



Commitment to Immunizing Zero-Dose Children



14 MILLION CHILDREN did not receive their first dose of the essential childhood vaccine that prevents diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTP) through routine immunization services in 2019.¹ These “zero-dose” children are far more likely to become sick with and die from vaccine-preventable diseases. An additional 6 million children in 2019 received some, but not all, vaccines required for full protection against vaccine-preventable diseases.¹

Zero-dose children and their families face systemic social and economic barriers and are likely to live in communities that struggle to access essential health services. Evidence suggests that the cost to reach each zero-dose child can be three to four times higher than those who are already being immunized.² Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (Gavi’s) recent \$500 million increase in its health systems strengthening funding reflects the investment and political will needed to reach zero-dose and under-immunized children and missed communities, including those missed due to COVID-19.³

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO REACH ZERO-DOSE CHILDREN?



Sustainable Development Goal targets and the Immunization Agenda 2030 goals of full vaccination cannot be attained without vaccinating zero-dose children.



Closing the vaccination equity gap must start with zero-dose children and missed communities.



A zero-dose child is unlikely to receive other primary health care services, so reaching them with immunization services can lead them to other health, nutrition, and social services.



Communities likely to have large numbers of zero-dose children, such as urban slums, remote rural settings, and conflict zones, suffer immunity gaps that lead to tragic loss of life, disease outbreaks, and health systems disruptions.

MOMENTUM (Moving Integrated, Quality Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health Services, Voluntary Family Planning, and Reproductive Health Care to Scale) is a suite of awards funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to accelerate reductions in maternal, newborn, and child mortality and morbidity in USAID partner countries. The projects providing technical assistance are MOMENTUM Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity, a consortium focused on overcoming entrenched obstacles to equitable immunization; MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership, a consortium that provides targeted technical and capacity development assistance to governments and their partners; MOMENTUM Private Healthcare Delivery, a consortium that seeks to strengthen private provider contributions to vital health care; and the MOMENTUM Integrated Health Resilience, a consortium that works to improve access to and availability of high-quality, respectful, and person-centered maternal, newborn, and child health services and voluntary family planning and reproductive health care in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

1 Unicef, WHO. 2020. Immunization coverage: are we losing ground? <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/WUENIC-Immunization-coverage-are-we-losing-ground-brochure-2020.pdf>

2 Gavi. 2020. Report to the Board: Accelerating Efforts to Reach Zero-Dose Children and Missed Communities in Gavi 5.0.

3 Gavi. 2020. Use of Gavi Support to Maintain, Restore, and Strengthen Immunization in the Context of COVID-19. <https://www.gavi.org/sites/default/files/support/Gavi-Guidance-immunisation-during-COVID-19.pdf>

USAID and its MOMENTUM grantees can add immense complementary expertise in providing technical assistance and capacity building to support national institutions and local partners to reduce the number of zero-dose and under-immunized children. MOMENTUM's approach must move beyond "business as usual" to embrace new ways to deliver services, engage with families, and bring additional partners beyond health, including civil society, the private sector, and other nontraditional actors. We will also work with global partners to develop policy and technical guidance.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on routine immunization

As a result of COVID-19, immunization services have been disrupted and even more children were not vaccinated in 2020 compared to 2019. Combined with increased food insecurity, lost income, and other shocks, millions of children are at-risk of becoming sick or dying.

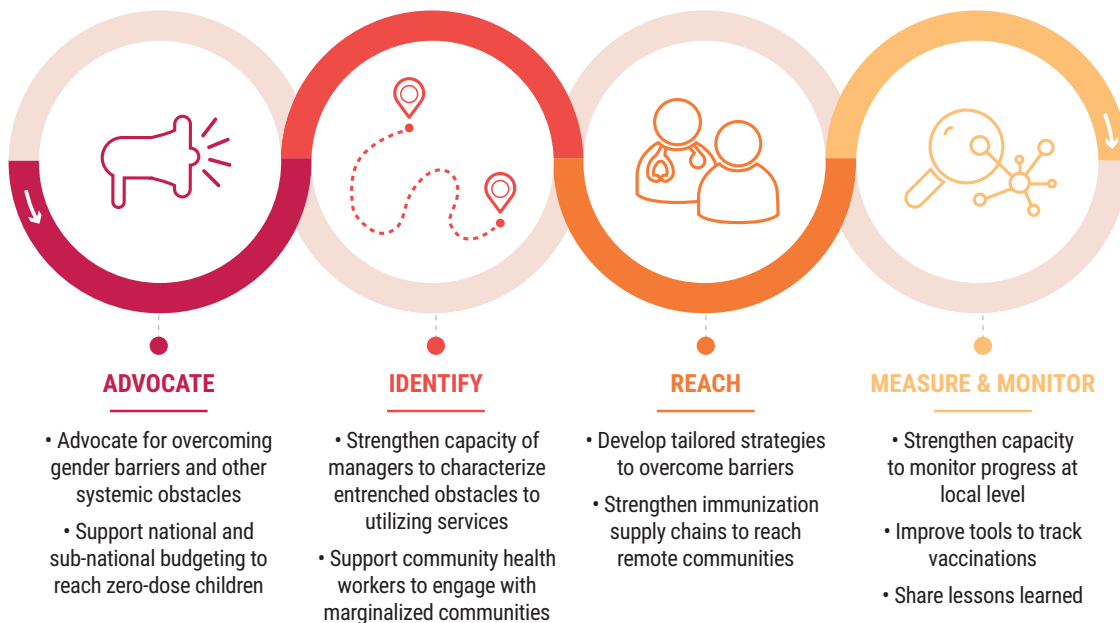
What will MOMENTUM do?

MOMENTUM aims to reduce the number of zero-dose children in its national and sub-national project areas. Working with country governments, Gavi, WHO, UNICEF, and other health and non-health partners, MOMENTUM will:

- A. Conduct analyses to sharply define the reasons and root causes for zero-dose and under-vaccination and inform advocacy, implementation, and learning strategies.
- B. Work with marginalized communities – voices that are too rarely heard – to co-design and apply solutions appropriate to their contexts while working to strengthen the health system and the quality of immunization services.
- C. Strengthen capacity of national and sub-national partners to implement effective solutions to reach zero-dose children.
- D. Identify and share what works to reach zero-dose children.

MOMENTUM will build upon Gavi's framework for reducing the number of children who have never been immunized: Advocate, Identify, Reach, and Measure and Monitor.

Illustrative MOMENTUM activities to reduce the number of zero-dose children



Illustrative learning questions from MOMENTUM related to zero-dose:

- Where and who are zero-dose children and missed communities? Why are they being missed?
- What do families that live in under-served communities think, feel, and do about vaccination? What do they wish was different about immunization services?
- What are the most feasible and cost-effective strategies for reaching zero-dose children? Under-immunized children?

For more information, contact Lindizgya Gutierrez: ligutierrez@usaid.gov.

This publication was produced by MOMENTUM Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity along with MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership, MOMENTUM Private Healthcare Delivery, and MOMENTUM Integrated Health Resilience under the MOMENTUM suite of awards, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). MOMENTUM is made possible by the generous support of the American people through Cooperative Agreement(s) #7200AA-20CA00017, #7200AA20CA00002, #7200AA20CA00007, and #7200AA20CA00005. For more information about MOMENTUM, visit usaidmomentum.org. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of MOMENTUM Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity along with MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.