

ZAMBIA DAILY MAIL

COMMENT

Maternal, new-born health must

MATERNAL and new-born health is a critical focus area in Zambia, aiming to improve the well-being of both mothers and their infants.

Zambia has made significant strides in reducing maternal and new-born mortality rates.

Cooperation like Millennium Development Goal Initiatives have contributed to a remarkable reduction in maternal deaths.

Government, along with partners like European Union and UNICEF, focuses on community-based maternal, neonatal, and child health practices.

These efforts aim to reduce mortality and morbidity rates through better utilization of health services.

But despite these efforts, neonatal mortality rates have remained a concern. Between 2014 and 2018, the rates averaged slightly above 24 in 1,000 live births.

This calls for sustained efforts to ensure safe pregnancies, quality care, and post-natal care for both mothers and new-borns in Zambia.

Therefore, United Nations resident coordinator Beatrice Mushi was right in her message yesterday to Zambia and other African countries to continue strengthening their health systems.

According to Ms Mushi, strong healthcare systems help reduce the disproportionate burden of maternal and new-born mortality rates, which results in thousands of mothers and their infants losing lives to preventable causes.

Despite some progress made in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality rates in Zambia, there are still challenges which need attention.

Many women in rural areas lack access to skilled birth attendants and emergency obstetric care. This geographical disparity affects timely responses during pregnancy and childbirth.

Zambia has a high rate of teenage pregnancies, which can lead to complications due to immature reproductive systems and inadequate prenatal care.

Also, iron-deficiency anaemia is prevalent among pregnant women, affecting both maternal and foetal health. This increases the risk of pre-term births and low birth weight.

Zambia has a significant HIV prevalence. Pregnant women with

HIV require specialised care to prevent mother-to-child transmission.

Some cultural practices, such as early marriage and harmful traditional birthing methods, impact maternal health outcomes.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, including community engagement, education, infrastructure improvement, and policy reforms.

It is imperative that Government has been making efforts to address the challenges in enhancing maternal and new-born health in the country.

Government should continue with its efforts of reforming maternal and new-born mortality rates until the country attains the United Nations acceptable levels.

If countries like Belgium, Kazakhstan, Oman, Cambodia, Cape Verde, and Turkey managed to reduce maternal mortality by over 90 percent within one generation, Zambia can do the same.

Zambia can replicate these countries' success stories by continuously involving communities, local leaders and traditional birth attendants. Their insights and participation are crucial for successful implementation.

Strengthening training programmes for midwives, nurses, and community health workers should be sustained. Skilled personnel can provide quality care during pregnancy and childbirth.

There should also be sustained investment in health facilities, especially in rural areas, ensuring access to emergency obstetric care, sub-fertility spaces, and neonatal intensive care.

Zambia can also adopt task shifting, which entails training non-qualified health workers to perform specific tasks such as antenatal checks to alleviate workforce shortages.

The need to establish robust data systems to track maternal health outcomes, identify gaps, and monitor progress is also critical.

Maternal and new-born health plays a crucial role in achieving sustainable development goals.

Women who remain healthy during pregnancy and after birth are more likely to invest in their children's health.

By prioritising maternal health, we create a foundation for stronger communities and better generations.

Chinese never showed up, court hears

Former ZAF top official was supposed to produce evidence to show how he acquired, developed subject properties

ZAMBIA NEWS
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ZAMBIA Army commander Sitall Athuzwe with the Central African Republic (CAR) President Faureng-Auzangue Teubers in Bangui during his recent visit to that country.

'Strengthen health care to cut maternal, new-born mortality'

KABANDA CHULU
ZAMBIA's health care system needs to be strengthened to reduce maternal and new-born mortality rates, according to a report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
The report highlights the need for improved health services, particularly in rural areas, to ensure that all women have access to quality care during pregnancy and childbirth.
Key recommendations include increasing the number of health workers, improving the quality of services, and ensuring that health facilities are equipped with the necessary resources and infrastructure.

The report also emphasizes the importance of community-based health workers and traditional birth attendants in providing essential services, especially in remote areas.
It calls for a multi-sectoral approach, involving government, private sector, and civil society, to address the underlying causes of high maternal and new-born mortality rates.
Investment in health infrastructure, such as roads and electricity, is also crucial for improving access to health services.

ZICTA monitoring impact of load shedding, engaging stakeholders

KABANDA CHULU
ZAMBIA Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA) is monitoring the impact of load shedding on the quality of service provided by telecommunications service providers.
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Bamboo production gets boost

JOHNS HARREN
The ZAMBIA's capacity to produce bamboo is expected to increase significantly following the launch of a new bamboo production programme.
The programme aims to support small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs in growing and processing bamboo products.
Key activities include providing technical assistance, access to markets, and financial support for bamboo production and processing.

The programme also focuses on promoting bamboo as a sustainable and eco-friendly material for various applications, including construction, furniture, and handicrafts.
It is expected to create new employment opportunities and contribute to the country's economic growth.
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JOHN CHAAMBWA
Petaweke

TO ENHANCE capacity to produce bamboo in Nyimba's Vizimumba ward, International Bamboo and Rattan Organisation (INBAR), in partnership with Centre for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), has trained 20 people.

Donald Kibhuti, who is the master trainer, says the programme aims to improve the skills of local people, who for a long time lacked professional training.

In an interview, Mr Kibhuti said the two weeks training has imparted trainees with both theoretical and practical knowledge of how to make bamboo for a sustainable livelihood.

"We have trained them on how to make bamboo office chairs, tables, stools and how to do weaving," he said.

Mr Kibhuti said the training started last week Monday and will end this week Friday.

The 10 male and 10 female trainees will be given certificates at the end of the programme.

Elvis Phiri, a participant, said the training has equipped them with cost-effective skills to make bamboo.

He expressed gratitude for the initiative, adding that he is optimistic that the bamboo they will produce will not only attract the local market but international one, too.

"With this knowledge, we want to start making handicrafts different from what we used to make before, for example, we used to buy fasteners to attach

[to] our furniture but now, we have learnt that we can attach using glue and bamboo, which will help us save money," Mr Phiri said, at Vizimumba Training Centre, while making some bamboo grass to make hoes.

CIFOR-ICRAF pilot landscape coordinator Wellington Chazya said the training also comes with learning how to use modern carpentry tools unlike the traditional ones the trainees have been acquainted to.

Mr Chazya said CIFOR-ICRAF, which is implementing and managing the Zambia for Agroforestry, Biodiversity and Climate project (Z4ABC), is confident the trainees will make high-value quality bamboo products.

"Our expectation is that these are going to be trainers of trainees," he said.

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