

Child mortality drops to new low with the help of important interventions including vitamin A supplements

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UNICEF announced yesterday that the total number of children under the age of 5 who died around the world in 2006 was 9.7 million. This marks the first time that fewer than 10 million children have died in one year since record-keeping began in 1960.

A [related article by the New York Times](#) underscores the fact that malnutrition is an underlying factor in 53% of all child deaths. In the article, UNICEF attributes the success in reducing child mortality to global efforts to:

- increase childhood immunizations,
- **distribute vitamin A supplements to support children's immune systems**
- distribute mosquito nets treated with insecticides
- provide drug treatments for children infected with HIV

The Canadian based and funded Micronutrient Initiative (MI) has played a leadership role in providing vitamin supplements for over a decade. **Last year alone, MI efforts included arranging for the supplies of enough vitamin A capsules and syrup to meet the needs of 347 million children in over 70 countries.** In addition, MI provided field level support in 12 countries to improve current and future coverage with vitamin A supplements. Programs have included work on new models to reach children who have been missed previously because they live in rural and remote areas or due to social barriers. The vitamin A capsules used are produced primarily in Canada.

"MI is pleased to see this substantial decrease in child mortality rates, which UNICEF attributes in part to global efforts in the distribution of Vitamin A supplements to support children's immune systems. Most Canadians are likely unaware that they must be congratulated for this achievement," says Micronutrient Initiative President Mr. M.G. Venkatesh Mannar. "Long term and stable support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has allowed Canadians to make their mark as global leaders in micronutrients, particularly Vitamin A. Thank you Canada!"

See also:

[BBC article](#)

[UNICEF media release](#)

