

# Diarrheal disease messaging

Millions of children's lives have been saved by protecting them against diarrheal disease, yet it remains a top killer of children in low-income countries. By implementing a combination of health, safe water and sanitation solutions, we can save millions more.

## CHILD SURVIVAL

**We can significantly reduce one of the top killers of children by addressing diarrheal disease.**

- Every day over 25,000 children die before they reach the age of five. Of these deaths, nearly 4,500 are caused by diarrhea, making it one of the leading early childhood killers in low income countries.
- History has shown us that diarrheal disease control works. Deaths of children under five have declined by nearly half since the 1980s, but 31,000 deaths every week from diarrhea is still too many. Diarrheal disease remains a serious public health issue for children across the globe.
- If we prioritize diarrheal disease control among a range of child health programs, we can achieve Millennium Development Goal #4, reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds by 2015.

## SOLUTIONS

**An approach that combines proven and affordable health solutions and access to safe drinking water is highly effective at reducing diarrheal disease and thereby deaths of children under age five.**

- If every family had access to the cost-effective health, nutrition, safe water and sanitation solutions that already exist, we could prevent and treat diarrheal disease to significantly reduce childhood mortality.
- Oral rehydration therapy (ORT), oral rehydration solution (ORS), zinc treatment, breastfeeding, vaccines, continued feeding, and nutrition are simple and inexpensive treatments available now to treat diarrheal disease. By combining these with water filtration and purification methods, we can ensure that all children survive diarrhea.
- It is important that we provide safe drinking water, access to treatments, and public education about preventing diarrheal disease in order to have healthy families and communities.
- Lack of safe drinking water due to economic and environmental causes contributes greatly to childhood death associated with diarrheal disease.
- We can reduce under five childhood mortality rates by 30% by 2015 just by focusing on providing safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene.
- Many illnesses, especially diarrhea, can be prevented by handwashing with soap, access to toilets, and low-cost products that make drinking safe such as filters and purifiers.
- Proven and inexpensive measures that reduce the threat of severe diarrhea include water purification products, toilets, and handwashing with soap.

## RESULTS

**We've seen that health and water solutions to prevent and treat diarrheal disease have been successful at reducing childhood mortality.**

- Since the 1970s, millions of children have been saved through interventions to prevent and treat diarrheal disease. We know what works and have the ability to ensure that millions more children survive.
- Nearly 9 out of 10 child diarrheal disease deaths could be prevented by interventions available today.
- With renewed political will, effectively allocated resources, and plans for action, we can dramatically reduce childhood deaths due to diarrheal disease.
- Recognizing the severity of the problems caused by diarrheal disease isn't always easy. But with renewed global interest in reducing childhood death, we can provide health and water solutions that give us tremendous potential for success.

## RESOURCE ALLOCATION

**More resources and programs in place to protect children against diarrheal disease are powerful means of increasing child survival.**

- There is a growing commitment among donors to fund child survival efforts including those that target diarrheal disease. But these commitments will only save children's lives if resources are allocated effectively, for proven health, water, and sanitation solutions.
- There is increased global interest in prioritizing safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene to improve the environment and reduce diarrheal disease.
- It is critical that all of us who focus on increasing child survival rates work together to effectively implement safe water and health programs to reduce diarrheal disease.
- Cost-effective and accessible health, safe drinking water and sanitation solutions that can dramatically lower the financial toll and scope of diarrheal disease exist today.

## HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

Consistent and compelling messages are vitally important in order to make an impact with any audience. The best messages are simple ones that resonate with stakeholders. PATH developed this message map for use by anyone interested in communicating the impact of diarrhea on the health and development of children and families around the world. Perhaps more importantly, it is also a guide to communicating the value of a coordinated approach to diarrheal disease control and the proven, affordable solutions available today to solve the problem.

This step-by-step communications guide intends to help advocates and educators detail the problem—and its solutions—to civic and government leaders, policymakers, donors, and other stakeholders. Use these messages as a guide, and then add your own supporting points or details to tailor communications according to your context and environment.

Consider using these messages in presentations, meetings, policy briefs, or stories on child health. Communicate the messages in everyday conversation to help those around you understand the importance of working together to combat diarrheal disease. You can also copy and paste these messages from [www.eddcontrol.org/](http://www.eddcontrol.org/) for quick and easy use and adaptation.

