

A better shot at a healthy life

PATH and partners in Andhra Pradesh, India, build a model immunization program

HEALTH CARE IS OFTEN OUT OF REACH in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Some among its population of 75 million people live more than a day's walk from services, and many families simply cannot afford to see a doctor. Children, especially, are vulnerable. However, many of the diseases that most threaten children can be prevented—if immunization services can reach them.

Thanks to a successful partnership between PATH and the Andhra Pradesh government, millions of children are now shielded against diphtheria, hepatitis B, Japanese encephalitis, measles, pertussis, tetanus, polio, and tuberculosis. Over the past four years, PATH and government officials have worked side by side to build a sustainable immunization program that reaches all 1.6 million infants born each year in Andhra Pradesh. Even more exciting, other states and the national government in India are beginning to build similar programs based on this model.

New skills, new hope

As recently as 2001, Andhra Pradesh's immunization systems were failing to reach those most in need—often



To ensure that children do not receive infections from reused needles, all vaccinations in Andhra Pradesh are now given with autodisable syringes.

because health workers lacked up-to-date training. Starting in just a few districts and expanding to others over time, PATH and the government helped nearly 32,000 doctors, nurses, and other health staff upgrade their skills in communicating with parents, administering vaccines safely, disposing of needles carefully, and keeping vaccines at the right temperature to maintain their quality.

During training, health workers expressed concern that they had no access to experts to help them solve problems or continue to improve in weak areas. PATH contracted with faculty from local medical colleges to regularly visit health centers. The faculty provide “supportive supervision,” or constructive feedback, to health workers. By the end of 2004, they had made at least two supervisory visits to 1,400 centers in the state.

Syringes that make injections safer

It would be tragic if injections meant to safeguard children's health actually infected them with HIV or hepatitis. But in 2001, health workers in Andhra Pradesh were still reusing needles, often attempting to sterilize them with methods they believed to be safe. Even when workers discarded them after use, the needles were often left in open garbage dumps, where they were a danger to children who play near the dumps and where they could be picked out of the trash and resold.

PATH and the government negotiated with Indian manufacturers to bring autodisable syringes—which can't be reused—to Andhra Pradesh at affordable prices. Now all vaccinations in the state are given with autodisable syringes. Health workers report a near

From the President

DEAR FRIENDS,

Recently I was asked to give a keynote address at a ceremony for winners of the Lemelson-MIT Awards, which honor ingenuity and dedication to improving the world. As I was drafting my remarks, I found myself reflecting on what we can accomplish when we apply our ingenuity to global health.

There is a common misperception that global health problems are too complex to be solved—and that investments in development are likely to fail or be wasted. Nothing could be further from the truth.

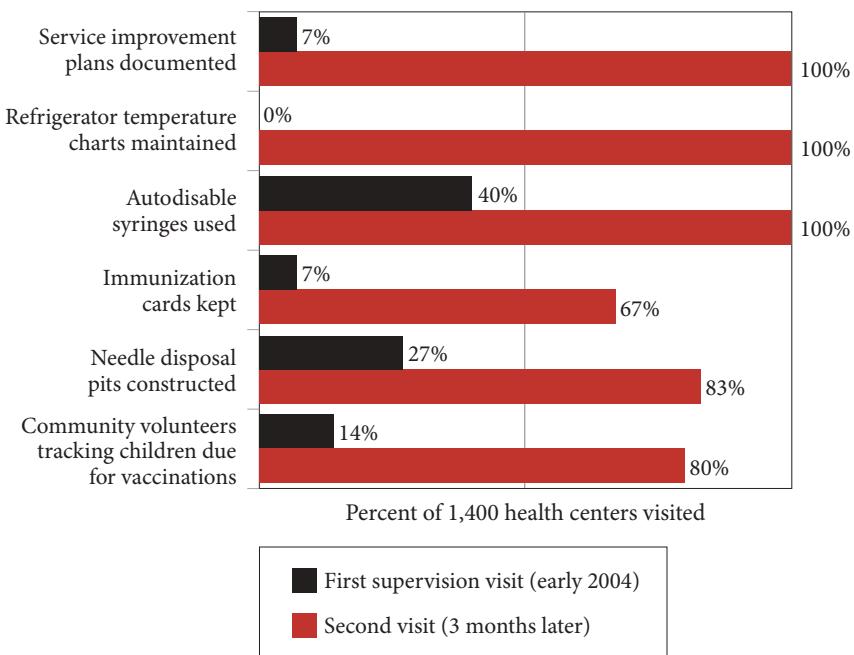
This year or next, for example, polio will be eradicated—the culmination of a half century of global cooperation. The effort to disarm this disease has required ingenuity at every step: a new vaccine, new ways to reach the most remote corners of the world, and unique partnerships between the public and private sectors. Manufacturers, governments, the World Health Organization, and service organizations such as Rotary International all played a role. PATH's own work on vaccine vial monitors helped solve the problem of how to detect polio vaccine that has been damaged en route from factory to tropical village.

