New UN Development Framework Kicks Off

Response to Drought • Ending Child Marriages • Economic Recovery • Human Rights • HIV & Health
Note from the UN Resident Coordinator

Happy New Year! As we usher in 2016, I would like to thank the Government of Zimbabwe for the constructive and productive engagement throughout 2015.

Together, with full participation of our Development Partners, we have reviewed the 2012-2015 Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF) and signed a new ZUNDAF for 2016-2020, validated the latter’s implementation package, taken stock of Zimbabwe’s performance in efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals, and launched a national position on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2016-2030.

The successful implementation of the 2012-2015 ZUNDAF programmes would not have been possible without the generous technical and financial support, as well as the constructive engagement of our Development Partners, particularly the OECD-DAC, which we are grateful.

We covered a lot of ground in 2015. But we have some way to go yet. The strong partnership that saw us through 2015 will be indispensable in our renewed quest for greater successes in 2016, particularly with the implementation of our joint agreed-to development support to Zimbabwe under the 2016-2020 ZUNDAF. I am hopeful and confident that together we will march forward in the same spirit.

2015 was a year of excitement and transition for global development, not least because of the adoption of the 2030 Global Sustainable Development Agenda in September along with its landmark 17 SDGs. In addition, the international community has committed to this ambitious agenda through the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa and fittingly at the end of the year, to fight global warming and the effects of climate change during a monumental climate conference in Paris.

Here in Zimbabwe, the country has taken the first steps towards implementing the SDGs for the remaining cycle of the Zim Asset. Through the Zim Asset midterm review; the national symposium on Investment for Inclusive Growth and Poverty Reduction; the launch of the National Position Paper on the SDGs and the inclusive dialogue with all Provincial and District Administrators on localising the SDGs, the Government with the support of the UN and Development Partners has laid a strong foundation for a more just and prosperous future for all Zimbabweans.

The Government has made significant progress towards re-engagement with the International Community, strengthening relations with the European Union and hosting the President of China. To be sure, rewards of re-engagement will take time and demand consistent efforts to mature. The continued commitment and engagement of all partners is critical to the achievement of this goal.

The foundation for a better Zimbabwe has been laid and the pillars raised, but challenges remain. The impending severe impact of El Nino as well as the lingering effect of poor and erratic rainfall from last year, which has left 1.5 million Zimbabweans food insecure, cannot be overlooked, while responding with the International Community, strengthening relations with the European Union and hosting the President of China. To be sure, rewards of re-engagement will take time and demand consistent efforts to mature. The continued commitment and engagement of all partners is critical to the achievement of this goal.

The UN will continue to work with the Government of Zimbabwe through the 2016-2020 ZUNDAF, in its efforts to accelerate economic recovery that will sustain and expand social services and achieve national development goals and the SDGs. Together, with the continued commitment from our valued Development Partners and active participation of the people of Zimbabwe, we can overcome. Have a nice read and happy New Year once again!
As effects of climate change worsen, droughts have become more frequent and severe in southern Africa. Combined with this year’s strongest ever recorded El Nino phenomenon—the present situation is taking a heavy toll on rural livelihoods and economies rendering an estimated 30 million people food insecure in this region alone. Some countries in the region have already declared drought emergency in an effort to scale up humanitarian response.

The Government and the UN system in Zimbabwe jointly held a multi-stakeholder consultative meeting on 15 January 2016 to assess the impact of the El Nino-induced drought in the country and to urgently prepare a coordinated response to the likely humanitarian needs.

Noting the seriousness of the situation in Zimbabwe, compounded by last year’s dry spell and daunting economic challenges, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Bishow Parajuli called on all stakeholders “to join hands and focus on responding adequately and timely to the urgent needs of the food-insecure population while building community resilience as an integral component of the response.”

Over the next three months, 1.5 million Zimbabweans will be short of food until the next harvest, which by then the number of vulnerable people is expected to further increase significantly due to the looming El Nino induced severe drought. As such, if 2015 was bad, this season is set to be worse.

With the current trend, the initial national response plan of US$ 132 million launched in October 2015 to respond to the food insecurity situation would likely go up further. Thanks to mainly the USA, the UK and the UN Central Emergency Relief Fund, so far US$ 59 million has been mobilized in food and cash support with responses being implemented. Currently, WFP is covering over 430,000 people with food assistance in 16 districts. FAO has delivered 4,000 MT of survival feeding and 80MT of small grains have in 7 districts. UNICEF has been supporting with emergency water and sanitation in 6 districts and with nutrition interventions in 4 districts targeting 12,000 children under five.

