



**Republic of Namibia**

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

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**DURING THE**

**LAUNCH OF THE  
“STATE OF THE WORLD’S CHILDREN” AND THE  
RELEASE OF THE NAMIBIAN SUPPLEMENT TO THE  
GLOBAL REPORT 2008**

**WINDHOEK**

**28 JANUARY 2008**

Director of Ceremonies,

UNICEF Representative Ms. Khin-Sandi Lwin

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Representatives from International Donor Agencies, Government, Private Sector, NGOs, civil society organizations

Members of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very happy to be here today to launch and release two very important and insightful publications. The Ministry of Health and Social Services is pleased that this year's focus of UNICEF's global **State of the World's Children report** is on **Child Survival** and that UNICEF Country Office Namibia prepared a **Supplement on Namibia's** situation under this theme in collaboration with the Ministry. I would like to go over some of the critical issues highlighted in this report and its Supplement.

This year's global report focuses on issues that underpin the development of any nation. *The 2008 State of the World's Children Report* highlights the global "good news" that the number of annual deaths of children under five has decreased to below 10 million per year. This means that between 1960 and 2006 the world has managed to decrease the number of children who, unfortunately, die each year by half (50%). This is a remarkable achievement. Indeed, this serves as motivation for us to work even harder, as there is still a concern. For example, 26,000 young children are reported dying each day around the world; mainly from preventable causes. This is unacceptable.

It is equally important to note that in terms of the reduction of child mortality by half, this did not happen at equal levels within and across regions. The regions of the world who are not on course to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) #4 on child survival are the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. The Report further highlights an alarming "bad news" that 80 per cent of all under-five deaths in 2006 occurred in **sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.**

According to the Report, in 2006, sub-Saharan Africa recorded 49% of the global number of children who died before they reached their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Of the 46 countries in sub-Sahara Africa, only **three are on course** to meet 4<sup>th</sup> Millennium Development Goal, namely Cape Verde, Eritrea, and Seychelles.

As outlined in the Report, the causes of childhood death in sub-Saharan Africa are due to malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea and malnutrition. Ladies and gentlemen, all these are curable, preventable and treatments are affordable in terms of costs for governments. It is equally sad to note that in addition to these preventable diseases, sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing political instability resulting in poverty, inadequate physical infrastructure, natural disasters such as floods, drought and worse of all is the impact of HIV and AIDS. All these contribute negatively to child survival.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, this calls on all Governments in sub-Saharan Africa to re-double our efforts in making peace where there is war and collectively to channel our resources in addressing the well-being of African children.

Director of Ceremonies, permit me to address you on the Global Report Supplement, titled “Redoubling Efforts on Child Survival in Namibia”. This Supplement tells us how Namibia as a nation fares in terms of progress toward the Millennium Development Goal #4 on child survival, without this progress the goals of meeting the 4<sup>th</sup> MDG will be in vain.

It is encouraging to note that, Namibia is among the leading nations in reporting progress on Goal 4 of the Millennium Development. It is heartening to note that since Independence we have made considerable progress in ensuring that our children reach their potential. We have worked hard to extend our Primary Health Care Immunization programme to every child in every health district in the country. We have been lauded by the World Health Assembly for the outstanding performance achieved in surpassing the WHO targets for Antiretroviral Treatment for children and for the Prevention of Mother to Child transmission of HIV.

Our global health partners including UNICEF Country Office have also given us special recognition for the effective manner in which we mobilized and immunized the entire population to curtail the further spread of the wild polio virus in 2006.

I am pleased to state that despite that major setback, we are now on track for polio eradication. Indeed, I have just been informed by the WHO that the global assessment team will be coming in August this year to review the “polio free” in Namibia, preceding a formal declaration.

To come back to the subject matter for which we are here today, despite the good and progressive programmes we have put in place, I am deeply saddened to note that the positive gains in infant, child and maternal health are unfortunately reversing.

Recent data that the Ministry is still analysing show that the **Maternal Mortality** has **doubled** from 271 in 2001 to 425 in 2006. We are witnessing **increased child mortality** from 62 per 1000 live births in 2000 to 69 deaths in 2006. Notwithstanding previous gains, Infant Mortality Rate has increased from 38 per 1000 live births in 2000 to 46 deaths in 2006. Our information suggests that this increase is due to HIV/AIDS. Given that PMTCT programmes were rolled-out in 2006 at almost the same time when the survey was carried out, we expect the situation to improve.

However, those children born before the rollout of PMTCT may have been at risk of HIV infection. According to the Supplement, in addition to HIV/AIDS as a direct cause, many children are still dying from curable and preventable diseases like pneumonia and diarrhoea.

Director of Ceremonies, ladies and gentlemen, the purpose of sharing the findings of this Supplement is not to alarm the nation but to stimulate debate and action on the critical issues affecting our children. Indeed the Ministry is ready and willing to tackle these challenges. The rolling out of ART, PMTCT, routine immunization, and EPI, are direct responses to this challenge. I have urged the staff in my Ministry very hard in the past to improve service delivery in both curative and preventive care. I commend them for the remarkable achievements made despite all odds in rolling out ARV treatment and for our efforts to eliminate some public health diseases like Tetanus and Polio.

However, the critical shortage of health care professionals continues to hamper effective health services delivery. This matter is being addressed with a view to reaching both short and long-term solutions.

The Ministry recognises the important role that the community plays in assisting the Ministry during national immunization days to achieve maximum coverage. We are grateful that the nation at large and various communities have begun to appreciate that effective health delivery requires a collaborative and partnership approach. For without good health, in place there can be no tangible socio-economic development and all human development suffers. We remain indebted to our development partners and stakeholders for the continued technical and financial support in addressing these challenges. May I take this opportunity to make a plea – that more funding is needed for health systems support and not just limited to HIV/AIDS.

Finally, allow me to express our sincerest gratitude to UNICEF Namibia and all of you who in one way or the other are investing your time and resources to support the Government's efforts and my Ministry in particular, in addressing issues affecting children in our country. Additionally, may I on behalf of the Ministry and indeed myself bid a warm farewell to Ms. Khin-Sandi Lwin, UNICEF Representative who has been with us for 7 years.

Ms. Lwin, your assistance, support and insights have been priceless. You will be truly missed. We wish you and your family all the best in your new assignment.

Director of Ceremonies, ladies and gentlemen, I now have the honour to declare The State of the World's Children 2008 Report and the Release the Namibian Supplement to the global report entitled "Redoubling Efforts on Child Survival in Namibia" officially launched.

I thank you for your kind attention.