2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

UN@70 • Localising SDGs • Enhancing Food Security • Ending Child Marriages • Advancing Quality Health Services

Community building a weir dam under UN supported asset building programme in Mwenezi
Seventy years on, the United Nations remains the uniting force for development, peace and security, and the upholding of human rights in the world.

True to its role as a uniting force, the United Nations facilitated the adoption of the 2030 Global Sustainable Development Agenda by all 193 Member States on 25 September 2015. The new landmark 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will succeed the Millennium Development Goals in 2016 and run for the next fifteen years until 2030.

The SDGs offer the world a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to end poverty in all its dimensions, advance a more peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable future for all, while taking collective action to protect our planet.

Here in Zimbabwe, our joint engagement has resulted in the finalization of Zimbabwe’s position paper on the implementation of the SDGs, which aim to achieve all the 17 goals by aligning and prioritizing them through subsequent national development blueprints and the United Nations strategic framework, commonly known as the Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF).

One of the unfinished businesses of the MDGs is the eradication of poverty. Zimbabwe has prioritized the eradication of poverty through adopting a multi-pronged approach of accelerating growth, ensuring quality social services, social protection and safety nets as well as building resilience of vulnerable rural communities. Given that the majority of the rural poor and women are engaged in agriculture, the current structural challenges of poverty can only be improved by investing in irrigation, water harvesting and management as well as drought resistant seeds and inputs, all of which are critical in the fight to end poverty. It is critical that we all join hands in addressing this.

Recurrent droughts has proven that regardless of how hard people work, shocks can affect their livelihoods and the prospect of people requiring support through safety nets is real. As such, the United Nations in Zimbabwe has developed a US$ 132 million response plan to assist 1.5 million vulnerable people during the 2015-2016 lean season. To date, some US$ 46 million has been pledged by humanitarian and development partners and an additional US$ 8.1 million from the UN Central Emergency Relief Fund. We still need to find the shortfall of US$ 78 million. The response plan is linked to ongoing efforts to address the medium to longer term challenges through the implementation of a national resilience framework, for which international partnership is required.

In addition to the recent engagement between the Government and development partners, the good news from Lima, Peru is that Zimbabwe is moving forward to enhancing partnership with International Financial Institutions which is expected to provide a fresh line of credit that will contribute significantly to the fight against poverty and pursuit of sustainable economic growth.

The United Nations will continue to support the Government and people of Zimbabwe to realize their development aspirations. The stories captured in this edition of the UN in Zimbabwe newsletter highlight our joint advocacy along the UN@70, efforts to localize the SDGs, our response to food insecurity, and our commitment to ensure quality social services, and addressing social issues such as ending child marriages.

We wish you a nice read.
The United Nations in Zimbabwe celebrated the 70th anniversary of the United Nations with multi-stakeholders through a series of advocacy activities which culminated in an official event held on 23 October 2015 at the World Health Organization’s office grounds.

The main event brought together over 300 senior representatives of Government, diplomatic corps, development partners, non-governmental organizations, traditional leaders, civil society organizations, UN agencies and the private sector.

The Vice President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Honourable Emmerson Mnangagwa presided over the event. In his key note address, the Vice President expressed gratitude to the United Nations for its strong and trusted friendship throughout the years and the contributions that the UN agencies have made towards many development programmes.

Noting the shared values, responsibilities and future hopes that the United Nations embodies, UN Resident Coordinator, Bishow Parajuli said, “The timeless values of the UN Charter must remain our guide. Our shared duty is to unite our strength to serve without leaving anybody behind... We have a once in a life time opportunity to end poverty and overcome today’s emerging development challenges under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

The UN Resident Coordinator said, “Let’s roll up our sleeves for action. Let’s implement the SDGs. We have what it takes in terms of knowledge, science and technology to make it happen.”

Echoing the call by the UN Resident Coordinator, Reza Hossaini, UNICEF representative in his vote of thanks reminded the gathering that the goodwill showcased throughout the celebration must be carried forward in collaborative efforts to ensure that not only are development goals met, but the lives of all Zimbabweans are transformed.

The celebration was captioned with all UN agencies based in Zimbabwe represented by information stands showcasing their areas of engagement in different development programmes in the country. The guest of honour Vice President Mnangagwa and participants of the UN day event visited the information stands to learn first-hand on the role of UN agencies in Zimbabwe.

As part of the lead up to the official commemoration of the 70th anniversary, the Government of Zimbabwe and the United Nations co-hosted a special media breakfast titled “From Millennium development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals”.