Recognizing the imminent severe effects of the El Nino, Deputy Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet, Rt. Col Christian Katsande said that Zimbabwe will face a significant increase in food and nutrition insecurity. “Rehabilitation of national irrigation infrastructure for increased food production has to be scaled up urgently,” added the Deputy Chief Secretary.

The food insecurity in Zimbabwe will be compounded by the regional spread of the El Nino phenomenon. European Union Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Mr. Philippe Van Damme said, “Our efforts to mitigate the humanitarian needs should be, to the extent possible, linked to the resilience building programme.”

According to the Zimbabwe National Water Authority’s hydrological cycle forecast, water resource management for most of the catchments is already under strain. As such, the prevailing reduced rainfall is also likely to have far reaching implications on water supply for human and livestock as well as disruptions to hydropower production.

The Government, UN and Development Partners are in the process of consultations to determine the needs, gaps and challenges in the 2015/2016 food security response.

Going forward the meeting agreed to:

- Conclude the ongoing crop and livestock assessments to inform the response
- Strengthen coordination efforts including through monthly meetings at policy and sectoral levels
- Government to consider declaring national drought emergency as is done by some countries in the region
Collective advocacy bears fruit: Constitutional Court Outlaws Child Marriages

The United Nations system in Zimbabwe welcomes the recent ruling by the Constitutional Court outlawing marriage of persons below the age of 18. This is a landmark ruling that will advance child rights in Zimbabwe by helping to end the harmful and prevalent practice of marrying children, especially girls.

The ruling not only upholds the Constitution but also reaffirms Zimbabwe’s commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Just this week, child marriage was a subject of debate in Geneva where the Government of Zimbabwe presented its Second State Party Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. We are delighted that the ruling sends yet again another powerful signal of Zimbabwe’s commitment to fulfil its obligations under national and international law.

In Zimbabwe, according to the 2014 Multiple Cluster Indicator Survey (MICS), 32.8 percent of women aged between 20 and 49 years were married before the age of 18. Furthermore, child marriage has a distinct gender dimension: 24.5 percent of girls aged 15-19 years are currently married or in a union while only 1.7 percent of boys in the same age group are married or in a union.

Child marriages are not only an affront to the dignity and well-being of individual girls; they also deprive nations of the social and economic benefits that derive from an educated and skilled female population.

The ruling also underscores the need to reform the current Marriage Act and the Customary Marriage Act to align them with the Constitution. The UN looks forward to a speedy process of reforming these laws as this will be a necessary and important step towards eliminating child marriages.

The new 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which commenced implementation in January 2016, aim, inter alia, to realize gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities.

As such, as the UN System in Zimbabwe, we stand ready to support the law reform process; efforts to strengthen enforcement mechanisms; initiatives aimed at educating the public on the need to do away with the practice of marrying children; and continued efforts towards the achievement of all SDGs for all.
UN Support Contributes to Key National Development Priorities

Ahead of the implementation of a new United Nations System development support to Zimbabwe under the 2016-2020 Zimbabwe UN Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF), the Government and UN agencies together with Development Partners reviewed the contributions of the 2012-2015 ZUNDAF to national development priorities over the last four years.

The high level ZUNDAF Annual Review meeting held on 27 November 2015 brought together senior representatives of Government, UN, Development Partners, Civil Society Organisations and the Private Sector. The meeting has also allowed for the adoption of a joint action plan for the implementation of the 2016-2020 ZUNDAF.

In his remarks UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Bishow Parajuli said, “ZUNDAF supported development results have been instrumental for the achievement of key national development priorities of Zimbabwe and its international commitments.”

Underscoring the ZUNDAF as a strategic framework that brings collective action of/by UN agencies, Mr. Parajuli underlined that the programmes implemented under ZUNDAF could not have been achieved without the generous support of Development Partners. "While recognizing the need to maintain the current level of Official Development Assistance to Zimbabwe, the ongoing engagement between the Government and International Financial Institutions as well as the reform to enhance the ease of doing business and attract Foreign Direct Investment currently underway will contribute to achieving sustainable social and economic growth,” said the UN Resident Coordinator.

