

SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, GENDER, ELDERLY AND CHILDREN, HONORABLE UMMY MWALIMU (MP) DURING THE FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON MONITORING AND EVALUATION BEST PRACTICES HELD AT SEASCAPE HOTEL, DAR ES SALAAM FROM 11TH TO 15TH DECEMBER 2017

- The Vice Chancellor of Mzumbe University, **Prof. Lughano Kusiluka,**
- Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Mzumbe University, **Prof. Ganka Nyamsogoro,**
- Director of Health, Social Welfare and Nutrition Services, MoHCDEC, **Dr. Ntuli Kabologwe,**
- Acting Director of Policy and Planning, MoHCDEC, **Mr. Edward Mbaga,**
- Assistant Director of Health Services, MoHCDEC, **Dr. Anna Nswila,**
- Assistant Director of Monitoring and Evaluation MoHCDEC, **Mr. Cloud Kumalija,**
- Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Zanzibar Malaria Elimination Programme, **Mr. Mohamed Haji Ali,**
- Head of Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (NACP), **Mr. Veryeh Sambu,**
- Country Director, University of California, San Francisco **Ms Christen Said,**
- Dean of the School of Public Administration and Management, Mzumbe University, **Dr. Stella Kinemo,**
- Representatives of Various Health Provisioning Institutions,
- Member of Academic Staff and Students at Mzumbe University,
- Members of the Press,
- Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

First and foremost, please allow me to thank you for the kind invitation to officiate the First Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Best Practice Conference to be held in Tanzania. Indeed, it is a great pleasure for me to be associated with this initiative, which I believe, will lead to many other such initiatives that have potential of transforming the Health Sector through data and evidence-based policy- and decision making.

I understand that, this Conference serves as a forum for sharing and cross learning monitoring and evaluation (M&E) best practices among health stakeholders with a view of enhancing the capacity of health facilities and related organizations to use high-quality data for efficient and evidence-

based strategic planning of health programmes. The Conference programme shows that the Conference will cover current context, novel contributions, best practices and lessons learned in the use of Monitoring and Evaluation data for programmes in Tanzania. Monitoring and evaluation has played a significant role in strengthening national health systems and services by providing information and evidence for policy and decision making processes.

Currently, all districts in Tanzania and selected health facilities collect, process, analyze and use the data for evidence-based decision making. Significant investments have already been made by the Government and Development Partners to strengthen health management information system including connecting all districts to the District Health Information System (DHIS2) national server. As the DHIS2 and other specific programme-based systems continue to generate information, public health officials are called upon to create a culture of utilizing the data to better inform their operations both in regional and district health service delivery facilities with the ultimate goal of improving the health of the entire population being served.

Vice Chancellor and Conference Participants,

Monitoring and Evaluation of health programmes will continue to be a vital tool for improving the health services because health information dissemination in a timely manner is critical in ensuring that appropriate and life-saving interventions are made. This Conference, therefore, is an important forum for making more improvements in data collection processes and to create a culture of data use among health professionals including those involved in training, research and clinical practice.

Since this is the First Conference of its kind, I would like to challenge all of you to come up with good strategies that will engage more other institutions within and outside the country on the need of promoting the culture of quality data use at lower level of health services provisioning starting with the improvement of the quality of data that is collected. I have been informed that this Conference is aiming at, among other things, creating awareness among health professionals on data use and the way in which this, can be improved in order to support informed planning and decision-making, which are fundamental for improving the quality of health services offered all over the country and the region. This is also evident in the structure of your Conference Programme, which shows coherent link between theoretical considerations and practical aspects as well as policy implications of all what you are doing as health professionals, and indeed, what you envision to do after this Conference.

Vice Chancellor and Conference Participants,

I would like to acknowledge the role played by Mzumbe University as the pioneer institution of higher education for training professionals in the Health Sector in Health Systems Management at Bachelor's degree level and Monitoring and Evaluation in the Health Sector at Master's level. The production of professionals in these areas has had a significant impact in the administration and management of health institutions and facilities in the country. I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of the Government of United States of America through the University of California San Francisco by supporting the collaborative project between Mzumbe University; Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children and the University of California San Francisco, Mzumbe University that has been very instrumental in enhancing the capacity of health professionals in Tanzania on monitoring and evaluation. My Ministry is very much proud to have been associated of this flagship programme.

