

President Kikwete vows to reduce mother, child deaths

THISDAY REPORTER

Dar es Salaam

PRESIDENT Jakaya Kikwete has vowed to take measures to reduce the deaths of women and children from pregnancy and birth-related causes.

He also announced the launch of a major programme aimed at giving every Tanzanian access to modern health care facilities.

The president made the remarks on Tuesday night at the launch of the "Deliver Now Campaign" in Dar es Salaam.

"Statistics tell us that each year about 8,100 women die of pregnancy and birth-related causes in Tanzania. Some 45,000 newborns die, and another 42,500 stillborn and

157,100 children die before their fifth birthday," said President Kikwete.

He added: "We in the government are taking measures to increase access to health care services. This year, we're launching the Primary Health Services Programme (MMAM) with a goal of giving access to modern health care facility for every Tanzanian within a distance of five kilometres from his or her home."

The president said the ambitious programme would involve construction of more dispensaries and health centres throughout the country and hiring more medical personnel.

"It also requires us to acquire the requisite medical equipment. Providing quality maternal, newborn and child

health services is a key component of the programme. In fact it is the motivating factor," he said.

The Deliver Now for Women and Children initiative is a new global campaign to reduce maternal and child deaths.

It aims at drawing the world's attention to the more than 10 million deaths of women and children which occur each year, mainly in developing nations.

Most of these deaths can be prevented through greater political commitment, increased investment in health services and support for communities to demand better access to quality health care.

Mr Kikwete launched the campaign in Dar es Salaam in the presence of the visiting

Norwegian Prime Minister, Mr Jens Stoltenberg, and Dr Francisco Songane, director of the Global Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

The Global Partnership has chosen Tanzania as one of five countries for direct engagement as part of the multi-country approach towards accelerated scale up of effective intervention for maternal, newborn and child health.

"Both maternal and infant mortalities can be prevented through the right kind of intervention at the appropriate time. Indeed, what seemed elusive a few years ago looks probable now," he said.

He added: "The main causes of under-five mortality include malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea, neonatal causes and

malnutrition. But, the truth of the matter is that, these diseases and causes are preventable."

Mr Kikwete noted that maternal deaths which are mainly due to excessive bleeding before and after delivery, obstructed labour, infections, pregnancy induced hypertension and post abortion complications can also be prevented.

"Delay in taking the right decision at home, delay in reaching to the health care facility and delay in receiving care at the health facility account for many women losing their lives.

"Increasing awareness and improving access to modern health care facilities will greatly help save many lives. This is the focus of our government's efforts in this regard," he explained.

Zuma hails blocking of Chinese vessel

THISDAY REPORTER & AGENCIES

Dar es Salaam

THE leader of South Africa's ruling Africa National Congress (ANC) party, Mr Jacob Zuma, has welcomed steps taken by Tanzania and several other African coastal countries not to allow a Chinese weapons ship to dock in their respective sea-ports.

Speaking to the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) from London, Mr Zuma has praised countries such as Tanzania, Mozambique, Namibia, Angola, including South Africa, for disallowing the Chinese ship to dock in their harbours. "It sends a clear message that Africa is tired now of violence, of receiving weapons and that we want peace."

A Chinese container ship carrying about 77 tonnes of Zimbabwe-bound weapons has been unable to find a port in Southern Africa to land its