The event, held in Harare, provided the media with the opportunity to engage with Government and media and other stakeholders took part in the UN Day

Dr. D Sibanda Secretary Economic Planning & Investment Promotion Ministry articulating Zimbabwe’s position on the implementation of the SDGs

Reza Hossaini, UNICEF Representative giving the vote of thanks on behalf of the UN Team

Over 300 senior representatives from Government, development partners, traditional and community leaders, media and other stakeholders took part in the UN Day

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UN representatives on the implementation of the SDGs within the Zimbabwean context.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator, Mr. Parajuli stressed the importance of the event, which is part of an ongoing programme of UN-Media engagement and dialogue: “The United Nations attaches great value to the role of the media in development discourse. This media breakfast can and should be taken as one of our strong collaboration towards a better world and a better Zimbabwe.”

Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet Dr. M.J.M Sibanda who co-chaired the media engagement with the UN Resident Coordinator launched the Government’s final country position paper on the implementation of the SDGs. Dr. M.J.M Sibanda expressed gratitude to all stakeholders who contributed towards the preparation of the document.

“This collaborative engagement enabled us [Zimbabwe] to be part of the Global Process that came up with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that will guide the world’s development in the economic, social and environmental sectors in the quest to improve human development and dignity for the next 15 years” said Dr. M.J.M Sibanda.

The panel discussants representing key UN agencies each provided a brief presentation on the importance of particular SDGs for Zimbabwe. Collectively, the presentations provided a united message on the importance of the SDGs for Zimbabwe and the people of the country.

The breakfast was well attended with over 130 guests that included media, donors, development partners, senior Government representatives, UN agencies and various stakeholders. The diversity of attendees exemplified the array of partners and stakeholders working together in the common goal to improve Zimbabwe through completing the unfinished business of the MDGs and achieving the SDGs.

Meanwhile, UN entities such as UNESCO, UNIC, WHO, WFP, UNFPA, UNDP including the Resident Coordinator’s Office conducted outreach activities in several schools where heads of UN agencies gave highlights of the UN day, the role of UN in Zimbabwe and on the SDGs. The school outreach, which was held from 14-15 October 2015, included the planting of 70 symbolic trees in the schools reached. In addition, joint UN statements were published as precursor to the UN day and to highlight issues of food security along the World Food Day and highlighted issues that affect rural women and the girl child on the occasion of the International days of the girl child and rural women.

For the first time the celebrations of the UN day has had an event dedicated to staff and family captioned with wellness activities. Over 1000 staff and family were updated on the overall role of the United Nations System and its contributions to national development in Zimbabwe. The participants also benefited from the different health services provided by different suppliers.
Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will require an integrated approach to sustainable development and collective action, at all levels, to address the challenges of our time, with an overarching imperative of ‘leaving no one behind’ and addressing inequalities and discrimination as the central defining feature.

Zimbabwe has already started to translate the new agenda into its development plans, strategies and visions. With the support from the United Nations, Zimbabwe has, so far, undertaken an all-inclusive dialogue at national and local levels with all Provincial and District Administrators on localizing the SDGs. The dialogue brought together senior Government officials, top leadership of Local Authorities and all District Administrators.

Noting the urgency to adopt a more action oriented approach to service delivery and serving the people, Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing Hon. Savior Kasukuwere said, “I call upon all Provincial and District Administrators, as the foot soldiers of the Government, to take a leading role in the pursuit of the envisaged future as guided by the SDGs”.

Addressing the dialogue session, UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Bishow Parajuli said, “Given the emerging development landscape, the delivery on SDGs rests on governments, private sector, local administration as well as development partners including the UN and donors. But the fundamental responsibility for this global partnership lies with Governments and their apparatus including local administrations.”

Supported by the United Nations in Zimbabwe, the national and local dialogues have laid the foundation to empower the local Government as a vehicle for the successful implementation of the global development targets articulated under the SDGs.

“As the face of the national administration at sub-national level, you will serve as SDGs ambassadors and implement programmes at the local level to fulfill the development aspirations of your people”, stated the UN Resident Coordinator.

Meanwhile, the UN Resident Coordinator called on the Council of Chiefs to play their role as traditional leaders in advancing the implementation of the SDGs. In a meeting held on 29 September 2015 with President of the Chiefs’ Council and other Chiefs, the UN Resident Coordinator noted that the meeting was called to provide an introductory dialogue on how the UN system and traditional leaders can work together for the achievement of the SDGs and the betterment of the people of Zimbabwe.

