

# COMMEMORATION OF THE GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION FOR CHILD SURVIVAL, MALAWI, 29 OCTOBER 2013



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## RACE FOR SURVIVAL

WORLD MARATHON CHALLENGE



# Malawi commemorates Global Day of Action for Child Survival 2013

**Tuesday, 29 October, Mwatibu Primary School,  
Nathenje, Lilongwe**

Pupils from Mwatibu, Nathenje and Mchuchu primary schools descended on Mwatibu Primary School on Tuesday, 29 October 2013 where they staged various performances in commemoration of this year's Global Day of Action for Child Survival in Malawi.

About 500 pupils from the three schools recited poems, sang songs and performed different traditional dances in a bid to capture the attention of policy makers and community leaders on the importance of prioritising child health.

Speaking on behalf of her fellow children, Evelyn Kachemwe, a standard 7 pupil at Mwatibu primary school, commended government for addressing under-five mortality in the country but called for more efforts to consolidate the gains registered so far.

“Honourable Deputy Minister, my fellow children have asked me to thank your government for your efforts in addressing issues of child health. However, we would like to call upon government to address issues of newborn health as well so that babies too benefit from improvements that the country has achieved.”

Picture 1: Evelyn making a speech on behalf of all children





Picture 2: School pupils expressing themselves on issues of child survival through song and dance

Kachemwe also called on all stakeholders to prioritise child nutrition so that malnutrition is reduced.

“We would also like to call upon traditional leaders, community leaders and the general public to address issues of child nutrition. Nutrition plays an important role in ensuring that children grow into productive members of our society.”

The Deputy Minister of Health honourable Chikumbutso Hiwa, who was the Guest of Honour at the event, reiterated government’s commitment to addressing issues that undermine child survival.

“Distinguished guests, the Malawi Government will continue to put efforts to address under-five mortality including newborn mortality. I want to assure you that Malawi continues to recognize the need to invest in maternal and newborn care as part of a broader strategy to expand access to essential health services.”

Honourable Hiwa also emphasised that government will continue to address child nutrition as one way of improving child health in the country.

“Government does recognize the important role that nutrition plays not only in

child survival but also in children's ability to succeed at school now and in their future endeavors. It is in this context that in June this year, the State President, Her Excellency Dr. Joyce Banda made eight commitments to promote nutrition at the Global Nutrition for Growth Summit in London."

President Joyce Banda committed that Malawi will develop a Nutrition Act by 2016 and review the National Nutrition Policy and Strategy by December this year. She also committed that government will increase the proportion of total annual government expenditure allocated to nutrition from the current 0.1% of the total national budget to 0.3% by the year 2020.

President Banda also committed that nutrition will be mainstreamed in sectoral budgets which have a role in fighting malnutrition including Education, Health, Agriculture and Gender; coverage of community based nutrition services will be scaled up in all districts at Traditional Authority and Village level by 2016 and Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition will be scaled up from 50% to 80% in all districts.



Picture 3: The Deputy Minister of Health, Honourable Chikumbutso Hiwa addressing the school children



Picture 4: Save the Children Director for Health Joby George making his remarks

Speaking earlier, Save the Children Director for Health in Malawi, Joby George congratulated the Malawi Government for the enviable success that it is registering in improving child survival.

“It is heartening to note that Malawi is one among the few countries that have made significant achievements in reducing under-five deaths. The recent estimates published by the UN inter-Agency Group have listed Malawi among the twenty-five countries that have already met the goal of two-thirds reduction in child mortality rates by 2015.”

George however lamented the high newborn death rate that the country continues to experience and called on government to swiftly move in to address it.

“However, as child mortality rates reduce, the challenge is increasingly concentrated in the first 28 days of life, the neonatal period. In Malawi, newborn deaths account for up to 44 percent of under-five deaths. This is unacceptable when we know that most of the major causes of newborn mortality are preventable.”



Picture 5: Pupils from Mchuchu primary school adding their voice on the day

He asked government to start enforcing mandatory newborn death audits as one way of addressing this extra-ordinarily high neonatal mortality in the country.

“While maternal death is unacceptable in our country, newborn death is often not regarded as a major loss in our society. If we continue with this disposition, our efforts to improve child survival will continue to be pulled backwards by high incidences of newborn deaths. Honourable Deputy Minister, I call upon your Ministry to enforce mandatory newborn death audits in all health facilities just like the way they do with maternal deaths so that high level of attention is given to every newborn death in the country.”

Joby George also asked government to strengthen the implementation of programmes that promote child nutrition and to provide sufficient health workers as additional strategies to addressing child mortality.

“Increased funding for essential health care and nutrition needs to be matched by adequate investment in health workers, without whom many key interventions cannot be delivered. A large number of countries, including Malawi, fall below the World Health Organization’s recommended minimum ratio of 23 doctors, nurses and midwives for every 10,000 people.”

The event was characterized by performances of various traditional dances by school pupils from the three participating schools. The three schools also competed in a relay race which symbolized the need to invest in child health so that growing up should not be a race for survival.

Nathenje Primary School won in the girls' category while Mwatibu Primary School won in the boys' category.

The event marking the Global Day of Action for Child Survival in Malawi was attended by representatives from other partner organizations including Oxfam, World Vision Malawi, Norwegian Church Aid, Reach Trust and the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR). Senior Group Village Headman Kamundi and Group Village Headmen Chiwowa and Kachuli also attended the event.

In commemorating the Global Day of Action, Save the Children released a report called *LIVES ON THE LINE: An Agenda for Ending Preventable Child Deaths*. This report contends that as the world moves towards MDG4 and mortality rates are concentrated in regional and social groups, continued success will increasingly depend on gauging progress against a "triple bottom line"—the overall reduction in mortality, equity and sustainability.



Picture 6: Relay race competitors getting set for the challenge



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