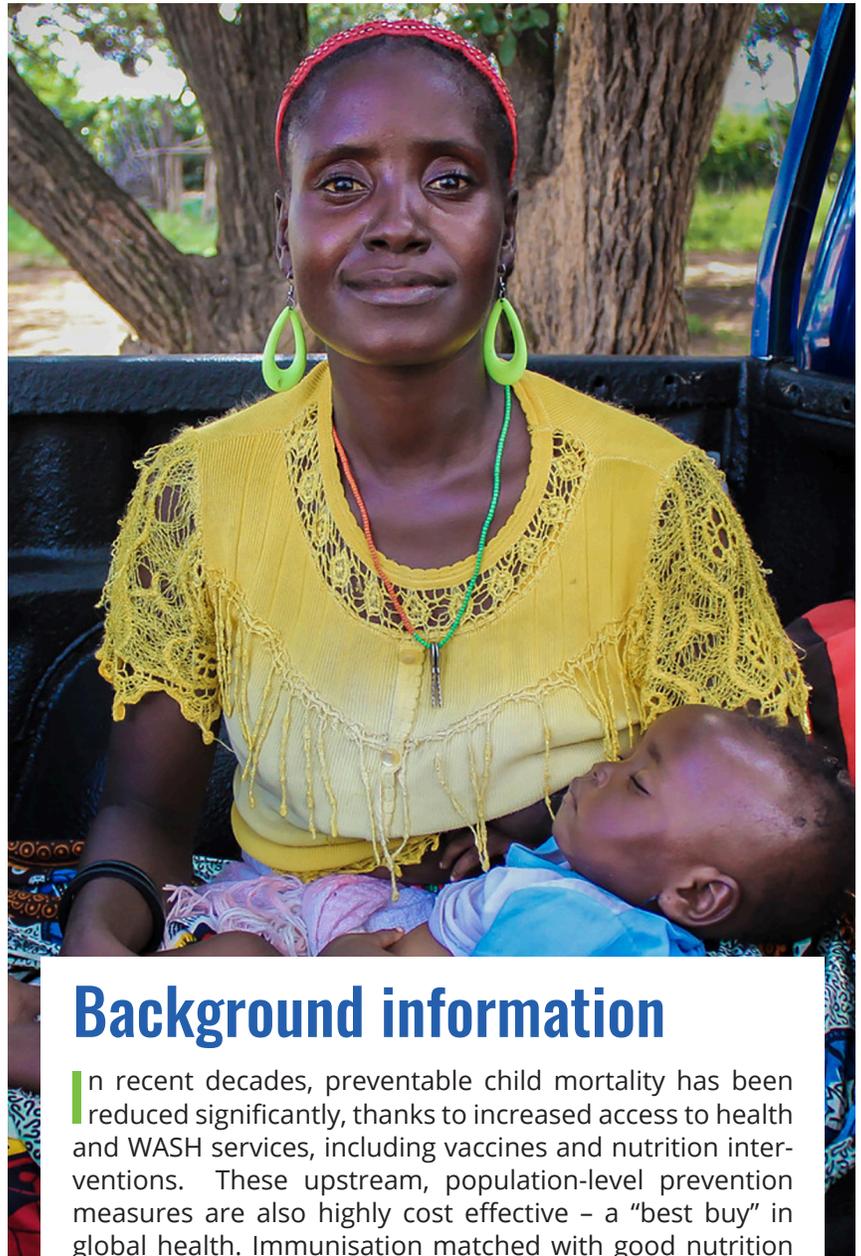


Vaccinations, Nutrition, and COVID-19

KEY MESSAGES

- 1** Vaccinations and good nutrition are essential for tackling child morbidity and mortality. Together, these cost-effective interventions prevent millions of deaths each year, create the foundation for health and development, and contribute to a virtuous cycle that lifts individuals, communities, and nations out of poverty.
- 2** Vaccinations and nutrition interventions complement each other, and each amplifies the impact of the other. They should, where appropriate, be delivered together, as a core part of a comprehensive primary health care approach, on the road towards universal health coverage.
- 3** The COVID-19 crisis threatens to roll back progress made on child survival and child health during the past decades due to critical health services being interrupted, while poverty and food insecurity are increasing. We cannot allow COVID-19 to reverse progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and leave a permanent mark on a generation of children.
- 4** Continued investment in vaccinations, nutrition, and other essential health services is crucial to effectively respond to COVID-19, to prevent child mortality and long-term negative effects on child health and development, and to build resilience during the recovery phase.



