

**A focus on the plight of malnourished children in sub-Saharan Africa:**

**The Lord Alton of Liverpool's Reception at the House of Lords, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013**

**P. Ofori-Atta, President of Motec Life UK**

My Lord, Professor David Alton- chief patron of Motec Life UK, noble member of Parliament Sir Baldry, honourable representatives of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Ghana, His Excellency Professor Danso-Boafo Ghana High Commissioner represented by Mr Peter Taylor, Head of Political & Economic Affairs, His Worshipful Mayor of the Borough of Dacorum, Councillor Herbert Chapman and Mrs Chapman, co-patrons Mr Peter Dyson of Hertfordshire and Mrs Dyson, and Mrs Marian Barnor Chair, Board of Directors, Merchant bank of Ghana, Accra, Mr Emmanuel Akuffo MBE, Patron, Ghana Doctors and Dentist Association of UK, and wife Mrs Akuffo, colleagues, my elegant wife Gladys, comrade Trustees of Motec Life –UK, the modern nightingale of nursing Mrs Georgina Gaisie, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I join Right Honourable David Alton in welcoming you to this evening's reception. This event has been facilitated by Lord Alton and we are very grateful to him for this esteemed privilege.

I consider myself blessed, and indeed humbled to stand before you this evening, on the occasion of 'May Day call' on behalf of Motec and malnourished children across the globe, especially impoverished sub-Saharan Africa. And what a place to choose to remind ourselves of the plight of the impoverished families and children - the institution of fairness, where important international changes are made, ratified and implemented - the House of Lords. Today, we are gathered here to focus on malnutrition in the world especially sub-Saharan Africa with the hope that our little efforts can have far reaching benefits.

Ghana has contributed to the medical vocabulary and focus on malnutrition, by naming one of the disease conditions 'kwashiorkor'. The name comes from the Ga language of Accra, and describes the unsightly, bloated-plump-child syndrome, which occurs when attention is swapped from the preceding baby to the one that has just been born. Kwashiorkor is protein deficient–high calorie malnutrition, one of the most serious and most widespread forms of malnutrition in sub-Saharan Africa.

According to statistics from the Ghana Health Service, 60% of the 10.5 million deaths per annum of children under the age of five worldwide, is caused by malnutrition. 30% of the

children are stunted, 22% are underweight and 6% of children aged between six months and five years have severe anaemia ([Health](#) 28 October 2005, Ghana Health Service). About 12,000 children in Ghana alone die each year from malnutrition. The statistics also indicate that under-nutrition contributes to about half of all child deaths beyond early infancy whilst one out of every thirteen children in Ghana die before their fifth birthday mostly as a result of under-nutrition ([Ghana Health News](#), Sept. 22, 2012). We note that Ghana has enjoyed sustained economic growth in recent years, however, this favourable situation has not filtered down to where it is most needed, leaving the health and nutrition status of many vulnerable children in dire straits. It is so serious that Ghana organized a workshop on Nutrition Advocacy Communications under the theme '[Build the Future, Invest Now in Nutrition](#)' in 2012. The situation is very uncomfortable looking across the sub-region.

Today we want to highlight the need for governments to continue to play a major role and to provide support for non-governmental organisations in the prevention of, and the fight against malnutrition in children. We intend to share with you our thoughts, joys, experiences, and wisdom from the shortfalls and failures that we came across in our work, in one of the harshest and poorest environments in the world, the Jirapa District of Ghana. This is a district with a population of about 100,000 people living in an area of about 1,400km square. The plight of these people attracted Comic relief to visit the district in February 2012, during which education was looked into. The issues of malnutrition and direct health care were not touched. We have identified the contribution nutrition and education could make in supporting children in our NUWLIFE project. We want Nutrition to Work for Life and we are working with the local chief (Naa Ansoleh Ganaa II), the local hospital Jirapa St Joseph's district hospital and the people of Jirapa, to facilitate a sustainable support for the children and their families.

We recognise that life is not worthwhile unless it has been useful and made a positive difference to the people we see or never get to know.

We are here today because we care, and want to be counted among those who touch the lives of people in need.

We want to be filled with renewed dedication to humanity, with the hope that we will continue to support good causes.

We want to be inspired by this dynamic house and the people who work in it, like Rt Honourable David Alton and influence good changes in the world.

Above all, in the true spirit of the House, we are here to be part of the history that focuses minds to diminish, and eventually abolish one of the cruellest forms of preventable disease that this modern world has ever witnessed - food deprivation in the midst of plenty, with the unnecessary

loss of young lives, at a time when we as a nation, are seeing huge quantities of food being destroyed.

Motec's Trustee responsible for education and international affairs Dr Louisa Draper will recall the journey that we have been through the past few years. We have been supported throughout this journey by The Ghana High Commission and Lord Alton, from whom we have enjoyed responsible inspirational and unadulterated guidance. It is no surprise that Lord Alton is Professor of good citizenship at Liverpool John Moores University.

We appreciate the contributions that Lord Alton, our consortium of patrons, health workers and the British public especially the people of the Borough of Dacorum, have made in support of the NUWLIFE project.

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." **John F. Kennedy.**

My Lord, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Let us enjoy our evening to the full, as we draw the attention of the world to the children muted by hunger. We can lend them a voice and a hand of friendship for a healthy start in life and hope for the future.

Thank you.

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