Health is a prerequisite for development. Investments in health are critical to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to fulfill the global commitments of Agenda 2030, in particular SDG 3: “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”. Health is a priority for the Swedish Government and Sida. Sweden has a feminist foreign policy and many global health challenges are linked to inequalities and inequities between men and women, most notably Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). In 2018, Sida disbursed 2.2 billion SEK for global, regional and country level programs of importance for global health, representing about 9 percent of Sida’s total budget.¹


DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORLD
The global health situation has developed positively in recent decades. Many diseases are on the decline and key health indicators have improved significantly. Globally, the number of women who die while, or in connection with, giving birth has decreased by almost 38 percent since the year 2000². Similar progress can be seen in child health, where deaths among children below the age of five have decreased by half³ in the last couple of decades. However, progress is uneven and huge challenges remain. Globally, maternal deaths are still three times higher than the Agenda 2030 targets of 70 deaths per 100,000, and in sub-Saharan Africa the current numbers are almost eight times higher than the target. Similarly, child deaths are higher in low-income countries and countries in conflict and 6.3 million children died in 2017, mostly from causes that could have been prevented⁴. Also, as has been observed in for example sub-Saharan Africa, several key SRHR interventions are not being universally provided due to limited resources and weak health systems.


MAIN AREAS OF SUPPORT
Sweden plays a key role in global health, as a leader in advocating for SRHR and mainstreaming gender in policy and programs. The majority of Sida’s health support is provided to countries in sub-Saharan Africa, but also includes countries in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. To be able to tackle persisting inequalities and inequities, Sida’s support targets the most vulnerable and the poorest, i.e. the 1 billion people who do not have any real access to health care. In particular, Sida’s development assistance is directed toward challenges in maternal and child health, SRHR and health systems.

Sida’s support in these three areas covers a wide array of programs ranging from improving access to maternal and child health services in countries like Bangladesh, Somalia and Zambia to supporting development of research capacity in e.g. Cambodia and Uganda, improving access to contraceptives in the southern Africa region, advancing SRHR globally and addressing the looming threat of increased antimicrobial resistance. Sida has also for many years been working to increase availability of skilled midwives, which is critical to safe deliveries and to reduce maternal mortality. Through Sida’s support to research, advancements have been made in treatment of childhood pneumonia, a disease that kills almost 1 million children

THE GLOBAL GOALS
The Global Goals for Sustainable Development include everyone - and we can all contribute. The goals are interdependent and therefore indivisible. Sida’s main contribution is to implement development cooperation, thereby reducing poverty and saving lives. Together we can build a better future where no one is left behind.
below the age of five annually. Furthermore, access to contraceptive counselling, services and products in sub-Saharan Africa has been supported by Sida’s social marketing partnerships to improve access to products for preventing pregnancies among the young, poorest and most vulnerable populations. Sida also promotes normative change through support to organizations and policy processes that address challenging issues such as access to safe and legal abortion for adolescent girls and women. Access to safe water and sanitation is critical to reduce morbidity and is a precondition for Sida’s health programs to be successful. Thus, Sida provides support to water, sanitation and hygiene programs in, e.g. Bangladesh, Bolivia and Somalia.

In addition, about 17 percent of Sida’s humanitarian assistance is directed to health interventions5. This includes e.g. support to WHO for assistance in Syria and to the Swedish Red Cross and Save the Children for work responding to the Ebola outbreak in the northern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

FOCUS ON:
Universal Health Coverage and sexual and reproductive health and rights
During 2019, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) has gained political momentum and a UN declaration on UHC was adopted in September6. This increased political momentum for UHC provides a window of opportunity to advance SRHR, which Sida has been actively advocating for. The declaration is important to signal commitment to improving the quality of health services and equity of access to services making sure that no one is left behind. SRHR is critical to achieve this ambition. Sida supports delivery of SRHR services by, e.g. ensuring that mothers can have a safe delivery assisted by health workers with the right training, but also supporting country aspirations to move towards UHC, including SRHR, through structural reforms of their health systems.

Antimicrobial resistance and pandemic threats
In recent years due to the failure to treat infections bacteria are becoming more and more resistant. Resistant bacteria already cause more than 750,000 deaths annually.7 Antimicrobial resistance is threatening our ability to treat common infectious diseases such as pneumonia and tuberculosis and consequently our ability to reach global health goals of e.g. improved child health. Through support to, among others, WHO and the ReAct network, Sida is contributing to tackling this challenge.

Double burden of disease
With increased income and changing life-styles in low- and middle-income countries, an increase in non-communicable diseases, such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, has been observed. This leads to health systems struggling to manage both the traditional infectious diseases and a rapid rise in non-communicable diseases. This is often referred to as a double burden of disease and it puts significant strains on country health systems. Sida supports strengthening of health systems, e.g. to find better ways to finance the health system and also use existing scarce resources more efficiently.

Results
In 2018, Sida supported programs contributed to, among others:
• Preventing 945,000 unwanted pregnancies, 745,000 unsafe abortions and 5,100 maternal deaths through social marketing for contraceptives.
• Providing 30.8 million children with comprehensive sexuality education.
• Improving access to maternal and child health services in Uganda.
• Increasing the proportion of pregnant women in Zambia receiving antenatal care.
• Providing six million children, youth and adults access to AIDS treatment.
• Supporting research on new treatment methods to reduce deaths in pneumonia among children.
• Managing the Ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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