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## SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE FOR ENDING PREVENTABLE CHILD AND MATERNAL DEATHS

At the U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID), ending preventable child and maternal deaths (EPCMD) is an Agency priority. Often, the most effective interventions for improving maternal and child health outcomes do not require expensive commodities or services. Simple behaviors practiced at the individual, household, and community levels can save lives and improve health outcomes. Changes in social norms can ensure these healthy behaviors are maintained over time.

Interventions that target behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes, known collectively as Social and Behavior Change (SBC) interventions, are as important to the success of public health programs as biomedical interventions such as vaccinations and antibiotics. In USAID's 24 EPCMD priority countries, millions of lives could be saved through social and behavior change interventions by 2020:



Increasing the rates of use of oral rehydration salts and zinc for children with diarrhea would save the lives of more than half a million children.



Handwashing with soap could prevent nearly 500,000 child deaths.



Exclusive breastfeeding through the first six months would save a quarter of a million infants.



Healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies could avert 1.4 million child deaths each year in USAID's EPCMD priority countries.

Communities, families, and health care workers armed with the right skills and information can maximize their access to and use of lifesaving commodities, health care facilities, and high-quality health care. Community health workers need to know how to prepare an oral rehydration solution. Providers must understand the benefits of washing their hands before interacting with patients and feeding children. Mothers must recognize that breastfeeding alone provides enough food to keep their babies healthy for the first six months of life. And each must feel empowered to use this knowledge.

Through social and behavior change activities, USAID and its partners raise awareness, reduce misinformation, and address the barriers that prevent individuals, families, and communities from practicing lifesaving behaviors to improve health outcomes, including breastfeeding, handwashing, newborn care, adequate nutrition, and others.

USAID integrates social and behavior change interventions into its efforts to end preventable child and maternal deaths. In addition, USAID leads and participates in a wide array of collaborations, alliances, and partnerships that strengthen the field of social and behavior change programming:

- USAID's **Behavior Change Framework** aims to accelerate in-country, sustainable social and behavior change interventions at the individual, family, community and institutional levels in USAID's 24 EPCMD priority countries. The Framework will help mainstream social and behavior change activities by identifying the Accelerator Behaviors that can have the highest impact on mortality reduction.

- A WHO-led collaboration that includes USAID, UNICEF, UNFPA, NORAD, NIH, and the Norwegian Institute of Public Health is working to develop the **Roadmap for Building, Reporting, Assessing, and Applying Evidence for Social and Behavior Change Interventions** to improve how the social and behavior change field builds, reports, assesses, and applies the evidence base for social and behavioral interventions for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health.
- USAID's **Accelerate Project** expands the capabilities of stakeholders in the 24 EPCMD priority countries to implement high-quality behavior change programming by focusing on 10 Accelerator Behaviors. The project supports evidence-based program design and implementation; emphasizes near real-time tracking, monitoring, and evaluation; and provides for the sharing of tools and best practices across USAID's network of partners.

- A partnership between **USAID** and the **White House Social and Behavioral Sciences Team (SBST)** works to implement and rigorously evaluate social and behavior change interventions and activities for newborn, child, and maternal health and nutrition in support of EPCMD objectives. The partnership focuses on identifying effective and efficient interventions that promote accelerator behaviors, providing assistance in the design of behavioral interventions, and generating evidence which can be immediately applied to improve strategies and approaches.



*A community action group in Lakhai Upazila, Bangladesh, meets monthly to discuss health concerns and healthy behaviors around pregnancy. / Amy Fowler, USAID*

- The **USAID/Peace Corps Interagency Agreement** will equip Peace Corps Volunteers to promote health behaviors for maternal and child health in 12 of USAID's 24 EPCMD priority countries. Through targeted training events, sub-regional workshops, and customized technical assistance, Peace Corps will help staff, Volunteers, and their counterparts in these countries to promote key messages and stimulate behavior change with individuals, families, and communities at a Volunteer's site.
- The **Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3)** is a five-year global project funded by USAID to strengthen the capacity of developing countries to implement state-of-the-art social and behavior change programs by addressing a comprehensive array of health areas.

*For additional information on USAID's EPCMD Social and Behavior Change activities, please contact Elizabeth Fox ([efox@usaid.gov](mailto:efox@usaid.gov)), Kama Garrison ([kgarrison@usaid.gov](mailto:kgarrison@usaid.gov)), and Stephanie Levy ([slevy@usaid.gov](mailto:slevy@usaid.gov)). To learn more about USAID's work to end preventable child and maternal deaths, visit [www.usaid.gov/actingonthecall](http://www.usaid.gov/actingonthecall).*