

BY MOSES CHITSULO

Fifteen non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that deal with reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health (RMNCH) have petitioned the government to update the country's Essential Medicines List (EML) to include the United Nations (UN) recommended 13 life saving commodities for women, newborn and children by 2015.

EML prescribes and guides the procurement of drugs and medicines which are used in the country's health system.

Speaking on behalf of the NGOs during a press briefing in Blantyre on Wednesday, Health and Rights Education Programme (Hrep) Executive Director Maziko Matemba said failure to include the life saving commodities is a missed opportunity in the campaign against maternal and newborn

NGOs petition govt to update medicine list

mortality rates in Malawi.

Some of the missing commodities include injectable antibiotics, resuscitation devices, contraceptives implants, emergency contraceptives, oral rehydration salts, female condoms, zinc, magnesium sulfate, amoxicillin and misoprostol.

"The country has been very slow in updating the guidelines that will necessitate the inclusion of

these 13 essential commodities on the list. The list was updated in 2009 which means years have passed since the last update. What we want is for government to give us its position on whether the update can be done or not and then we map the way forward," Matemba said.

He said in the event that some of the 13 commodities are available, it will still be difficult for health workers to administer them since

there is need for guidelines for their use.

"There are other international donors that may be willing to donate them [Essential medicines] but they cannot do so because they are not part of the EML. We need the inclusion of these commodities if we are to improve our health service delivery, more especially to women and children," he said. The petition was already

presented to the Secretary for Health Chris Kang'ombe last week Friday and, according to Matemba, he promised to respond within a period of two weeks.

Statistics show that Malawi is off-track on reduction of maternal mortality ratio currently at 675 per 100,000 live births against a target of 155 per 100,000 by 2015 and newborn mortality has also remained high.

Mwanza citizens bemoan

Mombera University

work to start