Speaking on the role of ZUNDAF to Zimbabwe's development priorities, Deputy Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet, Justin Mupamhanga said, “Our engagement through the ZUNDAF has been instrumental and remains a significant conduit for development assistance. I pay special tribute to our UN agencies and Development Partners for extending this valuable financial and technical support.”

Despite serious economic challenges, the 2012-2015 ZUNDAF with the generous support from Development Partners has delivered US$ 1.6 billion in development grants supporting the provision of social and public services as well as capacity building. Noting the need to enhance coordination, Mr. Mupamhanga called on the UN agencies to fully adopt the Delivering as One agenda to strengthen coherence and efficiency of UN supported programmes.

To sustain and build on the achievements made during the 2012-2015 ZUNDAF cycle and support the implementation of the SDGs, the 2016-2020 ZUNDAF aims to deliver US$ 1.65 billion to six national priority areas: Food and Nutrition Security; Gender Equality; HIV & AIDS; Poverty Reduction and Value Addition; Public Administration and governance; and social Services and Protection.

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Justin Mupamhanga, Deputy Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet

“ZUNDAF supported development results have been instrumental for the achievement of key national development priorities of Zimbabwe and its international commitments”
Bishow Parajuli, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative
A progressive and people driven constitution is in place to enhance democratic governance and rule of law.

The court system was expanded to remote areas with minimum statutory guidelines required to dispense justice.

Six human rights state party reports including the Universal Periodic Review on human rights recommendations completed.

Proportion of people living below the Food Poverty Line was almost halved, from 41.2% (2001) to 22% (2015).

Over 55,000 people trained in livelihood and entrepreneurship development.

Findings of major surveys and studies improved evidence based planning for Zim Asset and the 2016-2020 ZUNDAF.

Food assistance activities (2011-2014) supported more than 1.4 million food insecure people across the country.

440,000 food insecure people received food or cash-based assistance in exchange for participation in asset creation projects like rainwater harvesting structures.

Ratio of land area protected to maintain biodiversity maintained at 13% (2000 to 2015).

National Climate Change Response strategy launched.

Primary school completion rate rose from 68% (2009) to 77.3% (2014) and from 61.1% (2012) to 64.2% (2014) for secondary school.

A 1:1 pupil to textbook ratio was reached for over 2.5 million primary and secondary school children.

Gender parity in primary and secondary school achieved and maintained.

92% (2015) of health facilities have adequate stock status for essential medicines as compared to 52% (2010).

Maternal mortality declined by more than one third from 960 deaths per 100,000 live births (2011) to 526 deaths per 100,000 live births (2012).

Number newly HIV infected people fell from 2.63% (2000) to 0.49% (2015).

Mother to child transmission of HIV reduced from 18% (2011) to 6.6% (2014).

Women’s representation in parliament increased from 19% (2008) to 35% (2013).

A Gender Commission established with a constitutional mandate for oversight and ensuring accountability for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Over 100,000 women and community leaders updated on laws and policies on ending Gender Based Violence.
UN Supports Zimbabwe’s Ongoing Economic Recovery and Growth Measures

In a joint UN statement issued on 22 November 2015 prior to the national budget hearing, the United Nations agencies in Zimbabwe pledged/reiterated their full support to the ongoing economic and budgetary reform measures being implemented by the Government.

The UN statement recognized the prevailing economic challenges which include a slowdown in growth, low international commodity prices, high levels of unemployment and poverty, increasing informalisation of economic activity, low agricultural productivity, and low domestic and foreign direct investment.

Moreover, persistent adverse weather patterns which are likely to leave 1.5 million people in need of assistance during the peak lean season of January to March 2016 are likely to place a further strain on the people of Zimbabwe. This could be further aggravated by the forecasted severe El Niño effect.

Challenges to full recovery and growth mainly stem from a constrained fiscal environment, which has been worsened by limited external financial inflows and declining revenues. In addition, huge recurrent expenditures, which took up to 92% of the national budget for 2015, have crowded out capital, social and development expenditures.

