

Your Excellency, the Prime Minister;  
Honorable Minister of Health and Family Planning;  
Honorable Vice Minister of Health and Family Planning, and of Maternal and  
Child Health;  
The Representative of WHO in Madagascar,  
The Representative of UNICEF in Madagascar  
Ladies and gentlemen;

Child survival is one of the world's greatest challenges—although effective nutrition and health interventions exist that could prevent most childhood deaths, it is estimated that less than half of all newborns and children under age five receive them. The result is a loss of some six million children each year to preventable causes; the vast majority in developing countries

To succeed in lowering these frustrating statistics in a significant, lasting way means adjusting our vision of public health programming to extend well beyond health facilities and straight into the communities where families live.

The U.S. Government, through USAID, has joined WHO, UNICEF, and others in helping to develop innovative approaches to delivering health services at the community-level. Foremost among these is *community case management of childhood illnesses*, an evidence-based intervention aimed directly at reducing child mortality.

Madagascar is one of the many countries that benefits from technical assistance from USAID and its partners. The Agency's health program is an integral piece of U.S. Government support for the country, and part of the United States' recognition that the Madagascar Action Plan is a formidable strategy for accelerated development.

Over the last ten years, child health initiatives in Madagascar have helped reduce the child mortality rate by an impressive 42%. Yet, there is more that needs to be done if Madagascar is to achieve its Action Plan, as well as the Millennium Development Goals. Madagascar is clearly on the right path for doing just that and, as its partner, USAID is steadfast in its support to the Ministry of Health and Family Planning to improve health at the community level.

The review that you are beginning today is a key opportunity for Madagascar to share its program for community case management of childhood illnesses with other countries, particularly those that still harbor doubts about the efficiency of this approach. It is ultimately a strategy for improving public health, especially in the numerous hard-to-reach communities where access to even the nearest health facility is difficult.

Madagascar was selected to host this third annual conference on community case management following successful meetings in Senegal and Democratic Republic of Congo. The review of results achieved to date by Madagascar will allow for the presentation of evidence that has already provided clear-cut proof here and in a number of other countries of the efficiency of community case management of pneumonia, diarrhea and malaria for children under the age of five. The communities where these interventions occur are not simply beneficiaries of this innovative program, but are also intimately involved in the type of planning that makes it a success.

This third international Community Case Management conference benefits from the participation of many African nations, as well as countries beyond the continent. This is thus an ideal platform for exchanging experience, knowledge and best practices that will help in the widespread improvement of community case management of the deadliest childhood illness.

Investing in child health is an imperative for Madagascar, its African neighbors, and all developing countries. The U.S. Government shares in this vision and recognizes the significant efforts that are being made. USAID, working with its technical partners, will continue to support Madagascar so that rural populations can have access to quality health care.

In closing, the U.S. Government would like to congratulate the Government of Madagascar for hosting this important event and for the successes that this week will bring. It is my hope that all participants will use the opportunities and ideas presented here as the next step in further improving the health of children in your countries. I am confident that your sessions will be exceedingly valuable and that you've been provided with an ideal place for collaboration; and, of course, I hope you enjoy your time in this extraordinary country.

Your Excellency, the Prime Minister;

Honorable Minister of Health and Family Planning;

Honorable Vice Minister of Health and Family Planning, and of Maternal and Child Health;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Thank you.