

## CASE STUDY

## A coordinated approach to defeating diarrheal disease

Each year, diarrheal disease kills an estimated 1.3 million children under age five worldwide. PATH is working to reduce the burden of diarrheal disease in Vietnam by supporting new national guidelines on diarrhea management, enhanced training, and community outreach initiatives to improve access to prevention and treatment strategies.

A renewed national focus on defeating diarrheal disease is encouraging health care providers to combine new tools with proven strategies to combat the disease across the country's health system, from the national to the community level.

### PLANNING AND ORGANIZING INTEGRATED SERVICES

Beginning in 2008, we worked with Vietnam's Ministry of Health and the National Pediatric Hospital to convene a technical working group that helped update national guidelines for diarrhea management in children. The plan integrated new interventions such as zinc and low-osmolarity oral rehydration solution—interventions now recommended by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund—with existing tools such as improved hygiene and exclusive breastfeeding.

The guidelines focus on the role of health workers in providing education to parents on prevention and treatment strategies that they can apply at home, including hand washing and good hygiene as well as oral rehydration therapy.

### STAFFING, TRAINING, AND SUPERVISION

To raise awareness of the new guidelines and tools for treating diarrheal disease, we provided funding and technical support to train health care providers. We helped coordinate a “train the trainers” approach that rolled out the new guidelines to health workers at the national, provincial, district, and community levels.

A pilot project assisted health authorities in one province in the south central part of Vietnam to implement the new guidelines locally. The project also has provided donated zinc for use in treating diarrhea in provincial health facilities. The results of the pilot project will help inform efforts to implement the guidelines nationwide.



Nguyen Ba Quang

### PATH's approach to integrated health services

We develop integrated programming across as many as four levels of a country's health framework:



**(I) client-centered services** at the

community level; **(II) health operations** planning at the organization or agency level; **(III) health system** coordination at the national level; and **(IV) intersectoral initiatives** across development sectors. This case study highlights integration at the health operations and health system levels.

Our approach incorporates nine elements we consider essential for successful integration: planning and budgeting; organization of health services; staffing; training; supervision; logistics; community outreach; referral services; and monitoring, evaluation, and research.



PATH/Deborah Phillips

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## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

We worked in partnership with Vietnam's Health Education Center to create posters and brochures as well as radio and television announcements regarding prevention and treatment of diarrhea based on the new guidelines. Across the country's health systems, some facilities have established or expanded oral rehydration therapy corners, where mothers with children at the facility can receive education on nutrition, hygiene, and home care for diarrhea.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

We are currently helping to evaluate the provincial pilot project. Regional and district health officials indicate that the number of inpatient admissions for diarrhea treatment is down, inpatient stays for diarrhea treatment are now shorter, and there is reduced use of antibiotics for treating diarrheal disease regardless of the cause. They attribute these improvements to greater awareness and improved treatment at the local level. The addition of zinc and low-osmolarity oral rehydration solution to the government's essential drugs list this year ensures insurance coverage and public-sector availability of these interventions.

For a more detailed look at our approach to integration, please see PATH's framework for health services integration on [www.path.org](http://www.path.org).



PATH is an international nonprofit organization that creates sustainable, culturally relevant solutions, enabling communities worldwide to break longstanding cycles of poor health. By collaborating with diverse public- and private-sector partners, PATH helps provide appropriate health technologies and vital strategies that change the way people think and act. PATH's work improves global health and well-being.

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