The President of the Chief’s Council, Chief Fortune Charumbira expressed his appreciation to the Resident Coordinator and his leadership for “the monumental”, first of its kind and direct dialogue with the UNCT. He welcomed break and expressed readiness to advance the implementation of the SDGs.

To successfully achieve the SDGs, the Zimbabwe position paper for the implementation of the SDGs recognizes the positive performance of pro-poor economic policies, investments and also rapid improvements in the delivery of basic services. The United Nations in Zimbabwe is supporting national efforts to reach all Zimbabweans, especially the poor, with quality services that meet their needs, strengthen their resilience, and provide the basis on which to build a stronger and inclusive economy for all. Critical services include education, health, food and nutrition, addressing high levels of poverty, fighting HIV, women’s empowerment, employment creation as well as social protection.
$78m Urgently Required to Tackle Food Insecurity

The United Nations in Zimbabwe has appealed to humanitarian and development partners for US$ 78 million to urgently fill a shortfall to support 1.5 million people affected by food insecurity in the country. The UN agencies participating in the response to the food insecurity are: FAO, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO.

The appeal was made during a high level consultative meeting of senior representatives of the Government, UN agencies and development partners in the capital. The request follows a recent call made by Vice President Emerson Mnangagwa, as chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Food and Nutrition Security, to partners for support.

Addressing the meeting, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Bishow Parajuli said, “The food security response plan, developed through a consultative process, requests for US$ 132 million with US$ 54.1 million so far pledged leaving a shortfall of US$ 78 million to support 1.5 million people affected by food insecurity in 52 districts.”

The Resident Coordinator expressed gratitude to humanitarian and development partners for their pledge of US$ 54.1 million (of which US$ 8.1 was allocated by UN Central Emergency Response Fund) towards food assistance. Parajuli called on other humanitarian and development partners to join hands in responding to the funding gap.

The response plan which covers various sectors has a gap of US$ 36.7 million in food assistance; US$ 30 million in agriculture and livelihoods; US$ 4.4 million in nutrition; US$ 5 million in protection and social safety nets; and US$ 1.8 million in water, sanitation and hygiene to assist the most vulnerable populations in the country.

According to the 2015 Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (supported by Government, UN, donors and NGOs), an estimated 1.5 million people are facing food insecurity, resulting from a loss in agricultural production, mainly due to prolonged dry spells in the southern and south-eastern parts of the country as well as poor rainfall distribution patterns both in space and time across the country.

Citing the limited alternative opportunities that the affected communities have, Rtd Col Christian Katsande, Deputy Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet said, the assistance needs to be delivered in a way that strengthens resilience of the affected communities to adapt to recurrent erratic rain patterns and natural disasters”. The Government of Zimbabwe, with logistic support from the UN World Food Programme, has provided 30,000 MT of cereals for urgent assistance.

Recognizing the vast areas of Zimbabwe affected by structural food insecurity aggravated by the effects of climate change and El Nino, Paula Vazquez Horyaans, on behalf of the European Union Ambassador to Zimbabwe, confirmed that the implementation of the EU supported national resilience framework will contribute to create a resilient nation with the capacity to protect development gains against shocks and stresses and support inclusive economic growth.

Meanwhile, FAO and WFP, marked World Food Day by highlighting the importance of social protection for the promotion of agriculture, food security and nutrition, and breaking the rural poverty cycle.

Highlighting the day FAO Subregional Coordinator for Southern Africa and Representative to Zimbabwe, Chimimba David Phiri said, “FAO in Zimbabwe recognizes that in order to achieve inclusive agricultural development and food and nutrition security, targeted social protection programmes should be in place.”

FAO supports national programmes enhancing sustainable livelihoods, livestock and crop production, irrigation, forestry and fisheries.
The silence in Maranda village and the cries of hungry woodpeckers are clear evidence that the season did not go as planned for the farmers. This should be the time for storing the harvest and for woodpeckers to enjoy the spilled grain. But the rains did not deliver as hoped and the maize crop was a write-off across much of the country, particularly in the south.

The news, however, is somewhat better at the Masuku homestead; where close to 100 farmers are gathered to share the small grain seeds they harvested despite the scorching sun throughout the season.

