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- End Hunger, Walk the World, 7 June
- World Environment Day, 5 June
- International Day of the Elimination of Child Labour, 12 June
- Day of the African Child, 16 June
- World Refugee Day, 20 June



Low-cost housing production in Kanjedza, Blantyre by Malawi Homeless People's Federation © R. Precht

Nkhani Zathu (Our News) monthly Newsletter and Bulletin Board are hosted on www.unmalawi.org and can be downloaded as PDF copies. The e-bulletins are compiled by UN Communication Group and capture highlights of the UN Malawi in action. The publications will share events and developments within the UN and in Malawi as well as global events of interest.

For subscription, editorial policy or printing request, please contact email Editor.Newsletter@unmalawi.org. We invite contributions on experiences and events, putting a face to numbers, facts, figures to often drawn out UN-speak. You can contribute to the journal by submitting your articles or suggestions to a member of UNCG or write to Editor.Newsletter@unmalawi.org.

International Events

Africa Steps up the Fight against Maternal and Child Deaths

May 7, 2009 - Prime Minister of Ethiopia Meles Zenawi launched the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia during the opening ceremony of the fourth session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Health. The African Union (AU) has spearheaded this campaign, which aims to accelerate the availability and use of universally accessible quality health services including those related to reproductive and sexual health. "Africa cares: no woman should die while giving life" is the theme of the campaign.

According to latest estimates by the African Union, there will be 2.5 million maternal deaths, another 2.5 million child deaths and 49 million maternal disabilities in Africa alone over the next 10 years, if urgent action is not taken. The survival of women and children in Africa may very well depend on the newly-launched CARMMA.

Speaking at the event, the Commissioner for Social Affairs in AU, Bience Gawanas described the maternal mortality rate in Africa as "unacceptably high".

"It is my hope that through this campaign, we will ensure that our renewed efforts save the lives of women who should not die while giving life. We should ensure accountability; every single loss of a mother's life should be reported. In this regard, it is essential to establish and institutionalize maternal, infant and child mortality audits," said Gawanas.



Medical personnel at Kasungu Hospital conducting an ultrasound scan on a pregnant woman. © UN Malawi/2007

Malawi is among the African countries with the highest maternal mortality rate (MMR). It is only second to war-torn Sierra Leone. Malawi's MMR is at 807 deaths per 100,000 live births. Malawi will be among the first countries to conduct national launches of the campaign in the next three months.

The launches will be government-led and will receive technical support from the AU and UN agencies. Other countries who will lead in the national launches are Mozambique, Rwanda and South Africa.

In Malawi, the UN is working with the Ministry of Health through its technical and financial assistance as well as community based initiatives including empowering traditional leaders and their communities. The campaign will work on strengthening such existing initiatives.

UNFPA Africa Regional Director Bunmi Makinwa said

at the launch that the UN is convinced that the battle against the high incidents of maternal mortality could be won if there is effective coordination among all players. Makinwa explained that in Africa, most women die because they are pregnant. "Is this something that should continue happening? No. It's really sad that one of the worst things that could happen to a woman in Africa is being pregnant," he said.

Programme Highlights



Commemorating ILO's 90th Anniversary

On 28 April, Malawi joined the world in marking ILO's 90th anniversary celebrations under the theme "90 years Working for Social Justice" on 28 April. The ILO was created in 1919, as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based on social justice. Malawi as a Member of the ILO, has ratified 29 Conventions including all the 8 ILO core conventions.

Malawi will shortly start implementing the Malawi Decent Work Country Programme aimed at improved, gainful, secure and rights-based employment for the youth, women and men. Other programmes in Malawi receiving ILO's assistance are: Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour; HIV and AIDS Work place Education programme; Prevention and Management of HIV and AIDS in the transport sector; Women's Entrepreneurship Development Programme.

The ILO is the only 'tripartite' United Nations agency. It brings together representatives of governments, employers and workers to jointly shape policies and programmes. This unique arrangement gives the ILO an edge in incorporating 'real world' knowledge about employment and work. The Malawi Government has been an active participant in the organs of the ILO especially the International Labour Conference held in June every year.



Media professionals commemorate World Press Freedom Day

Media professionals in Malawi gathered in Lilongwe on May 1 to celebrate World Press Freedom Day 2009. The commemorations, which were sponsored by UNESCO and organised by Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Malawi Chapter, started off with a freedom march from Lilongwe Old Town Post Office to the Silver Conference Hall where a public debate was held.

The debate was held under the topic: "The Role of the Media in Fostering Dialogue, Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation" This topic was drawn from the global theme set up by UNESCO for this year's World Press Freedom Day commemorations. Panellists and other contributors at the debate noted that the media in Malawi had done well in supporting dialogue, mutual understanding and reconciliation by giving a voice to various players in the society including political parties ahead of the elections. However, observations were made that the media needed to improve as there were still pockets of biases and use of inappropriate language which compromised national dialogue and reconciliation.

