

'Transform CLTS into national programme'

By WALLEEN SIMWAKA
DEPUTY director of public health in the Ministry of Health Fodson Nyirenda has appealed to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to transform the Community Led Total Sanitation into a national programme.

CLTS is a UNICEF-funded programme whose main aim is to educate communities against the dangers of open defecation by voluntarily constructing usable toilets.

CLTS is currently only in some districts of Southern Province and its effect has seen some communities attaining a 100 per cent open defecation-free status with every household having a latrine.

Mr Nyirenda said Zambia could be the cleanest country if the people could cultivate a positive attitude towards sustaining the *make Zambia clean and health campaign*.

He said sanitation in most townships in urban areas is poor and that some residents have now developed the habit of using what has come to be known as flying toilets.

Flying toilets are plastic bags which some people use to relieve themselves and throw the bag away.

CLTS, piloted in Choma, has now been spread to Mazabuka, Livingstone and Kazungula with

the idea of triggering shame among communities practising open defecation.

Mr Nyirenda said UNICEF should consider replicating the activities of CLTS to other provinces because many rural communities do not consider good sanitation as a health issue.

He was speaking at the closure of CLTS legal enforcement workshop in Livingstone on Friday.

He said Zambia is a dirty country largely because of lack of enforcement of by-laws.

Mr Nyirenda said the public health act is not being enforced and that this has led to communities committing public health misdemeanors with impunity.

"I have been following the activities of CLTS very closely and I must say I am pleased with their achievement. Choma, where the programme was piloted, is now a clean town. Many of the illegal businesses have been closed.

"It was through the CLTS that Choma Prison and a nursing school was closed. I would like to see these activities replicated in other provinces because every Zambian needs to live a healthy life. UNICEF should consider making CLTS a national programme so that

every Zambian benefits," Mr Nyirenda said.

He said diseases like cholera, dysentery and other preventable illnesses have been haunting the country for a long time and that CLTS could be the formula to a clean environment.

Mr Nyirenda said he would this week issue a circular to all health inspectors in Zambia to resume routine examination of food handlers across the country.

He said the Food and Drugs Act demands that consumers be protected, yet there are many places where people are subjected to eating food prepared in dirty and unhygienic conditions.

And Livingstone Principal Resident Magistrate Davis Mumba said the public should change its behaviour towards the environment.

Magistrate Mumba said he would work closely with the CLTS committee in meting out punishments to those who contravene the public health and the food and drugs Acts.

He said many businesses are trading without licences and those who resist closure of their businesses will have to be subjected to the process of the law.

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