



2010 HUMAN INTEREST STORY – INSPIRE

MADAGASCAR

In Atsimo Andrefana region, on the south-western coast of Madagascar, Monique, 18 years old, stands in front of Saint Augustin basic health centre. She is here to receive tetanus vaccination and carries her two year old daughter Marie Monica in her arms.

Like many other Malagasy women, Monique gave birth at home. More fortunate than most, she was assisted by a mid-wife. Giving birth un-assisted, which is often the case for home births, is one of the 'risk behaviours' for tetanus.

Monique proudly glances down at her child. *"My daughter is fully immunised and this is my third vaccination against tetanus."* she says. *"I know that this is good for us, but I had a friend who did not want to come here today; I told her to come and explained the benefits, and now I can see her waiting over there."*

Meanwhile, across the region in Belalanda, a suburban village on the outskirts of Toliara town, a 23 year old woman, Elysée, waits in line with her five year old son Jonah outside their local basic health centre. This is Elysée's fifth vaccination against tetanus, meaning that she and her future children are now fully protected against the disease; she understands well the importance of being immunised.

"Getting vaccinated not only protects me from disease, but also my future children," she proudly explains. *"I've come here to take care of myself and my family, to protect us from getting sick. And I want to send the message to other women in my community who didn't turn up today: You should come here! It can only do you good!"*

Both Monique and Elysée were immunised as part of the 2008 Tetanus Campaign in Madagascar, which was launched by UNICEF Executive Director Ann Veneman on 29th July during her visit to the country. *"Death due to tetanus is painful,"* said Ms. Veneman during the launch, *"but one visit to the local health center, for a simple immunisation can help save a baby's life."*

The campaign covered 22 districts (out of a total of 119) which were identified as being at high risk of tetanus. Five of these districts are located within Atsimo Andrefana region, where the lowest immunisation coverage rates in Madagascar are found.

In order to ensure that as many women of childbearing age (15-49 years) were reached in this region, 1,712 social mobilisers sensitised women in each community on the importance of being immunised against tetanus, carrying out door-to-door visits to both sensitise and register women, holding community meetings, speaking in churches, diffusing messages through local radio stations in the local dialect, and working with pousse-pousse (rickshaw) drivers to transport and put up tetanus campaign posters in public places.

During the week of the campaign, 143 fixed sites provided tetanus vaccination services, and 261 mobile and outreach health teams ventured out into the community to immunise women against the disease, including the most rural and hard to reach areas.

The hard work of the Atsimo Andrefana regional health team paid off well; more than 80 per cent of women of childbearing age in each target district received their second vaccination against tetanus during the campaign, meaning that these women are now well protected against the disease, and rendering the campaign a resounding success in this region.



Figure 1:

Women of child-bearing age being vaccinated against Tetanus during the Tetanus vaccination campaign in Atsimo Andrefana district in August 2008



Figure 2:

Women of child-bearing age being vaccinated against Tetanus during the Tetanus vaccination campaign in Atsimo Andrefana district in August 2008