In the face of these challenges, Zimbabwe, with major support from Development Partners, has managed to restore and sustain the provision of basic social services. According to the latest national surveys supported by the United Nations such as the 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and the MDGs progress report, the number of women who die from pregnancy-related complications has decreased from 3,840 a year in 2009 to 2,456 a year in 2014. In addition, deaths of children aged five years and below have similarly declined from 37,600 a year in 2009 to 30,000 in 2014. In the education sector, the net enrolment rate remained high at 92% and the literacy rate at 99.6% in 2014. Moreover, the number of new HIV infections annually has declined from 100,000 a decade ago to 64,000 last year, while the rate of mother-to-child transmission of HIV has dropped to 9% in 2014 from 22% in 2009.

Sustaining and improving on these gains will require increased allocations and disbursements from the national budget. In addition, in light of the current situation, continued strong engagement of Development Partners and maintaining the level of development assistance remains critical. However, as the ongoing economic recovery and growth reform measures start to bear fruit, the country will need to take measures to sustain these efforts.

The UN agencies welcomed the Government’s ongoing efforts to rationalize expenditures and create sufficient space for capital, social, and development expenditures. The joint UN statement also called for the full implementation of the measures contained in the Government’s Mid-Year Fiscal Review of 2015. These include: continued re-engagement with all creditors on debt resolution to unlock additional streams of funding; adherence to fiscal reforms, including containing the wage bill; continued improvements in the investment climate and ease of doing business; financial sector strengthening; and investment into the productive sector for promoting employment and growth, with focus on revitalizing food and agricultural sectors.
Human rights belong to everyone without exception. In fact, “human rights are at the heart of all that we do as United Nations,” said Bishow Parajuli, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, in a round table discussion held as a prelude to mark Human Rights Day on 8 December 2015 in Harare.

At the roundtable discussion, the Ministry of Justice officially launched a yearlong campaign under the running global theme “Our Rights. Our Freedoms. Always.” The campaign will highlight the 50th anniversary of two enduring international treaties adopted: The International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Zimbabwe Human Rights Commissioner, Mr. E.H. Mugwadi said, “The commission is happy that the comprehensive bill of rights enshrined in the national constitution is in compliance with the covenants on human rights.”

The roundtable discussion noted that Zimbabwe has ratified some key international treaties and the country was called on to ratify pending treaty bodies which include: Convention against Torture; International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Member of their Family; International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Despite unmet goals and persisting challenges of limited financial resources to fully implement Zimbabwe’s human’s rights agenda, the Government of Zimbabwe with support of the United Nations and Development Partners, has achieved noteworthy gains. An important development was the promulgation of progressive Constitution, which provides the highest potential to promote rule of law and the respect for human rights and equitable access to justice for all Zimbabweans.

In addition, Zimbabwe is signatory to many key international treaty bodies and has consistently been reporting on progress. These treaty bodies are: Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; Convention on the Rights of the Child; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Meanwhile speaking at the national International Human Rights Day commemoration held on 17 December 2015, Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa said, “Government continues to monitor local government structures to enforce good governance practices, weed out corruption and streamline budgets to prioritise service delivery.” Noting progress made to ensure that Zimbabweans enjoy their human rights and freedoms, the Vice President said.”

Highlighting the importance that the European Union attaches to human rights, the EU Ambassador to Zimbabwe Philippe Van Damme said the EU recognises the enjoyment of human rights and freedoms as a bedrock of its foreign policy “because this could lead to sustainable, inclusive social and economic development”.

Mr Llyod Kuveya, Zimbabwe NGO Human Rights Forum said that the gains achieved to date should encourage all stakeholders to continue working tirelessly to ensure that respect of all human rights and freedoms remain at the core of our values, standards, cultures and humanity.
Describing Zimbabwe’s hosting of the 18th International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA) as historic, the United Nations has commended the Government for outstanding leadership in responding to the HIV crisis and saving thousands of lives through delivery of health services to the needy. The conference took place in Harare from 29 November to 4 December, 2015.

Speaking at the opening of ICASA, the Executive Director of UNAIDS, Michel Sidibé, stressed the need to reach people most affected by HIV. He also underlined the importance of engaging key populations in global, national and local responses to HIV.

“Key populations are helping us to break the conspiracy of silence,” said Mr Sidibe. “I commend your courage and leadership for building an inclusive and effective response to HIV.”