For a while, 43-year-old Sipepisiwe Masuku thought her fate was hopeless, but her life was transformed when she started planting small grains. Having been selected as one of the lead farmers in WFP’s small grains pilot project, Sipepisiwe says she really benefited from the training she received. She has harvested enough to see her through the next season and produced enough surpluses to give seed to other farmers.

Under the project implemented in seven rural districts thanks to funding from China, farmers were able to plant a plot of land the size of a football field with sorghum, millet and rapoko grass. The farmers were trained on the climate and soil requirements for small grains production as well as on small grain varieties and expected yields. They learned about so many things - setting up demonstration plots, land preparation, planting, fertiliser, weed management and herbicides, pests and disease control, harvesting and storage, and the keeping of records.

After they harvested, the lead farmers shared seeds with ten beneficiary farmers.

“The small grains we have shared are the seeds of hope and a better future,” says Sipepisiwe, showing off her surplus. “Now I have enough to feed my family and to share with ten other farmers. Because of the surplus I sold, I was able to pay for our children’s school fees. This is something I never thought would happen in my lifetime.”

To date, nearly 350 farmers have been trained and supported with demo packs containing seeds, fertiliser and pesticide. Each lead farmer is responsible for training at least ten additional farmers, bringing the beneficiary total for this project to nearly 3,500 farmers who have been directly or indirectly trained through farmer-to-farmer workshops.

“Now I have enough to feed my family and to share seeds with ten other farmers”
Sipepisiwe Masuku, project beneficiary
Enhancing Community Livelihoods Through Asset Creation

It’s half past five on a cool summer morning in Mwenezi, Zimbabwe and Zvodai Ndambakuwa, aged 23, is sitting impatiently on the 20-litre container she uses to haul water. Every five minutes, she glances down at the one-metre deep well, hoping the water level will be high enough for her to haul it. She has been at the well since 4 o’clock in the morning.

“Ever since I was born, water has been a problem in this area. Now I’m married, have two kids, and we are still facing the same problem,” says Ndambakuwa. “Everyone’s hopes are now pinned on the weir dam the World Food Programme is building. It will bring life to not only my family and our livestock, but to the six villages that surround us.”

The World Food Programme (WFP) is promoting the creation and rehabilitation of small dams including weir dams in arid parts of the country. The dams are part of WFP’s Food for Asset programme aimed at strengthening communities’ resilience to climactic shocks. Funded under a joint initiative by the United States and Japan, 114 dams are being created or rehabilitated across 10 districts in 2015.

“Japan’s contribution not only helps WFP meet people’s immediate food needs but also helps provide the most vulnerable with a means to cope with shocks, such as drought,” says WFP Representative of Zimbabwe Eddie Rowe. “Building resilience is the key to achieving sustainable development and creating a future free from hunger.”

In the districts of Zvishavane and Mwenezi, some 83,000 people are likely to face hunger during the height of the 2015/16 lean season. WFP established its Productive Asset Creation programme to help vulnerable communities move away from dependency on food assistance by creating assets that increase their resilience to future food security shocks. The Tsvimborume dam, for example, located 150 kilometres from Zimbabwe’s oldest town, Masvingo, and created under WFP’s Productive Asset Creation programme, will benefit more than 2,000 people and some 8,000 livestock.

Zvishavane and Mwenezi are among a number of districts in southern Zimbabwe that have suffered as a result of consecutive bad harvests caused by poor rains during the growing season. It is estimated that at least 1.5 million people across the country will be food insecure during the height of the lean season after a 50 percent decrease in crop production this year.

The construction of the weir dam was implemented by WFP, in partnership with the Mwenezi Development Training Centre and with support from the Government of Japan. Able-bodied, food-insecure people receive food rations to meet their immediate needs while they work on the project. Work at the construction site resumed early this year after being placed on hold in 2013.
The United Nations welcomes the Government’s commitment to aligning existing marriage laws with the constitution, which places the minimum age of founding a family at 18.

In response the UN issued a joint statement to add its voice to the ongoing national discourse on child marriage. “I call upon all stakeholders to accelerate efforts to end this harmful practice,” Bishow Parajuli, UN Resident Coordinator in Zimbabwe has said. “The notion that girls, some as young as 12, are fair game for marriage should no longer be condoned in this day and age. Child marriages are not only detrimental to the development and wellbeing of these young girls; they also pose a threat to the very wellspring of this country. We must redouble our efforts to reverse this trend.”

Statistics from the 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey show that 24 per cent of girls aged between 15 to 19 years are married or in a union. “On too many occasions, girls who are married have been rendered vulnerable to HIV infection and deprived of their rights to education and to health, particularly their right to look after their sexual and reproductive health” Mr. Parajuli observes.

