



## Investing in global partnerships to save women's lives

We have two major tools to prevent cervical cancer: vaccination against the human papillomavirus (HPV), the virus that causes >95% of cervical cancers, and cervical screening coupled with pre-cancer treatment. Of course, timely follow up is critical if any abnormalities are found during screening.

Women and girls without access to these life-saving interventions are especially vulnerable to the disease. Today, 90% of cervical cancer deaths occur in low-resource settings, especially in areas of high HIV burden.

Investments in effective and innovative programs are making access to cervical cancer prevention a reality to women and girls in low-resource settings. Here are just a few examples:

**Pathfinder International:** Building on a successful pilot supported by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a collaboration between Pathfinder International and Stanford University's Program for International Reproductive Education and Services has supported Ethiopia's Ministry of Health in scaling up cervical cancer prevention and control nationally since 2015. Currently operating in 1,200 public health facilities, a planned expansion will include one health facility per district and reach 12,000,000 women.

**Jhpiego:** Jhpiego is working in primary and secondary prevention across LMICs. In secondary prevention, Jhpiego is introducing HPV DNA testing in six countries, notably, as an implementing partner in the SUCCESS (Scale Up Cervical Cancer Elimination with Secondary Prevention Strategy) project, supported by Unitaid and Expertise France. SUCCESS collaborated with two leading teaching hospitals in Burkina Faso to train 632 health care providers and 35 community health workers to engage communities, screening over 20,000 women to date using HPV testing.

**PATH:** PATH has partnered with Mauritania on decision-making and technical HPV vaccine introduction assistance since 2017, and Mauritania introduced HPV vaccine in 2021, targeting girls aged 9 to 14 years. In 2022, PATH continued to support the Ministry of Health (MOH) to reinforce social mobilization through radio, television, community involvement, and sensitization of journalists for the second vaccination campaign conducted in March 2022. PATH will also support Mauritania's HPV vaccination program revitalization, coverage improvement, and routinization starting in late 2023.

**PSI:** Integrating cervical cancer prevention within existing services is practical and impactful. Population Services International (PSI) has partnered with MD Anderson



Cancer Center, Rice University, and local research partners to implement the USAID-funded Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research (PEER) project to identify models for integrated cervical cancer and family planning services in Mozambique. PEER has simultaneously provided almost 9,000 women with voluntary family planning services together with HPV testing in Mozambique, while building the evidence base supporting widespread implementation of integrated services in national guidelines for women's health.

This short list of programs underscores the power of investments in global cervical cancer prevention - and illuminates the potential impact of investing to ensure access to effective interventions at scale.

The PSI and Pathfinder programs highlighted here are just two programs in which United States investments are making a difference in the battle against cervical cancer globally. Support through the Go Further program partnership implemented through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has enabled almost 6 million women living with HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa to be screened for cervical cancer.

Expansion of molecular testing has also been shown to be cost-effective and can improve health outcomes by identifying women at high risk of disease earlier, allowing for earlier pre-cancer treatment and other follow-up. This can save time and resources for individuals and families and reduce the burden on health systems.

Increasing investments in PEPFAR's Go Further program builds on existing capacity to accelerate program expansion to all fourteen target countries in sub-Saharan Africa and support the transition to HPV testing. Building on the successful PEER program to incorporate other countries in sub-Saharan Africa can enhance existing screening infrastructure and build on synergies with other women's health programs.

It's time to put the most effective and scalable strategies in place to accelerate progress to end this preventable threat to women. We stand presented with the first-ever opportunity to globally eliminate a cancer. With an expansion of political leadership and targeted deployment of resources and expertise, millions of girls and women around the world can live their lives free from fear of cervical cancer.

#### Photo credits:

Front page: Jhpiego. Back page: PSI (top), PATH/Gavi (bottom).

#### Sources:

George W. Bush Presidential Center (2023). Go Further: Saving women's lives from cervical cancer in sub-Saharan Africa.

World Health Organization (2022). Saving lives, spending less: the case for investing in noncommunicable diseases



**Together for Health** imagines a world where no woman dies from cervical cancer. Together works alongside global health leaders to put effective, equitable policies in place, to promote education and best clinical practices to improve cancer prevention globally, and to share stories of how cervical cancer affects women, their families and their communities. Together's partners - including Jhpiego, PATH, Pathfinder International, and PSI - provide cervical cancer services in over 30 countries and link thousands of girls and women with life-saving health services each year. For more information, visit [www.togetherforhealth.org](http://www.togetherforhealth.org).