With the UN’s support as well as other Development Partners such as the Global Fund, PEPFAR and DFID, Zimbabwe has made major progress in combating HIV. The number of HIV-positive people on anti-retroviral therapy rose from 363,261 in 2010 to 508,690 in 2012 and 854,181 by September 2015. According to 2013 HIV estimates, deaths averted by the ART programme rose from 624 in 2004 to 36,315 in 2009 and 45,422 in 2013.

Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director noted “without such support it would have been very difficult to render health services”. The support from Development Partners has contributed to reverse the deteriorating health indicators which include maternal and child health, HIV and AIDS, and Immunization.

Significant strides have also been realized under the Prevention of Mother-to-Child-Transmission (PMTCT) programme. The percentage of HIV-positive pregnant women who received anti-retroviral treatment to reduce the risk of mother-to-child-transmission has increased from 85.4% in 2010 to 92%, in 2012 and 89% in 2014, according to the Ministry of Health and Child Care’s 2014 PMTCT annual report.

Dr. Julitta Onabanjo, UNFPA Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Director said that while progress has been made in some areas to address HIV & AIDS, there is a need to scale up HIV prevention efforts among young people, especially girls and young women. “Our responses to HIV must therefore address the needs of adolescent girls,” said Dr. Onabanjo. “Violence, child marriage, and lack of access to sexual and reproductive health information and services – including lack of access to condoms increase adolescent girls’ vulnerability.”

Acknowledging the fight against HIV as one of the great success stories during the MDGs implementation, Ms Leila Pakkala, UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Director made a special plea to Government leaders, partners and civil society to continue on the path to an AIDS-free generation.

ICASA is a major international AIDS conference which takes place in Africa. The biennial International conference is the premier gathering for those working in the field of HIV, as well as leaders, people living with HIV and others committed to ending the epidemic.
Intensifying advocacy on HIV prevention

During the last quarter of 2015 the condomize campaign was launched by UNFPA and the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC) together with other partners such as SaFAIDS, SAYWHAT and the Global Condom Project. The condomize campaign aims to educate people on how to use condoms correctly to ensure safe sex and HIV prevention, particularly among young people, in order to curb the AIDS epidemic in Zimbabwe by 2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

“People are going to have sex, with or without a condom. We just want to help people make the right decision for SAFER sex”, said UNFPA Senior HIV Advisor, Bidia Deperthes.

The condomize campaign acts as a social mobilization platform to discuss and educate communities about condoms and sexual reproductive health and rights, including HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

“People are going to have sex, with or without a condom. We just want to help people make the right decision for SAFER sex”, said UNFPA Senior HIV Advisor, Bidia Deperthes.

Using innovative displays such as the road show truck, entertainment, art zones, colorfully designed materials to wear and give away, the campaign acts as a social mobilization platform to discuss and educate communities about condoms and sexual reproductive health and rights, including HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

Zimbabwe, with an HIV prevalence rate of 14.3% and more than 80% of HIV infections transmitted through sexual contact, is targeted in an attempt to tackle the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. Young people account for the majority of new HIV infections in the country and are most at risk of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

“Zimbabwe is one of the countries where condoms have really been accepted,” said the MoHCC National Coordinator for STI Prevention and Condom Distribution, Ms. Anna Machiya. The Government, with support from UNFPA, distributed 110 million male condoms last year alone, along with 5 million female condoms, the continent’s highest uptake.

However, a recent study by UNFPA and MoHCC on public sector condom acceptability among youth in Zimbabwe found major challenges faced by condom programmes, particularly on access and utilization among young people. The study highlights the need for innovative approaches to Comprehensive Condom Programming in terms of education, breaking down gender stereotypes and dispelling misconceptions.

The condomize campaign has, so far, equipped five of the most under-served communities in high-density areas of Harare, a city with an HIV prevalence of 13%, educating over 5 000 people on the correct use of condoms through edutainment and live demonstrations. A nationwide campaign is planned for 2016 under the theme of “Don’t Compromise, Condomize”.

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Latest thematic report a boost for evidence based development

The Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZimStat), with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), has begun disseminating results from three key thematic reports focusing on Fertility, Mortality and Population Projections that provide detailed analysis of data collected from the Zimbabwe 2012 Census.

The results of the 2012 Census were released in December 2013. The launch of these thematic reports is the last specific objective for producing national population projections to enhance future planning. Statistics are a vital tool for economic and social development. Disaggregated, reliable and timely data can help Zimbabwe in the formulation of evidence based development policies and programmes.

