

Press Statement - For immediate release

Former Tanzanian President commends State Government's efforts on 'Dakshata'

His Excellency, the former President of Tanzania, *Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete* called on the Hon'ble Minister of Health in the Government of Rajasthan, *Shree Kali Charan Saraf* today at his office in the state capital, Jaipur and complimented him on the Government's achievements on implementing initiatives that focused on women's empowerment and improvement of the status of the girl child.

During discussions, Shree Saraf was pleased to highlight the fact that due to the successful execution of the scheme on the ground, "day of birth care" to newborns has made phenomenal strides and as a result, newborn resuscitation has improved by 95 per cent, while management of advanced neonatal care has improved by 84 per cent. These figures represent rapid progress by a state which till recently did not have a positive track record of maternal and child health.

The ***Dakshata*** (meaning adroitness), project that has succeeded in arresting and reversing the high neonatal births in the state, was discussed. This initiative aims to improve the quality of care at healthcare delivery points across the country. In Rajasthan, the intervention has succeeded in empowering health workers, creating an enabling environment for them to perform their duties; it has also prioritized and standardized approaches for life-saving practices at the point of use. This highly successful scheme (modelled on the WHO Safe Childbirth Checklist, implemented in 101 facilities across seven high priority districts in the state) came in for high praise from the former President.

His Excellency President Kikwete is a maternal and newborn advocate and is visiting India with The Children Investment Fund Foundation to see how other countries in low resource settings are overcoming challenges to ensure that women give birth with the aid of a qualified birth attendant. Obstacles to ensuring pregnant women give birth safely in a health facility with qualified personal include transport, staff, equipment, medical supplies and infrastructure are all challenges that India has also needed to navigate to improve healthy birth outcomes.

The South-South study visit included a meet with H.E. *Shree Kali Charan Saraf* as a courtesy call at the summation of the former President's three day tour to Rajasthan.

'Dakshata' may find mention at the UNGA

His Excellency conveyed to the Honourable Minister of Health that he was very 'impressed' with the work done in Rajasthan on 'Dakshata' and that he would certainly make a prominent mention of the same in his address to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) later this year. This would not only be an

honour for Rajasthan and the nation, but would give the initiative global exposure and a chance for other countries to learn from this exemplar.

“Visiting two facilities yesterday, I was struck by the way this program is being run so efficiently and diligently. I commend the State Government and the implementing partners in making this a highly successful program which has overhauled the neonatal care scenario in this state. This is a successful approach to overcoming obstacles in low resource settings that showcases how with political will combined with an innovative approach to improving neonatal care can make a significant improvement on maternal and newborn health outcomes.” remarked former President Kikwete.

In the meeting which lasted about 30 minutes, the two dignitaries had wide-ranging discussions on specific issues relating to the health and social well-being of women and children in Rajasthan. The former President, who had just visited an on-site facility where the program was being implemented in the outskirts of the city, commended Smt. Raje on the stellar performance of the Dakshata scheme. Her Government’s consistent focus on the girl child and women were also lauded by His Excellency.

“Focus on initiatives to empower children and women, worthy of emulation”, says former President

Shree Saraf also apprised the visiting dignitary on other path-breaking initiatives that the Rajasthan Government has embarked upon to provide a better quality of life to its citizens- especially youth and children. In this context, the Honourable Minister informed the former President about the state Government’s untiring efforts to improve key indicators such as infant mortality and the maternal mortality ratios and the programs in this regard which he said have borne fruit.

Another key area that was discussed at the meeting was improving the quality of life of the girl child. Given the legacy of a skewed sex ratio, the Rajasthan Government has undertaken various schemes that support the girl child through the course of her life and ensure a life of dignity and prosperity for women and children. One such flagship scheme is the **Bhamasha Yojana** which involves transferring of cash entitlements directly to the account of the woman of the family, a scheme which has been widely replicated both at the federal level and in other states. Another scheme that was also discussed was the **Mukhya Mantri RajshreeYojana** which ensures a staggered payment to the family right from the birth of a girl child to her higher education, thus delaying pregnancy and early child marriage.

The two leaders also spoke about other flagship schemes such as the **Mukhya Mantri Jal Swavalamban Abhiyan**, critical to a dry state like Rajasthan as also the **Chirayu Programme**. His Excellency noted how schemes and policies run by Smt. Raje’s Government are empowering communities and helping to change the status quo of women and the girl child in her state.

The ‘Poshan’ program of the Government of Rajasthan which addresses the issue of malnutrition was also discussed as an example of how state support along with the right kind of interventions can make a difference on the ground.

“The Government and my department have tirelessly worked to improve the lives of our citizens through economic and social empowerment with a special focus on the marginalized, the poor and children and

women. These are our guiding posts and our efforts in this direction will continue unabated'', the Hon'ble Minister of Health remarked.

His Excellency also commended Shree Saraf on the Rajasthan Government's efforts on these issues and indicated that the state contains some excellent case studies which could be showcased at international fora as examples of how a Government with vision and political will is turning things around to ensure better quality of lives for its citizens, especially children and women. He also lauded the efforts by Smt. Raje's Government to improve the socio-economic status of its citizens and implementing state-level initiatives as initiatives worthy of emulation.

Shree Saraf also informed His Excellency, that during the tenure of the present Government in Rajasthan, the state has made rapid strides and is now counted among the top 8 states in the country on parameters such as growth, inward investments, industrialization and job creation – to name a few. At the close of the discussions, he thanked the former President for taking some time off to visit Rajasthan and invited him to visit the state again.

His Excellency expressed his gratitude for the warmth and cordiality the state has extended to him during his visit and requested that Smt. Raje and Shree Saraf should visit Tanzania and see for themselves how the African country is emerging from the shadows of the past and is being transformed as a young, confident and progressive 21st century nation.

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