“We strongly urge the Government to speed up the process of aligning marriage laws,” said Mr. Parajuli. “This will be a necessary and important step towards eliminating child marriages. It will also bring Zimbabwe’s laws in tandem with its commitments to United Nations resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriage, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the 2015 African Union Common Position on Ending Child Marriage in Africa.”

Noting clear linkages between gender equality, gender based violence and economic growth, UN Women Representative Delphine Serumaga said ensuring the protection of girls and women was a critical human right and economic issue that was directly linked to economic growth and poverty reduction.

“Ending child marriages is not a marginal social or women’s issue only. It has to concern all of us because of its negative impact on social and economic growth,” she said.

Combating child marriages requires challenging gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality and equal opportunities for girls and boys.

“These efforts should also be complemented by empowering girls with knowledge on sexual and reproductive health and with the resources to navigate difficult social situations, including coercive relationships,” said UNFPA Representative Cheikh Cisse. “Girls should be encouraged and supported to stay in school but for those who drop out, marriage should not be an option. They should be supported to gain access to skills development,” he said.

UNICEF Representative Reza Hossaini said a quality education that deepens knowledge, promotes a sense of self-worth and expands life skills opens the minds of young people to a world of mutual respect, learning and self-fulfillment.

“Lasting change can be achieved through the provision of quality education to young girls, along with adequate social and legal protection as well as other social services.”

The support from the United Nations to end child marriages includes alignment of marriage laws, strengthening the child protection system to track, account and safeguard children from early marriage, social mobilization of communities to address negative social norms, enhancing girls’ retention in schools and access to skills development, and advocating for increased political will at community and national levels.
The Health Development Fund will focus on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health.

The European Union, UK, Sweden, Ireland as well as the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI) have indicated to be part of the Health Development Fund.

The Health Development Fund aims improve on gains made over the past five years by strengthening health systems.

The Government of Zimbabwe, in partnership with the United Nations and Development Partners has launched the Health Development Fund (HDF), a multi-donor fund for the health sector, with a focus on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health.

Building on the achievements of two health sector programmes- the Health Transition Fund (HTF), managed by UNICEF, and the Integrated Support Programme (ISP), managed by UNFPA - the HDF aims to consolidate and improve on gains made over the past five years by strengthening health systems and scaling up implementation of high impact interventions through support to the health sector.

The HDF comes at a time when a good baseline has been created by the HTF and the Integrated ISP among the other Programmes which have worked to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates. However, with a current maternal mortality rate of 614 per 100 000 live births in Zimbabwe, more work still needs to be done to further reduce these deaths.

“The HDF is part of the ministry’s efforts to ensure that funding partners are coordinated to fund specific, identified gaps and needs on maternal, child and adolescent health,” said the Minister of Health and Child Care, Dr David Parirenyatwa.

“The HDF, if fully funded, will support mothers, children and young people in the country and will ensure that gains made to reduce maternal and child deaths are sustained.”

The HDF aims to raise US$ 680 million over five years. So far, the European Union and the governments of UK, Sweden, and Ireland as well as the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI) have indicated their willingness to be part of the HDF.

“The emphasis on inclusiveness and equity in the next phase of the HDF is crucial,” said Annabel Gerry, Head of the UK Department for International Development in Harare. “We need to reach out to the more remote areas and the most vulnerable groups. Here, I am thinking of women and girls, adolescents, and the urban and rural poor amongst others. Access to health services is still a major challenge for many of these groups.”

Within the context of the 2016-2020 National Health Sector Strategy, the HDF aims to ensure equitable access to quality health services for women and children, which will result in the reduction of maternal and child mortality by 50%, increase in access to family planning, halving the prevalence of stunting in under five children, and elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV, all by 2020, while combating HIV and AIDS, malaria and other preventable diseases.

“The goals we have set are very ambitious and can only be achieved through our continued commitment and hard work as the UN family,” said UNICEF Representative Reza Hossaini. “We must do everything we can to achieve results for the women, children and young people.”

The HDF which will run between 2016 and 2020 within the framework of the ZUNDAF, will operate under seven thematic areas – Maternal; Newborn; Child Health and Nutrition; Sexual Reproductive Health Rights; Medical Products, Vaccines and Technologies; Human Resources for Health; Health Financing; Health Policy and Planning; and Technical Support, Operations, Research and Innovation.