Background information

In recent decades, preventable child mortality has been reduced significantly, thanks to increased access to health and WASH services, including vaccines and nutrition interventions. These upstream, population-level prevention measures are also highly cost effective – a “best buy” in global health. Immunisation matched with good nutrition can prevent most vaccine-preventable diseases. In isolation, vaccines may not have the anticipated efficacy when administered to those who are malnourished. Nutrition programs will be less effective at preventing early death in unvaccinated populations. Complementing immunisation programs with the delivery of nutrition services will ensure adequate and sustained nutrition and is, therefore, key to maximising the impact of vaccines and promoting cost-effectiveness while breaking the vicious cycle of poor health, malnutrition, and stunted growth. Vaccines and good nutrition work hand in hand to prevent child mortality and promote good health – they should be addressed together as part of a comprehensive primary health care approach, on the road towards universal health coverage

Continued on next page...



Continued from previous page...

- Immunisation and nutrition interventions are among the most cost-effective ways to save lives and promote good health and well-being. Together, they save millions of lives each year, protecting from disease and disability, supporting healthy development, and boosting immunity – with a lifelong legacy.
- Good nutrition is key to build immunity, protect against illness and infection, and support recovery. Poor child nutrition is associated with higher prevalence and severity of infectious diseases. Malnutrition weakens the immune system and greatly increases the likelihood of dying from infectious disease, including vaccine-preventable illnesses such as measles and pneumonia. Vaccine effectiveness can be significantly diminished in children who are poorly nourished. This may be due to impaired immune response to the vaccine itself, and a higher likelihood that undernourished children have co-morbidities, including micronutrient deficiency or diarrhoea, which prevents optimal vaccine absorption.
- Children who suffer from infectious diseases are at an increased risk of poor nutrition. Vaccine-preventable diseases could tip children into a malnourished state as they impair the absorption of essential nutrients.
- Immunisation and nutrition are co-dependent, and failure to treat them in tandem will undermine investments in them as individual interventions. Efforts to distribute vaccines and improve nutrition need to be delivered together, where appropriate. Bundling these essential health services can translate to saving more lives while saving more money.
- Immunisation routinely reaches more households than any other health service and brings communities into regular contact with the health system. This provides an effective platform to deliver other primary health care services, including essential nutrition actions, and upon which to build universal health coverage.

Increased and sustainable investments in vaccinations, nutrition and other essential health interventions are crucial for effectively responding to COVID-19 and for building resilience during the recovery phase – thus preventing child mortality and long-term negative effects on child health and development

- The COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic consequences could reverse immunisation and nutrition gains made over the last decades.
- A strengthened holistic approach to immunisation and nutrition is needed to overcome stagnating progress and accelerate impact of vaccinations and nutrition interventions.
- Immunisation and nutrition should be adequately reflected in sub-national, national, and global COVID-19 response and recovery plans, and sufficiently funded.
- Integration and joint delivery of vaccinations and nutrition intervention should be a core part of health system strengthening during the COVID-19 response and recovery, for higher effectiveness and better use of human, technical, and financial resources.
- A fully replenished Gavi is a vital step towards lowering child mortality and enabling other interventions, such as nutrition, to reach their potential.
- The 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit will be a unique opportunity for global health stakeholders, such as Gavi, to align their commitments to the needs expressed by countries in their national multi-sectoral nutrition plans and universal health coverage roadmaps.

Our thanks to the following organizations that contributed to this messaging: Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN), 1,000 Days, ACTION Global Health Advocacy Partnership, HarvestPlus/IFPRI, Save the Children Japan, Save the Children UK, Eleanor Crook Foundation, Power of Nutrition, RESULTS UK, and Nutrition International.