



Building a sustainable future: Healthy communities

Addressing health needs is the first step in helping communities overcome poverty and move towards sustainable development. Healthy adults work and healthy children attend school. It is the very foundation of a productive community and workforce.

Health in low-income countries remains a significant challenge. Infectious diseases, complications from pregnancy and childbirth, and poor nutrition continue to create high mortality rates. For the world's most vulnerable people, health care can be out of reach.

Australia is working with partner governments, multilateral agencies, civil society organisations and other development partners to help improve the health of poor and vulnerable people, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.



Photo: Sarah Boyd, AusAID

Improving maternal health in Nepal

Economic, social and cultural factors all influence how many women survive childbirth and how well they fare afterwards. Good quality and accessible health services—such as the presence of a skilled health worker during birth—are vital in reducing maternal and infant death rates. Australia funds a wide range of supportive measures to help the world's poorest and most vulnerable women access maternal health services.

Australia has worked with the United Nations Children's Fund—UNICEF, to improve maternal health services in Nepal. As a result, basic emergency obstetric services are now available in 90 per cent of Primary Health Care Centres in ten districts across the country and the use of birth attendants has increased from 29 per cent of births in 2010 to 33 per cent in 2011—meaning an extra 4500 births have been attended by skilled health workers.

Strengthening national health in East Timor

Australian aid is helping to strengthen health systems, improve training and ensure the availability of medical equipment and supplies—providing more people with access to health services in developing countries.

In East Timor, where Australia has been working to improve the reliability of drug supplies, the number of health facilities regularly reporting a lack of access to supplies fell from 40 per cent in 2008 to 17 per cent in 2010.



Photo: Dean Sewell/Ocull, Agence Vu for WaterAid

Global action to prevent and treat communicable diseases

Communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and HIV continue to significantly impact people in poorer nations. Each year an estimated 655 000 people—mostly children under five years—die from malaria, while 1.8 million died from HIV-related causes in 2009.

Australia contributes to the Global Fund, the largest multilateral sponsor of health programs, which has addressing disease in developing countries. Programs supported by the Global Fund have provided HIV treatment to 3.3 million people, anti-tuberculosis treatment for 8.6 million people and distributed 230 million insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria. Support from the Global Fund has saved an estimated 7.7 million lives worldwide.



Photo: Jeremy Miller, AusAID

Controlling malaria in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu

The Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have had some of the highest incidences of malaria outside Africa. Australia is working closely with the Ministries of Health, the Global Fund and the World Health Organization to bring malaria under control in both countries. Bed nets have been distributed; houses have been treated with insecticide and malaria testing, diagnosis and treatment services have been extended. In the Solomon Islands, incidents of malaria fell from 200 cases per 1000 people in 2003 to around 50 per 1000 in 2011, while in the same period in Vanuatu it went from 75 per 1000 to 25 per 1000.



Photo: Andrew Gavin, AusAID

Preventing non-communicable diseases

Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease are an increasing cause of poor health and death in developing countries and account for nearly 80 per cent of deaths in Pacific Island nations.

Australia is working with the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea to begin tackling non-communicable diseases and promote healthy lifestyles. These countries have agreed to national policies and strategies to prevent and control non-communicable diseases and Australia will continue to provide support in areas such as legislative reform.

Australia is also helping eliminate blindness in East Asia through the Avoidable Blindness Initiative. This will improve the quality of life for people with low vision and blindness through better diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation.

Increasing access to immunisation through the GAVI Alliance

Australia stands alongside international organisations, donor and developing countries, financing institutions and vaccine manufacturers as a proud supporter of the GAVI Alliance. Committed to enhancing community health by increasing access to immunisation, the GAVI Alliance has vaccinated more than 1.6 million children against diseases such as Hepatitis B, yellow fever, meningitis and pneumonia since 2006.