

# Key Messages

## Advancing lifesaving commodities for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health

**Overarching message:** Every year, thousands of women, newborns, and children die of preventable or treatable causes because they cannot access affordable and effective medicines and simple health technologies. Even the most effective medicines and technologies cannot save lives or improve health if they do not reach the people who need them.

### Meet Global Goals

Despite progress, women and children in many countries still do not have consistent and assured access to high-quality, affordable essential medicines and health technologies—which threatens their health and well-being.

- Improved reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health is a core component of many global health and development targets, including the Sustainable Development Goals. These goals will not be achieved without improved access to lifesaving health commodities.
- Lifesaving commodities are essential to achieving reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health global targets, yet essential supplies—such as amoxicillin, chlorhexidine, and contraceptives—are too often excluded from health systems strengthening interventions.
- Ensuring women and children receive high-quality, affordable health commodities is critical to bring down rates of disease, end preventable deaths, and realize global goals for health and prosperity.
  - According to the UN Commission on Life-Saving Commodities, expanding access to 13 essential health products could save the lives of approximately 6 million women and children over 5 years.<sup>1</sup>
  - Approximately 225 million women worldwide want to delay or avoid pregnancy, yet are not using effective contraception, in many cases because they cannot access the contraceptive method of their choice. Ensuring women's contraceptive needs are met can reduce unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and maternal mortality<sup>2</sup>; however, contraceptives must be available, affordable, and quality-assured for these outcomes to be realized.

### Implement Supportive Policies

Lifesaving commodities for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health must be prioritized in national health strategies, guidelines, and budgets.

- Developing and implementing commodity security policies for essential medicines and technologies will strengthen the quality of health services and contribute to better health outcomes.
  - Postpartum hemorrhage, pre-eclampsia, and eclampsia account for almost half of all maternal deaths; if the lifesaving medicines for their treatment—oxytocin, misoprostol, and magnesium sulfate—were available to all women at birth, 1.4 million women's lives could be saved over 10 years.<sup>3</sup>
  - Improved access to oxygen therapy with pulse oximetry has been shown to reduce pneumonia mortality among children by up to 35 percent in high-burden settings.<sup>4</sup>
- The Global Financing Facility offers countries the opportunity to develop financing strategies that will help improve the health of women and children. If governments wish to end preventable deaths, lifesaving

reproductive, maternal, newborn, adolescent, and child health commodities must be included in their health financing strategy.

### **Ensure Accountability**

All sectors of society must come together to prioritize access to lifesaving health commodities to save more lives, faster—through public and private investments and citizen and community actions that hold leaders accountable to their commitments.

- Governments, donors, the private sector, and other stakeholders should increase investments in proven strategies that ensure access to and availability of high-quality, affordable commodities for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health.
- Citizens and communities must hold their governments and service providers accountable for high-quality reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health care, including ensured access to affordable lifesaving commodities.
  - In Malawi, where 1 in every 18 women dies during pregnancy or childbirth, civil society partners successfully advocated for the government to add 13 lifesaving commodities to the national essential medicines list.<sup>5</sup>
- Citizens and communities must hold their leaders accountable for their commitments made to strengthen health systems and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals—including ensured access to high-quality, affordable lifesaving commodities for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health.
- National and sub-national governments must prioritize consistent access to lifesaving medicines and technologies in their political agendas and budgets, ensuring their citizens can access the essential health commodities that enable better health outcomes.
  - Civil society organizations in Uganda launched a campaign in late 2015 to hold the government accountable for ensuring the availability of essential medicines, particularly those for HIV and tuberculosis, through increased financing for procurement.<sup>6</sup>
- Governments, donors, and other stakeholders should leverage participation in the Global Financing Facility to harmonize commodity security interventions for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health, ensuring alignment across health sectors and product categories.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> *Scaling Up Life-Saving Commodities for Women, Children, and Newborns*. Washington, DC: PATH; 2015. Available at: [https://www.path.org/publications/files/APP\\_advocacy\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.path.org/publications/files/APP_advocacy_toolkit.pdf)
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- <sup>3</sup> Page on Life Saving Commodities—Maternal Health. Life Saving Commodities website. Available at: <http://www.lifesavingcommodities.org/about/our-experts/maternal-health/>
- <sup>4</sup> Duke T, Wandt F, Jonathan M, et al. Improved oxygen systems for childhood pneumonia: a multihospital effectiveness study in Papua New Guinea. *The Lancet*. 2008;372(9646):1328–1333.
- <sup>5</sup> Matamba M. *13 medicines that could save millions of mother's and children's lives*. PATH blog. 2015. Available at: [http://blog.path.org/2015/06/malawi-eml/?utm\\_referrer](http://blog.path.org/2015/06/malawi-eml/?utm_referrer)
- <sup>6</sup> CSO call for more HIV/AIDS, TB funding. *New Vision*: Kampala; 2015. Available at: [http://www.newvision.co.ug/new\\_vision/news/1411504/cso-hiv-aids-tb-funding](http://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1411504/cso-hiv-aids-tb-funding)



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