



Fact Sheet

Faith-based Organizations Credible Partners in Saving Children's Lives



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Children under 5 in Cambodia receive life-saving treatment from faith-based organizations like World Relief.

Cambodia's Light for Life Program

In 2000, two-thirds of child deaths in Cambodia were due to neonatal conditions, pneumonia, and diarrheal disease.⁵ World Relief partnered with the Cambodian Ministry of Health to launch the "Light for Life" Child Survival Program to address these challenges.

Community-based volunteers disseminate health information and give support services in primarily rural areas north of Phnom Penh. These volunteers, also called women health educators, care for 15 households in a community and hold weekly meetings to train local women.

While Light for Life initially worked through 900 volunteers to reach over 9,000 children under five, the program has been expanded to 13,500 volunteers whose work affects more than 113,000 children. By 2006, in the villages covered by the program, every child with diarrhea was treated with oral rehydration therapy. Immunization rates, basic hygiene practices, and treatment for children with respiratory problems increased from about 30 percent in 2003 to nearly 100 percent by 2006, reflecting a 29 percent reduction in child mortality in these communities.⁶

Every day, more than 26,000 children around the world die from largely preventable and treatable diseases. Faith-based organizations (FBOs) like Food for the Hungry, World Relief, and World Vision are responding to this tragedy. In partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and others in the global health community, FBOs give low-cost care and basic health training to children and their families in some of the world's most remote places.

Many faith-based organizations have been active for several decades. Having started small, they are now well staffed by public health professionals and other experts who are addressing issues of poverty and development, including child and maternal health care:

- Food for the Hungry (FH) founder, Dr. Larry Ward, started his work in 1971 in Haiti; FH now works in more than 26 countries. One child survival program in Mozambique benefits more than 134,000 children and 64,000 women through training on how to detect and treat malnutrition, diarrhea, and other illnesses. Between 1999 and 2003, the death rate of preschool children in FH's program areas dropped by 62 percent.¹
- World Relief began its ministry in 1944 when the National Association of Evangelicals sent food and clothing to victims of the Second World War. World Relief currently works in 16 countries, including Cambodia. Their "Light for Life" survival program in Cambodia works through volunteers to reach nearly 70,000 women, teaching them to recognize and treat diarrhea and pneumonia in young children, mobilizing families for childhood immunization, and promoting iron supplementation for pregnant women.²
- World Vision, one of the most well-known FBOs, was founded in 1953, when Dr. Bob Pierce began a child sponsorship program for Korean War orphans. The organization now has sponsorship projects in nearly 50 countries. World Vision's child survival health programs, like the Kabudulu project in Malawi, provide vaccines and oral rehydration therapy, as well as sanitation services.³
- Faith-based organizations, including both national and international NGOs, have been increasingly recognized as vital partners in child

health. In many countries, health services are largely provided by local faith-based groups with vast networks of believers united by a common bond of faith and a desire to serve. FBOs are also respected partners of the U.S. Government, providing foreign assistance through a variety of projects, including many that focus on child health. USAID's Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, established in 2002, has helped clarify this relationship, so that FBOs can compete for contracts on an equal footing with other types of organizations.⁴ Efforts should continue to scale up successful interventions pioneered by faith-based groups and other organizations working to save the lives of children and mothers.

For more information about faith-based organizations engaged in child survival projects, visit the following Web sites:

- Adventist Development and Relief Organization: www.adra.org
- Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations: www.aerdo.net
- Catholic Relief Services: www.crs.org
- Christian Connections for International Health: www.ccih.org
- Food for the Hungry: www.fh.org
- Global Ministries, the United Methodist Church: <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/>
- World Relief: www.wr.org
- World Vision: www.worldvision.org

For further information on the US Coalition for Child Survival, see www.child-survival.org.

1 Anbarasi, Edward, World Relief. Written communication regarding FH/World Relief Mortality Study in Gaza and Sofala Provinces, Mozambique (funded by CORE Group), November 2004.

2 World Relief. "The Church at Work: World Relief Cambodia – 2006 Annual Report." <http://community.wr.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Document.Doc?&id=106>, viewed on August 7, 2007.

3 World Vision. "Immunizations." <http://donate.wvus.org>, viewed on July 4, 2007

4 USAID. "Faith-based and Community Initiatives." http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_partnerships/fbci/, viewed on June 27, 2007.

5 World Health Organization. "Core Health Indicators." http://www.who.int/whosis/database/core/core_select.cfm, viewed on August 7, 2007.

6 World Relief. "The Church at Work: World Relief Cambodia – 2006 Annual Report." <http://community.wr.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Document.Doc?&id=106>, viewed on August 7, 2007.



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Through the efforts of faith-based groups united by a common bond of faith and a desire to serve, children in developing countries can realize healthier lives.

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