

UN celebrates Yvonne Chaka Chaka 10th year working on development issues

At a press conference hosted by the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership and UNICEF on 31 March in Johannesburg, Goodwill Ambassador Yvonne Chaka Chaka was recognised for her enduring work and commitment to maternal and child health, particularly for Africans, over the past decade...



Several world leaders shared messages of thanks and congratulations that were presented at the press briefing. In a video message, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, thanked Yvonne for her "enormous contributions to the United Nations and our world." He continued: "...I am proud to march side-by-side with you for a better future. You are truly the Princess of Africa, our Queen of Equality, and an invaluable friend of the United Nations."

H.R.H. Princess Astrid of Belgium, Special Representative of the RBM Partnership, also sent her congratulations in a written message delivered on her behalf: "Yvonne, you are a true inspiration and a force to be reckoned with. You are transforming communities one note at a time, creating a healthier and more prosperous world for our sons and daughters."

Through her work with the RBM Partnership and UNICEF, among countless other partner organisations, Yvonne has made child survival a top priority of her humanitarian work. Visiting communities and government halls across Africa and throughout the world, Yvonne has used her public platform to raise awareness and generate political commitment for children's health, including malaria prevention and child vaccination.

"The Roll Back Malaria Partnership is proud to work with Yvonne Chaka Chaka, and we are grateful for her tireless dedication to the women and children of the world. With Yvonne's support, we've seen malaria financing triple in the past decade and malaria mortality rates have decreased by 55% in Africa since 2000," said RBM Representative in New York and Head of External Relations, Herve Verhoosel.

Between 1990 and 2013, the number of under-five deaths was halved, from 12.7 million to 6.3 million. However, despite best efforts and tremendous progress, an estimated 17,000 children under five die every day from preventable and treatable causes like malaria and unsafe drinking water each day. Sub-Saharan Africa shoulders the greatest burden of child mortality, with an estimated 1 in 11 children born there dying before the age of 5 - nearly 15 times the average in high-income countries.

"Right now the world is reducing the under-five mortality rate faster than at any other time during the past two decades," said Herve Ludovic de Lys, UNICEF South Africa Representative. "Powerful, recognisable voices like that of Yvonne Chaka Chaka have played an enormous role in this accelerated progress through high level advocacy, generating public interest and financial commitment."

Born in Apartheid South Africa and raised in a Soweto township, Yvonne Chaka Chaka became the first black child to appear on South African television in 1981 and went on to launch what would become a legendary music career at the age of 19. When a band mate suddenly became ill and died of malaria while on tour, Yvonne began lifting her voice for the millions of Africans at risk of the preventable and treatable disease. In doing so, she has become an omnipresent advocate for the United Nations development priorities - including education, poverty, gender equality and discrimination based on sexual orientation, among others - to create a better Africa and a safer, more prosperous world.

Yvonne also founded the Princess of Africa Foundation to build upon her advocacy work with the UN, Foundations, Governments, Civil society and Private Sector partners. She has received accolades worldwide, and in January 2012, she became first African woman to receive the World Economic Forum Crystal Award, which recognizes artists for using their skills to improve the status of the world.

In a written statement delivered on his behalf, President Jacob Zuma noted, "You have represented the country well as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Children's Fund and the Roll Back Malaria Partnership...You have also played a key role in promoting a good image of the country throughout the continent as our ambassador through music and humanitarian work."

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