage new resources to end preventable deaths.