“The Health Development Fund pillars speak quite strongly to some of the Sustainable Development Goals,” said UNFPA Deputy Executive Director Ms. Kate Gilmore. “There is need for a concerted effort to end preventable maternal and new-born deaths and disabilities.”
Life-Changing Surgeries Restore Women’s Dignity

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Zimbabwe, working with the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC), and the Women and Health Alliance International (WAHA) is providing a life-changing opportunity for Zimbabwean women living with Obstetric Fistula to undergo free repair surgery.

With US$ 100 000 committed to a Campaign to End Fistula, the first of a series of camps, ran from 19 August and 18 September. Here, 30 women from Mashonaland West province and other parts of the country were surgically repaired.

Dr. Jean Yunga, a Fistula surgeon with WAHA, led a team of local doctors supported by the Ministry of Health and Child Care, as well as theatre and ward staff from Chinhoyi Provincial Hospital where the Camp was held. Social Workers from WAHA provided patients with counselling and support prior to and post-surgery.

Before signing up for the procedure, women at the Camp reported that they felt as though they were the only ones living with the condition, perhaps an indication of the general low level of awareness on the condition in Zimbabwe.

When discharged, Tuwede (37) from Rusape said, “I have had urine incontinence for 19 years and everyday has been a social and emotional struggle for me. Today I walk out of hospital a new woman with such dignity.”

In changing the lives of women, the campaign initiative has been welcomed by the community, and resolved the associated matter of social exclusion. “It has been an eye-opener for us”, said Dr. Collett John Mawire, Medical Superintendent at Chinhoyi Provincial Hospital. “The campaign has brought women out in their numbers. After the success of the first camp, our aim is to make the initiative as sustainable as possible and also create public awareness of the condition, especially that it can be repaired. If the number of women with Obstetric Fistula grows, and the partnership allows, the hospital may become a center of choice for repair in the country.”

UNFPA Country Representative Dr. Cheikh Cisse said that UNFPA is committed to working with the Ministry of Health and Child Care and other partners to address the problem of fistula in Zimbabwe.

“As UNFPA, we are committed to ensuring every woman lives a healthy reproductive life, in a state of physical, mental as well as social well-being at every stage of their life. That is why it is important for us to address the condition known as Obstetric Fistula.”

The Campaign to End Fistula is being implemented with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, and Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development of Canada.
Giving children the gift of life

The Government of Zimbabwe has stepped up its fight against infant and child mortality by embarking on a National Measles and Rubella campaign, alongside Vitamin A supplementation drive across the country.

From 28 September to 2 October 2015, the Ministry of Health and Child Care and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education conducted the immunization campaign at all clinics and hospitals, pre-schools, primary and secondary schools, churches, outreach points and select markets across the country.

“We have a responsibility to protect the future generation by ensuring that they are protected from preventable diseases through immunization,” said Minister of Health and Child Care, Dr. David Parirenyatwa. “If we work together collectively, Zimbabwe can eradicate measles in the same way that we have eradicated polio.”

This year’s National Immunization Day has seen the Government, in partnership with the WHO, UNICEF, GAVI, and USAID’s Maternal and Child Health Integrated Programmes vaccinating up to 5 million children aged 9 months to 16 years with the Measles and Rubella vaccine for the first time, while children aged between 6 months and 5 years were given the Vitamin A supplement.

“Our Ministry provides a very strategic entry point to conduct these vaccinations, as many children will be in school during this time,” said Deputy Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Professor Paul Mavhima. “I am calling upon parents, guardians, and teachers to assist in ensuring that children are vaccinated in schools.”

The Government has also called on Chiefs, religious leaders – especially objectors from some Apostolic Sects, and traditional leaders to become advocates for immunization.

“We have a responsibility to protect the future generation by ensuring that they are protected from preventable diseases through immunization,” said UNICEF Representative Reza Hossaini. “If we are to continue to see this downward trajectory, we must ensure that all children are vaccinated no matter what part of the country they are from.”

“The effects of Rubella are largely unknown in most parts of the population,” said WHO Representative, Dr. David Okello. “However, we should not allow our children to suffer – Rubella is a virus that can have long term consequences for children.”

The rubella vaccine, which is being introduced for the first time in Zimbabwe, prevents children from being infected with the rubella virus. If women become infected during early pregnancy, they risk giving birth to babies with Congenital Rubella Syndrome as well as other adverse conditions such as fetal deaths and congenital defects including deafness, blindness as well as heart defects.