The debate was officiated by Francis Mkandawire of the Malawi National Commission for UNESCO, Deborah Nyangulu-Chipofya of MISA Malawi and the Chinese Ambassador to Malawi, His Excellency Lin Songtian.

After the debate, commemorations proceeded with a social football match at Civo Stadium followed by a donation of some fortified food supplements to Kamuzu Central Hospital by the Gift of the Givers Foundation. The commemorations were crowned by the Awards Gala later on the evening held at the Crossroads Hotel where journalists who had performed well in their profession were rewarded.

Malawi has been commemorating the World Press Freedom Day for the past seven years, and this was the first time the commemorations were held in Lilongwe. May 3 was set aside by the United Nations to raise awareness on the importance of press freedom and freedom of expression as enshrined in Article 19 Of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Malawi provides for this right in section 35 of its Constitution.

unicef The NAMISA awards

Malawi's National Media Institute of Southern Africa (NAMISA) in conjunction with UNICEF has introduced media awards that will recognize media practitioners who have made a significant contribution in covering issues relating to emergency programming in the country including the welfare and the status of women and children.

The Awards are a partnership between UNICEF's, the Ministries of Health and Information and Civic Education, NAMISA and other civil society organizations, who have developed an Emergency Communication Plan to pre-position messages on critical health conditions caused by emergencies including drought, flooding and food shortage.

NAMISA will bring together the media houses and offer journalists the opportunity to visit and appreciate emergency prone areas. NAMISA will also ensure sure that issues relating to emergencies are properly covered in the media in order to improve public awareness and sensitization during emergencies.

These awards are open to both print and electronic media practitioners. It is expected that through this initiative over 40 journalists will be supported to make at least 4 key visits in the given period to disaster prone districts to appreciate the interventions in place and to produce stories for dissemination. The stories would cover issues on cholera, nutrition and sanitation.

UN HABITAT Urban youth to benefit from UN-HABITAT's Opportunities Fund

Youth-led organizations in developing countries including Malawi who are working to improve the living conditions of their communities and particularly in urban areas, can now apply for financial assistance from UN-HABITAT to support innovative youth-led projects in areas such as employment, education, environment, health and safety.

The Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-Led Development will provide grants between \$5,000 and \$25,000 to organizations led by young people aged 15-32 years.

'In this time of worldwide economic crisis, it is not only banks and automakers who deserve financial support, we also need to encourage youth who are often best placed to solve problems in their communities,' said Mrs Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT. 'The Opportunities Fund is designed to provide financial support of up to one million dollars per year, to youth-led initiatives aimed at sustainable urbanization. We must harness the energies of the young if we are to overcome the problems of urban poverty.'

Out of one and half million slum dwellers in Malawi, an estimated 70% are under the age of 30. Yet these young people lack adequate resources to improve their own living environment and perhaps earn an income too. Youth are often a marginalized group within the community and broader development debate, and particularly so in urban areas, where assumptions are that commercial centres provide them with employment and income. Several youth-led initiatives do exist in slums and squatter settlements, and which with financial support can be elevated to benefit more people.

The Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-Led Development has been established with support from the Norwegian Government with an initial \$ 2 million over two years with possibility of renewal.

Local government authorities receive 15 vehicles



United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) handed over 15 land cruisers worth MWK 100.4 million to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. Fifteen local authorities and institutions that implement the Local Government Strengthening and Investment Programme (LOGSIP) will use the vehicles, which is part of the National Decentralization Programme (NDP) supported by UNDP. The programme aims to improve service delivery in the local authorities by continuously building and developing their capacities.

(Left: Secretary for Local Government and Rural Development Mr. George C. Mkondiwa testing one of the vehicles)

First Housing Sector Profile in Malawi



Low-cost housing production in Kanjedza, Blantyre by Malawi Homeless People's Federation © R. Precht

UN-HABITAT has presented the preliminary findings, conclusions and policy recommendations of the Malawi Housing Sector Profile to stakeholders in Lilongwe. The Profile is the result of field surveys and housing sector studies undertaken during the last six months by a multi-disciplinary team of national and international experts led by UN-HABITAT.

The stakeholders' workshop (20-21 April 2009) discussed the draft Housing Profile document and how it can be improved to provide evidence, in-depth knowledge and possible guidance to improve housing delivery and the draft Malawi National Housing Policy that is currently under review. Amongst the 65 participants were representatives from national and local governments, utility companies, NGOs, civil society, traditional leaders, donor organizations, private sector housing developers, financial institutions, professional institutions, and academia.

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