I am aware that in 2015, through the collaboration between Mzumbe University, MoHCDEC and University of California, San Francisco, a Centre of Excellence in Health Monitoring and Evaluation (CoE), the first of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa was launched at Mzumbe University. The Centre of Excellence has played a great role in research and information dissemination, provision of professional services and training professional in the field of M&E in Tanzania and beyond. Already, in addition to the Master's programme in M&E, two short courses on the Use of M&E for Quality and Programme Improvement in the Health Sector and Data Management and Analysis in the Health Sector have been designed and are on offer. In addition, the Centre hosts the East African Journal of Applied Health Monitoring and Evaluation (EAJAHME), which is a peer-reviewed international journal. The journal publishes original, high quality articles focusing on monitoring and evaluation in the health sector in Africa, with a particular focus on East Africa, although it also accepts articles on health-related M&E experiences from outside of Africa that provide useful comparative lessons.

Dear Conference Participants,

I am not going to repeat what has already said and what will be presented in coming four days, but, as the Minister responsible for Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children in Tanzania I feel obliged to make some few suggestions related to the expected outputs of this Conference. First, I challenge you to deliberate on how you can produce more high quality research outputs that will lead to publications

and more practical tailor-made courses on M&E for health workers at lower levels of health services delivery facilities like dispensaries and health centres. The publications need to be packaged in such a way they can be easily understood by the users at the grassroot and, preferably they should be in Kiswahili, our national language.

Secondly, I expect that the Conference will make recommendations on how effectively, the culture of using good quality data and best practices based on M&E will be promoted beyond the Conference proceedings. As a policy-a decision maker, I would like to see that our policies are informed and founded on scientific evidence whose credibility cannot be doubted. This is because, good policies are informed by good quality data and bad policies are a result of poor quality data. It is only the use of good quality data that will impact positive on the development of the Health Sector and save the lives of our people, which are the most precious resource for development.

Thirdly, I expect that this Conference will pave way for more collaborations among institutions in scientific research and innovations in health in order to produce results that government officials and health practitioners can use in improving policies and decisions. Research outputs will also inform those in training institutions to improve curricula and designing more relevant courses for health professionals in both the public and private sectors. Moreover, as I have already emphasized, I expect that among the recommendations of the Conference will be to put more emphasis on capacity building for staff particularly in health centres and dispensaries because majority of staff in these lower level health facilities lack the culture and skills for quality data use. Therefore, all the initiatives for empowerment of staff at lower levels to acquire the M&E and data use skills will have long-term impact on the improvement of health services in the country and beyond.

Dear Conference Participants,

The 5th Phase Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, led by His Excellency Dr. John Pombe Magufuli, is making tremendous investment for improving the Health Sector. As a Government, we are very much aware that, the success of our investment programmes require well-planned monitoring and evaluation systems and which depend on high quality data inputs. In order for all this to be successful, it means that more and highly skilled professionals in M&E and data management are required. In this regard, therefore, I urge Mzumbe University and other higher learning and research institutions to expand training opportunities but ensure that the quality of training is of international standards. In addition to your own

initiatives, you can achieve this by strengthening existing collaborations with partners like the University of California San Francisco and forging many more such collaborations with other institutions within and outside the country. I wish to assure you that my Ministry will continue to supporting the collaborative initiative that exists between Mzumbe, Ministry and University of California, San Francisco and I would like to see that such collaborations expand and involve more institutions because in doing so, you will leverage on the capacities of each member institution.

As I move towards the end of my speech, I hope that I have provided some input for reflections and discussions during the Conference, some of which may inform your resolutions and recommendations. I am looking forward to receiving the recommendations and suggestions on how, as a Government, we can strengthen more the M&E system in the Health Sector. I also hope that, you will start strategizing on future Conferences of this kind, and I am sure, you will appreciate in the course of the week that Tanzania is a perfect destination for such conferences. I entice you to plan the Second Conference to be held in Dodoma, which is now, the seat of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Vice Chancellor and Conference Participants

Once again, I wish to thank you for inviting me to officiate this important Conference whose recommendations will inform future policy processes in my Ministry and other relevant institutions. I also wish to appeal and encourage all of you and, especially delegates coming from outside Tanzania to visit places and explore the beauty of this great country. I am glad to learn that in your programme, you will be visiting Zanzibar, the major Spice Island in the world. However, do not forget that Tanzania is home of Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa; Lake Victoria, which is the largest freshwater lake in Africa and Lake Tanganyika, the deepest lake in Africa as well as, the World Heritage of flora and fauna in the Serengeti National Park and the Ngorongoro Crater, all which form the great Serengeti Ecosystem.

After these remarks, I now have, the pleasure to declare that the First Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Best Practices Conference is officially opened.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR LISTENING!