

I am profoundly grateful to Dr. Vendly, Religions for Peace and KACIID for bringing us all together today. I would like to start with a quote by a great American man:

“Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'
[Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)

I represent the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and I lead our Agency priority to End Preventable Child and Maternal Deaths. I wake up every morning thinking about what more we can do to save children's lives around the world and ensure their wellbeing and those of their families.

We know what the causes of mortality are – and they are PREVENTABLE. It's things like pneumonia, diarrhea or malaria, or lack of sanitation, vaccines, or appropriate newborn care. We KNOW how to prevent these causes of death and disease. And much of what needs to be done is simple behaviors, such as hand-washing or breastfeeding, or making sure children receive the right medicines. It's also making sure that mothers and families have the knowledge they need to best ensure their children's and their own health.

I am here today to speak with you about how vital YOU are in this effort.

Just over one year ago, in June 2012, at a meeting in Washington, D.C. the Child Survival Call to Action aligned the global community around a common vision of ending preventable child deaths in a generation. Of the many commitments made by the more than 700 participants who attended that meeting, one of the most powerful was the pledge signed by the faith-based sector. More than 300 faith leaders and faith-inspired organizations pledged support for “Ten Promises to Our Children” – a set of ten critical behaviors proven to help save the lives of children.

That pledge was all the more exciting because of your proven ability to affect large-scale social change. As faith-inspired groups, you've mobilized your networks to denounce social injustices and defend the interests of society's poorest and most vulnerable. You are often present in the farthest and often poorest communities. You have teaching authorities – often the elders, teachers, leaders and authority figures of a community. You provide holistic attention – looking at the overall wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities.

And you are credible conveners. Faith-inspired leaders can convene leaders in other faiths and other sectors of society. You often enjoy the social standing, local acceptance, goodwill and credibility to bring together all the groups necessary for large-scale and systemic changes. AND You can provide a voice when other groups may fear to speak.

So, I would ask two things of you, as leaders and teachers in your communities.

First, Ten Promises to Our Children.

You can lend your voice and influence to promote these life-saving behaviors. They are listed on the Religions for Peace website. And Katherine Marshall, from Georgetown University and WFDD, who I believe is here today, has done some great work highlighting the distinctive role of faith groups and showing multi-faith examples of how faith groups around the world are implementing each of these behaviors. And if you feel ten is too many, then start with just One. Pick One Promise. One Behavior. You can lend your voice toward keeping that promise and ensuring your communities or congregations understand its value.

Now, for the second “ask”:

Public accountability for the political promises made on behalf of children and their mothers. Since last June, 177 governments have pledged to accelerate progress on child survival. We need to let governments know that citizens have heard those promises and are expecting them to be fulfilled. You can watch and see that your local and national governments are delivering health or educational services they have promised. You can listen to your congregations and communities. And you can lift your voice so that – through YOU – your governments hear the voices of the most vulnerable.

I would like to end with a quote from another great American man, Abraham Lincoln, who wrote to his son’s teacher: **“A child is a person who is going to carry on what you have started ... the fate of humanity is in his hands.”**

Thank you.