

Healthy Lives: Improving Health in Madagascar

Madagascar is a beautiful island nation with a wealth of biodiversity. Up to 5% of the world's plant and animal species are found in Madagascar, over 80% of which are found nowhere else in the world. Madagascar is also a poor country of just over 19.4 million people. More than 85% of the population lives on less than two dollars per day. There are over 18 different ethnic groups, and the main languages are Malagasy, French and now English. Over 70% of the population lives in rural areas with poor infrastructure. Literacy rates are low, and only 65% of women are able to read. Average life expectancy is only 55.5 years. Leading causes of death and disability include malaria, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), diarrheal diseases, and adverse conditions arising from pregnancy and birth.

:: Child Survival Challenges and Successes

Despite these challenges, Madagascar has demonstrated tremendous success in reducing both under-five and infant mortality. Rates of infant and child mortality decreased by over 40% between 1997 and 2004. Maternal mortality rates have similarly shown improvements. These successes can be attributed to highly effective public health interventions by the Government of Madagascar, donors and NGO partners such as PSI. For example, use of modern family planning methods increased from only 5% in 1992 to 18% in 2004. During the same time period, there was a 50% decrease in the prevalence of diarrhea and a doubling of the percentage of those with diarrhea who received either oral rehydration salts (ORS) or a homemade solution. Meanwhile, age at first sexual debut increased from 16.8 to 17.4. Recent population-based research conducted by PSI/Madagascar has suggested that these positive trends have continued in recent years.

:: PSI/Madagascar

PSI/Madagascar is a locally registered NGO that implements a comprehensive social marketing program to address the major health problems identified by the Government of Madagascar. Funded primarily by USAID, but also supported through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM), UNICEF, the World Bank, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and private foundations, PSI/Madagascar has a national reach, working in all 22 regions throughout the country. With a talented and experienced staff of over 200 people trained in public health, marketing, research and communications, PSI/Madagascar currently distributes a full range of high-quality reproductive and maternal and child health products at affordable prices, including malaria and diarrheal disease prevention and treatment tools.