The story of global polio eradication is an excellent example of what our collective ingenuity and dedication can accomplish. The world has no shortage of problems, but solutions are possible. As I told the audience at the awards ceremony, innovation brings hope.



Christopher J. Elias, MD, MPH
President

Health centers in Andhra Pradesh practicing safe immunization



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disappearance of injection-related abscesses, and parents can trust that vaccinations will prevent disease, not cause it. Building on this success, the national government of India has adopted a formal policy mandating the use of autodisable syringes for vaccinations throughout the country.

A system children can count on

As a result of these activities, immunization services in Andhra Pradesh have improved dramatically (see figure above). By the second visit made by supervising faculty, 67 percent of centers were keeping immunization cards for children, 80 percent were using community volunteers to help track children due for vaccinations, and 83 percent had constructed safety pits to dispose of used needles. All of the centers had improvement plans in place, were maintaining temperature

charts on refrigerators to monitor vaccine quality, and were using autodisable syringes.

With the system-strengthening activities described here and several other initiatives, the project has also increased overall immunization coverage and made hepatitis B vaccine—a safeguard against chronic liver disease—universally available to infants.

As planned, the improvements are being tightly woven into the fabric and budget of the state's health system. For example, government supervisors travel with medical faculty to observe and learn techniques for supporting and directing health staff. The government has also been increasingly taking over the costs of the immunization program. This attention to sustainability means that, even as the formal project draws to a close, millions of children will continue to get a better shot at a longer, healthier life. ●

George Lhamon, special friend to PATH, passes on



George Lhamon

PATH recently said goodbye to friend and visionary George Lhamon of Redmond, Washington. Mr. Lhamon, who died on March 11, took an active interest in our global programs and gave generously of his time, money, and wisdom. "George was intellectually engaged, but he was equally engaged with his heart," reports his long-time friend and PATH vice president Peggy Morrow.

Mr. Lhamon was the first member of PATH's Leadership Council, and he and his late wife Mary Bruce were founding members of PATH Associates, the group of individuals who provide \$1,000 or more annually to PATH. In addition, Mr. Lhamon pushed PATH to raise our visibility, and through his enthusiasm, encouraged many others to support our work. "He advised us how to present complex international health issues to the layperson," adds Ms. Morrow. "His commitment was unwavering."

Board member Dr. Khama Rogo writes from Kenya, "I join PATH in mourning George. His passing calls for rededication of our efforts to make his dream and faith in PATH come to be."

Charity Navigator gives PATH four stars

PATH recently received the highest possible rating—four stars!—from the nonprofit evaluator Charity Navigator. PATH "outperformed most other charities in America in its efforts to efficiently manage its finances," according to Trent Stamp, executive director of Charity Navigator. You can access the evaluation at www.charitynavigator.org, or contact PATH for information.



Opportunities to engage

Global health problems are complex, but you can make a difference by simply learning more. Here are three opportunities:

Watch for the traveling exhibit *In Women's Hands*. It features an award-winning photo essay on the African AIDS epidemic and describes how a handful of scientists and advocates are racing to stop the loss of future generations. For information on the exhibit cities and dates, visit www.global-campaign.org.

Honor or remember someone you love with a gift to PATH. We will be happy to send a tribute card acknowledging your donation. Donate online, use the enclosed envelope, or give us a call.

For more information, please contact Jan Jacobs, development director, at 206.788.2475 or jajacobs@path.org. ●



A sample tribute card.

PATH'S MISSION

is to improve the health of people around the world by advancing technologies, strengthening systems, and encouraging healthy behaviors.



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Flexible funds fuel our work

Contributions from individuals are vital to PATH. We pool them in our Catalyst Fund and use them to do preliminary research, create technology prototypes, and start projects that lead to larger grants once a concept has proven viable. For example, PATH used flexible funds to research and develop a prototype of an improved, more affordable female condom, which is now fully funded and in clinical trials.

2004 contributions

Last year unrestricted contributions from individuals ranged from \$10 to \$20,000 and totaled \$251,797, including \$50,000 in matching funds from the Fisher Fund of the Tides Foundation.

The challenge grant motivated many of you to begin or increase your commitment to stronger, healthier communities around the world. Twenty-seven individuals and couples joined our team of PATH Associates—those who contribute \$1,000 or more annually—and several Associates increased their contributions.

More matching funds

This year our goal is \$400,000! We're grateful that the challenge grant has been renewed one last time. It will match those who step forward with new or increased gifts of \$1,000 or more by December 31.



Check out PATH's redesigned website. We think you'll find it simpler and easier to use, with more examples of our work at the ready! www.path.org

If you would like to support PATH's work, please submit your contribution in the enclosed envelope, or make your gift online at www.path.org.

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www.path.org

info@path.org

F 206.285.6619

T 206.285.3500

Seattle, WA 98107 USA

1455 NW Leary Way