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Zambia Celebrates the First Open Defecation Free District

Chienge is also First in Southern Africa

Lusaka (23 April) – On 24 April 2015, Chienge will host a national celebration to mark the historic achievement of becoming the first district in Zambia and Southern Africa to be declared Open Defecation Free (ODF). With three chiefdoms in the districts becoming ODF at the same time, Chienge's verification also makes Zambia the second country in Africa, after Kenya, to realize such an ambitious goal. The district moved from a low baseline coverage of 12% to the now verified 98% population reach (this includes all 13 wards being verified and certified as ODF by the Ministry of Local Government and Housing working with UNICEF.

The celebration is part of the "ODF Zambia by 2020" Campaign which has seen Zambia make progress on improving sanitation coverage with chiefdoms leading the way. So far, 10 chiefdoms have been declared ODF, an important factor in reducing disease outbreaks such as diarrhea in communities.

Diarrhea is the second leading cause of death for children under 5, globally, and one of the significant contributors is the lack of access to adequate sanitation and appropriate hand washing facilities. In Zambia, approximately 40 children die each day because of a lack of access to sanitation and clean water and 40% of those affected are stunted – notably because of faecal-oral transmission of diseases. The negative outcomes disproportionately impact Zambia women and girls, who face additional risks to their safety when defecating outdoors or attempting to reach far away toilets. In the economic context, Zambia loses ZMW 946 billion annually due to poor sanitation, according to the review conducted by the Water and Sanitation Program (World Bank, 2012).

The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Housing, Mr. John Phiri, commented, "We are inspired by this landmark achievement which shows that by using community participatory approaches such as Community- Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), and effective sector collaboration at different levels, huge milestones can be made towards a defecation free Zambia. We salute their Royal Highnesses Senior Chief Mununga, Senior Chief Puta and Chieftainness Lambwe Chomba, for their distinguished leadership that has resulted in having the first ODF district in Zambia and other countries in the Southern African Region."

"A lack of sanitation in the most vulnerable populations often translates to lack of good health, and a loss in economic and educational opportunities – outcomes that disproportionately affect the quality of a woman's and child's life and future," stated Dr. Hamid El-Bashir Ibrahim, Country Representative for UNICEF. "This is why the district of Chienge achieving its open defecation free status is an important milestone in Zambia's history, not only because of what it means for the

health of over 100,000 residents in the district, but also because it demonstrates the great capacity of the Zambia communities and their traditional leaders to realize their own innovative solutions. I can only admire such a remarkable display of collective government prioritization, collaboration, and mobilization that have made this milestone possible."

While the long-term health and development impacts of this achievement are still emerging – remarkably, Chienge was able to leap between its abysmal starting point to its currently outstanding coverage over just the course of one year - stakeholders watch with great interest as the district, which historically recorded almost yearly outbreaks of cholera, passes the 12 month mark with zero confirmed cases of Cholera recorded.

"This has been an absolute team effort. Spearheaded by the strong leadership and commitment of the three chiefs, our tireless Community Champions, EHTs and CHAs, Sub-Chiefs, Headmen and head women, Ward Councillors, all District WASHE Committee members including the District Administration and key line Ministries and District Staff, especially our RWSSP Focal Point person and the proud and hard-working communities of Chienge District, with excellent support from facilitating NGO Akros, PDHID and provincial and national line ministries, "says Chienge District Council Secretary Mr Kauchingu.

Chienge is the first in the line of ODF districts to be verified in the upcoming months, which includes Lunga, Samfya and Mumbwa to be confirmed soon.

The National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme is led by the Ministry of Local Government and Housing, in partnership with the Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs, Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health, and the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health. The leadership is supported by many cooperating partners and NGOs in the sector, particularly by UNICEF and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) programme currently found in 67 rural districts, with a view to expanding into more districts this year. NRWSSP is committed to addressing the underlying causes of diarrhea and other waterborne diseases through a package of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) interventions that include the evidence-based participatory approach of CLTS.

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Key terminologies:

Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) - An innovative, participatory methodology for mobilizing communities to completely eliminate Open Defecation. Adopted and adapted by GRZ – the approach utilizes Community Champions to facilitate communities to conduct their own appraisal of Open Defecation and decide on their own actions to address it. The programme aims to have each and every household with access to an Adequate Latrine, which includes a handwashing facility with water and soap or ash available and in use.

Adequate Latrines - this is particular to Zambia, defined by the Ministry of Local Government and Housing as follows: a House Hold has a latrine with a superstructure for privacy, a smooth cleanable floor, a lid covering the hole, and a hand-washing facility with water and soap or ash available; this measure is greater than the better than the improved sanitation.

ODF District - A village is considered ODF when every household has a latrine with a superstructure to provide privacy, and lid and a hand-washing facility with water and soap or ash available. When more than 85% of villages in a District meet this criteria, the District is verified as being ODF.

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