



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SPEECH BY THE HON. MINISTER OF HEALTH

DR. JOSEPH KASONDE, MP

ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST EVER NUTRITION AWARDS CEREMONY AT MULUNGUSHI

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER

FRIDAY, 20TH DECEMBER, 2013

Ministry of Health
Ndeke House
Haile Selassie Avenue
P.O. Box 30205
Lusaka - ZAMBIA

- The Permanent Secretary-Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services
- Members of Parliament present
- Representatives from various Ministries present
- Representatives from the Department for International Development (DFID)
- Irish Aid Representative
- The Chairperson of the Civil Society Organizations Scaling up Nutrition Alliance (CSO-SUN)
- Representatives from Civil Society organizations
- Members of the Press
- Distinguished Invited Guests
- Ladies and gentlemen

First and for most, I would like to express my happiness for having been invited to officiate at this very first nutrition awards ceremony where individuals and institutions who have contributed and continue to contribute to nutrition development in Zambia are being recognized. Allow me to sincerely thank and congratulate the Zambia Civil Society Organization Scaling-Up Nutrition Alliance (CSO SUN) for taking the initiative to honour the recipients by hosting this event.

The move to honor and recognize these organizations and individuals' unselfish efforts is greatly appreciated by my government as we are aware that levels of under-nutrition in the country have remained consistently high at 45 per cent.

Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tackling the challenge of under-nutrition in Zambia requires coordinated and concerted efforts from different stakeholders to invest significantly in better nutrition. As government, we do recognize and appreciate efforts such as those of the Zambia Civil Society Organization Scaling-Up Nutrition Alliance who endeavor to bring together diverse local, national and international civil society organizations to increase understanding of the crisis of malnutrition because one of the effects of malnutrition is stunting that affects about 45.8 percent of children in our country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As one of the first signatories of the scaling-up of the nutrition movement, the
Zambian government is fully committed to reducing chronic under-nutrition by
50% in the next 10 years through a combination of local and international support.

One of the measures that my government undertook to improve nutrition in the
country was the launch of the first 1000 Most Critical Days Programme in April this
year.

The first 1000 Most Critical Days Programme is aimed at operationalizing the first
strategic direction of the national food and nutrition strategy (2011 – 2015) that
prioritizes multi-sectoral synergistic efforts to strengthening and expanding
interventions to prevent stunting in children who are under two years old.

Distinguished Invited Guests

Government is thus committed to galvanizing political leadership at high-levels to move forward this strategy so that nutritional outcomes are properly enshrined as key goals of national development policies and plans. The government also recognizes scaling up effective, evidence-based actions in the country which will quickly reduce under-nutrition, especially among young children and their mothers during the 1,000-day period from conception to the child's second birthday.

One of the measures that Zambia has undertaken as a member country of the scaling up nutrition movement is the adoption of a broad, multi-sectoral approach to implement key interventions at all levels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My government has taken this measure because investing in nutrition is non-negotiable as it is crucial in achieving the United Nations Millennium Development goals (MDGs) that include eradicating poverty and hunger, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating disease, empowering women, and achieving universal primary education.

In working together with all stakeholders, we shall steadily be increasing people's access to affordable nutritious food and other determinants of healthy nutritional status such as clean and safe water, sanitation, healthcare, social protection and initiatives to empower women and children who are the most affected by malnutrition.

Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My Government is aware that working together with other stakeholders to fight under-nutrition will result in high economic returns, high impact on economic growth and poverty reduction.

These awards being presented tonight are evidence that government, with support from stakeholders, is committed to upholding the 1000 Most Critical Days for both mother and child. These awards are also meant to appreciate stakeholder's efforts around nutrition development and to encourage them to get more involved in securing a healthy future for all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally, I would like to challenge my colleagues in the media that more still needs to be done for the public to be sensitized on nutrition. My challenge to you members of the press is to be the prime movers in promoting good health among our citizens in Zambia.

It is now my singular honor and privilege to sincerely congratulate all those individuals and institutions who are being awarded and urge them to continue prioritizing nutrition.

Thank you and God Bless

End.