“The 2012 population census thematic results could not have come at a better time when there are a number of national development processes which are quite data intensive such as the mid-term review of Zim Asset, final review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),” said UNFPA Representative Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Cisse.

The thematic reports show that while fertility has generally been declining in Zimbabwe, with an implied decline of about 1.8 births during the 30-year inter-census period of 1982-2012, it is expected to remain high (around four children per woman) for the next two decades.

The findings also show that trends and levels of mortality in Zimbabwe have been significantly influenced by the HIV and AIDS epidemic. With the introduction of a wide coverage of anti-retroviral therapy mortality indicators have steadily improved since 2002. The maternal mortality rates have improved by 50% during the inter census period 2002 – 2012, however the thematic report shows an increasing risk for women who give birth at very young ages and at older ages.

“The Zimbabwe Population Census Mortality Thematic Report is the first such comprehensive report in the country and one of the several census thematic reports to be prepared by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency,” said ZimStat Director General, Mr. Mutasa Dzinotizei.

The thematic report results also show that Zimbabwe, like many other developing countries, will experience a youth bulge, which could be turned into a “demographic dividend.” Zimbabwe’s population has grown by 74% from 1982 to 2012. Population projections based on the 2012 Population Census shows that 64 percent of the population of Zimbabwe will be aged 15-64 years in 2032 compared to 55 percent in 2012.

“The question is whether this demographic transition will be sustained into the future and whether the country will develop the needed measures to transform the unprecedented number of youths into assets,” posed UNFPA Representative Mr. Cisse.

The Zimbabwe Population Census was implemented as a joint programme supported by three UN organisations, namely: UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP; with significant funding and material provisions availed to ZIMSTAT by the Government of Zimbabwe; and five bilateral and multi-lateral donor organisations, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Royal Danish Embassy; UK AID), European Union and Swedish International Development Agency.
Advancing Affordable Universal Healthcare

The Zimbabwe Health Professions Authority is one of the best examples of regulatory bodies in Africa, Dr. David Okello, Representative of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Zimbabwe has said.

Addressing over 500 delegates at the annual congress of the regulatory body held at the end of November 2015 in the capital, Harare, Dr. Okello said that the Zimbabwe Health Professions Authority has been instrumental in advocating for health professionals to take seriously the issue of medical ethics such as proper diagnosis, treatment and prescriptions, as well as to opt for normal delivery instead of rushing for caesarean sections.

“Zimbabwe Health Professions Authority is known for promoting high quality healthcare in line with WHO’s vision of upholding high standards of healthcare delivery by coordinating and regulating all activities of health professionals,” Dr. Okello said. “In recognition of the high organisational set-up and services of the Zimbabwe Health Professions Authority, WHO has facilitated study tours to Zimbabwe for some African countries that were planning to set up or strengthen their health professional governing bodies,” he added.

The regulatory body has played a significant role in improving the health conditions of Zimbabweans. Despite challenging economic conditions and dwindling allocations of the national budget to health, recent statistics available in the health sector indicate that mortality rate for children under five years of age has dropped from 84 per 1000 live births in 2010 to 75 per 1000 live births in 2014. Maternal mortality which reached 960 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010 dropped by one thirds to 614 deaths per 100,000 births in 2014.

The annual congress noted the need to address emerging health challenges of non-communicable diseases, which are surpassing HIV and AIDS as the leading cause of death in Zimbabwe. Road traffic injuries are claiming just too many lives already. Furthermore, cervical cancer is on the rise among women in Zimbabwe while Diabetes prevalence is increasing.

“We must work together to strengthen health systems to effectively address both communicable and non-communicable diseases” explained Dr Okello, underscoring the need to quickly determine the current burden of non-communicable diseases in order to design effective intervention mechanisms.

As a professional body entrusted with, among other things, overseeing quality assurance, Dr. Okello advised the regulatory body to advocate for increased human resources for health and an effective healthcare system.

In an effort to tame and reverse the brain drain of health professionals, WHO has been spearheading dialogue with developed countries to seek how best they can help developing countries to retain their healthcare professionals, whilst allowing systematic migration on win-win arrangements.

The regulatory body works with health service providers to encouraged the latter to increase the number of health institutions, both public and private, in remote rural areas and advocates for cost-efficient health services so that the poor can access universal health care.