

Progress against child deaths will lag until family, community care prioritized

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Global efforts to tackle millions of preventable child and maternal deaths will fail to extend gains unless world leaders act now to pour more healthcare resources directly into families and communities, according to a new World Vision report launched today.

"The Missing Link: Saving children's lives through family care" examines how the resources invested to achieve [Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs) 4 and 5 can go further toward saving the more than 8 million children under the age of five and 350,000 mothers who die each year, mostly from preventable causes. Undertaken by the international child-focused organization World Vision, the analysis distills several decades of field-based experience and research to recommend investing directly in care for families and the communities where they live.

"With only five years to go until the MDG target deadline, no one can afford to waste time or resources," said Kevin Jenkins, president and CEO of World Vision International. "Efforts will falter for the world's most impoverished, vulnerable children and their mothers until we focus our energies on bringing health care directly where they need it most—right to their homes and communities."

In 2000, world leaders adopted eight ambitious yet achievable goals aimed at halving extreme poverty and its effects. Known as the MDGs, their target deadline is 2015. Next week, world leaders, governments and NGOs convening for the 2010 UN General Assembly in New York will

highlight progress, examine gaps and lessons learned and revitalize efforts on the MDGs, with Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon putting a special focus on women's and children's health.

MDGs 4 and 5, targeting the reduction of maternal and [child mortality](#), lag far behind the other goals. This is in part because the people who most need care can't access it, say the authors of the World Vision report.

"Millions of children live and die beyond the reach of formal health services and clinics, of diseases that are easily prevented and treated when families are able to access effective, basic interventions as close to their homes as possible," said Martha Newsome, Global Director of Health and Nutrition for World Vision International. "This deadly gap makes family and community care a critical link in saving millions from preventable deaths, and an essential component required to strengthen health systems adequately."

World Vision's Child Health Now campaign, drawing upon lessons learned from the Christian humanitarian organization's 1,600+ community programs, encourages communities to express their rights to quality health care, and press local and national governments to meet their responsibilities for promoting health and ending preventable child deaths.

Although the number of deaths among children under the age of five has declined in recent years, the rate of decline—an estimated one-third reduction over 20 years—is insufficient to meet MDG 4, particularly in the regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and Oceania, where most child deaths occur, according to estimates released today by UNICEF.

The results are dismal given that evidence shows millions of babies and

toddlers could be saved from death each year through a small number of proven, cost-effective interventions such as skilled birth attendants, immunizations, mosquito nets and oral rehydration therapy.

"We know what works, why it works and how to do it," says Jenkins.

"What we need to do now is to mobilize the necessary political will to put mothers, children, their families and communities front and centre of global development."

"Otherwise, too many children born today into poor, under-served communities won't survive the five years to the 2015 deadline, simply because they and their families don't have access to basic health services," said Jenkins.

Provided by World Vision

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