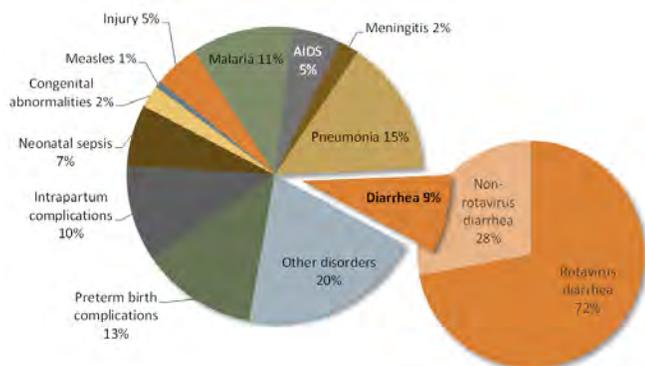


Rotavirus disease and vaccines in Tanzania

Diarrhea is a leading killer of children in Tanzania, causing approximately nine percent of deaths in children under five years of age.¹ Rotavirus, the most common cause of severe and fatal diarrhea in young children worldwide, takes the lives of more than 8,100 Tanzanian children under five each year—accounting for approximately six percent of all under-five deaths in Tanzania.² It is estimated that more than one-third of diarrheal disease hospitalizations of Tanzanian children under five are caused by rotavirus.³ Studies in Africa show that rotavirus vaccines are safe and effective against severe rotavirus disease and are a cost-effective intervention.⁴⁻⁶

On December 6, 2012, Tanzania will become the eleventh GAVI-eligible country to introduce rotavirus vaccines in its national immunization program. The high burden of rotavirus disease in Tanzanian children, coupled with the power of rotavirus vaccines to prevent childhood deaths and hospitalizations, underscores the incredible potential for Tanzania's introduction of rotavirus vaccines to save children's lives.

Causes of death in Tanzanian children under five years of age, 2010^{1,2}



ROTA VIRUS IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF SEVERE AND FATAL DIARRHEA IN AFRICAN CHILDREN <5 YEARS OLD

Rotavirus is a virus that causes gastroenteritis—an inflammation of the stomach and intestines. If left untreated, it can lead to severe dehydration and death. Generally, children six months to two years of age are most vulnerable to infection.

Globally, rotavirus causes more than 450,000 deaths each year in children under five and is responsible for millions of hospitalizations and clinic visits.^{7,8} Nearly a quarter of a million African children die from the deadly, dehydrating

diarrhea caused by rotavirus infection every year, accounting for more than 50 percent of the global total.^{2,7}

Tanzania Facts

Total population (2011)⁹:	46,218,486
Population children <5 (2011)¹⁰:	8,266,965
Mortality rate children <5 (2011)¹⁰:	68/1,000 live births
Total number <5 deaths (2011)¹⁰:	113,471
Number of <5 deaths due to diarrhea (2010)¹:	11,391
Number of <5 deaths due to rotavirus (2008)²:	8,171

ROTA VIRUS TREATMENT AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Rotavirus is highly contagious and spreads easily from person-to-person through contaminated hands and objects. It cannot be treated with antibiotics or other drugs. Mild rotavirus infections can be treated effectively in the same manner as other forms of diarrhea, by providing fluids and salts (oral rehydration therapy). However, children with severe rotavirus diarrhea can become dehydrated and often need intravenous fluids or they risk dying. In developing countries, this type of urgent health care is often inaccessible or unavailable, making rotavirus prevention through vaccination critical to saving children's lives.

Vaccination offers the best hope for preventing severe rotavirus disease and the deadly dehydrating diarrhea that it causes. Improvements in water quality, hygiene, and sanitation stop bacteria and parasites that cause other forms of diarrhea but do not adequately prevent the transmission of rotavirus. Lifesaving rotavirus vaccines should be introduced as part of a comprehensive approach to control diarrheal disease, along with other interventions, including oral rehydration therapy, breastfeeding, zinc treatment, and improvements in water and sanitation.

TWO SAFE AND EFFECTIVE ROTA VIRUS VACCINES ARE SAVING LIVES TODAY

There are two orally administered rotavirus vaccines available today: Rotarix[®], manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline, and RotaTeq[®], manufactured by Merck & Co., Inc. Both vaccines have been shown to be safe and effective in large-scale clinical trials in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the US. Clinical trials in Africa (Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, and South Africa) found that rotavirus vaccines reduced severe rotavirus disease by more

than 60 percent during the first year of life, when children are at greatest risk for severe rotavirus diarrhea.^{4,5}

In June 2009, based in part on the clinical trials in Africa that demonstrated rotavirus vaccines significantly reduced rotavirus disease in impoverished, high-mortality settings, the WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts recommended that rotavirus vaccines be included in all countries' national immunization programs.¹¹ As of November 1, 2012, 39 countries have introduced rotavirus vaccines in their national immunization programs, including seven in Africa: Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Morocco, Rwanda, South Africa, and Sudan.



Rotavirus vaccines are saving lives and improving health in countries where children have access to them. Swift and significant declines in hospitalization and deaths due to rotavirus and all-cause diarrhea have been observed in many countries that have included rotavirus vaccines in their national immunization programs.¹² Researchers also have found use of rotavirus vaccines may protect unvaccinated children and adults by reducing transmission (an effect called herd immunity).¹³

ROTAVIRUS VACCINES ARE COST-EFFECTIVE AND A WISE INVESTMENT

Rotavirus vaccines are cost-effective, and in GAVI-eligible countries, where 95 percent of deaths due to rotavirus occur, more than 2.4 million child deaths can be prevented by 2030 by accelerating access to lifesaving rotavirus vaccines.⁶ If used in all GAVI-eligible countries, rotavirus vaccines could prevent an estimated 180,000 deaths and avert

6 million clinic and hospital visits each year, thereby saving US \$68 million annually in treatment costs.⁶

Rotavirus vaccines are an essential and lifesaving intervention in comprehensive diarrhea-control strategies. Accelerating access to rotavirus vaccines will not only save the lives of Tanzanian children but also lessen the tremendous economic and health burden of rotavirus disease, thereby contributing to poverty reduction and a growing economy. GAVI and its partners plan to support the introduction of life-saving rotavirus vaccines in at least 40 of the world's poorest countries by 2015, immunizing more than 50 million children.

For more information on rotavirus disease and vaccines please visit <http://rotavirusvaccine.org>.

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Photo: PATH/Doune Porter.



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MAILING ADDRESS
PO Box 900922
Seattle, WA 98109 USA

info@path.org
www.path.org

STREET ADDRESS
2201 Westlake Avenue
Suite 200
Seattle, WA 98121 USA