

WHO ZAMBIA

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STORY HIGHLIGHT

RALLYING TO CONTROL CHOLERA OUTBREAK

- 25 tons of medical supplies and equipment procured
- 4 million cholera vaccine doses delivered
- 23 WHO experts deployed

One evening, Lusaka resident Samuel Zyambo rapidly fell into a disturbing, dreamlike state of unconsciousness. He was unaware that when he woke up the following day, he was in a cholera treatment centre fighting for his life, with no recollection of anything that had taken place in the previous 12 hours.

"I had no idea where I was. There were people in beds all around me," he says. Zyambo was in fact at a sports stadium that Zambia's Ministry of Health converted into a state-of-the-art cholera treatment centre. "When the doctor told me I was at National Heroes Stadium, I couldn't understand why I was in a place where I know they play football," he recalls.

Zyambo, like tens of thousands of his fellow Zambians, contracted cholera, an acute, extremely virulent infection, during one of the worst outbreaks in the country's recent history. He says he owes his life to the rapid response of his family, who rushed him to the treatment centre, and the excellent care he received from health workers.

The outbreak peaked in January 2024, with Lusaka at its epicentre. Between 15 October 2023 and 23 July 2024, Zambia had recorded 23 382 cumulative cases and 740 deaths. No new cases have been reported since 11 July 2024, a sea change from the situation in January, when the country was recording an average of 461 new cases every 24 hours.

Government's multi-faceted response, supported by World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners, included surveillance, infection prevention and control, case management, laboratory, community engagement and improvement of water, sanitation and hygiene services to control the outbreak. WHO dispatched 23 international experts to provide technical support in each of these response areas, who in turn trained over 800 health workers.

In addition to supplying 25 tons of medical supplies and equipment, including cholera kits, WHO upgraded seven community-based cholera treatment centers in Lusaka's Chilanga, Chipata, George, and Matero sub districts and the Southern province's Chipepo, Namoomba and Lumbembe areas. The Organization also provided infection and prevention, water, sanitation, and hygiene supplies to two other treatment centers.

In partnership with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, UNICEF, and others, WHO delivered 4.1 million cholera vaccine doses over two rounds to immunize people at high risk of infection in the worst affected areas to stem the outbreak.

"We've learned a number of lessons that I'm hoping we can have as part of our playbook for future responses," says Dr Kalima Nawa, who was clinical manager at Heroes cholera treatment centre until its closure in late February 2024. "So ultimately, the hope is that what we are learning here allows us to have a sustainable, fast response to future outbreaks, not just the cholera outbreak, but other responses as well".

Read more:

<https://www.afro.who.int/countries/zambia/news/zambia-rallying-control-cholera-outbreak?country=Zambia&name=Zambia>

Regional Technical Meeting on Maternal and Newborn Health

Rebrands Initiative to 'Every Woman Every Newborn #HealthyFutures'.

With support from WHO and partners, Zambia recently hosted a pivotal regional technical workshop focused on maternal and newborn health, drawing participants from over 13 African countries and beyond. This significant gathering, held in Lusaka, marked a transformative moment for the region's efforts to combat preventable maternal and newborn mortality. In a move that symbolizes a renewed commitment to this cause, the workshop also introduced the rebranding of the initiative, now known as the ENAP/EPMM 'Every Woman Every Newborn #HealthyFutures'.

The workshop, initially centered around operationalizing the Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality (EPMM) and Early Newborn Action Plan (ENAP), brought together health experts, policymakers, and representatives from various international and civil society organizations, and aimed to translate global, regional, and national commitments into actionable strategies to implement locally, ensuring every mother and newborn has access to the care they need.

Participants engaged in detailed discussions on the challenges and opportunities within the current healthcare system, focusing on strengthening health services, improving data collection and usage, and increasing community engagement to support maternal and newborn health.

Speaking on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Beatrice Mutali, Dr. Nathan Bakyaite, WHO Representative to Zambia, highlighted the critical need for continued investment in maternal and newborn health: "Investing in maternal and newborn health is not only a moral imperative but a smart investment in our future. Healthy mothers and children are the foundation of healthy societies and prosperous economies," he said.

The workshop provided a platform for countries to share experiences and best practices, focusing on overcoming the unique challenges faced by health systems in the region. Key topics included improving strategic choices to enhance MNH acceleration prioritization, implementation and monitoring.

Dr George Sinyangwe, Permanent Secretary for Donor Coordination, representing the Minister of Health, called for continued collaboration and common purpose to ensure that every mother and newborn in Africa has an opportunity to survive and thrive. "This workshop is not just about policy; it's about common purpose and action. We must ensure that our strategies are not only comprehensive but also adaptable to the needs of our communities. Every life saved is a testament to our collective effort and commitment."



"Every Woman
Every Newborn
#HealthyFutures".

The decision to rebrand the initiative to 'Every Woman Every Newborn #HealthyFutures' reflects an expanded vision that goes beyond just preventing mortality. The new name emphasizes the broader goal of ensuring every woman and newborn has access to quality healthcare, promoting survival and long-term health and well-being.

As the workshop concluded, all participants renewed their sense of urgency and commitment to accelerate the implementation of the Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality and Early Newborn Action Plan. The workshop's outcomes are expected to inform national policy and guide future initiatives to improve maternal and newborn health.

In 2021, Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP) and Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality (EPMM) global partnership, co-chaired by WHO, UNICEF, and UNFPA, established population coverage targets for each of these critical high-impact packages of care with country governments to accelerate progress in maternal and newborn health by 2025.

Technical Workshop on Delivery for Impact Cycle



The delivery for impact (DFI) approach is a significant framework that aims to strengthen the implementation of national health strategies through targeted, data-driven interventions. By using this method, WHO seeks to address the most pressing health challenges and ensure that resources are efficiently allocated to areas that will generate the most impact.

Zambia is one of the three countries in Africa (alongside Rwanda and Madagascar) where focused delivery and integrated WHO action for impact is prioritized. This decision reflects the urgency of accelerating progress in key health areas, with the ultimate goal of ensuring healthier populations and achieving SDG targets.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, WHO Zambia Country Office together with WHO Africa Regional Office (AFRO) and WHO headquarters (HQ) analyzed health gaps and trends of national priorities identified in the 2022- 2026 National Health Strategic Plan (NHSP), leading to WHO convening the technical workshop on Delivery for Impact (DFI) Cycle from 9 to July, 2024.

Subsequently five impact level priorities were identified for WHO's three level engagement and support in the areas of health care financing, health workforce strengthening, reducing maternal and neonatal deaths, elimination of malaria and reducing malnutrition.



The DFI workshop was a key moment in Zambia's journey towards achieving its health goals. The workshop brought together national and regional health leaders, program implementers, and partners to align strategies and define practical steps for accelerating progress in the identified five priority areas.

Participants engaged in discussions and group activities on how to strengthen health systems, identifying high-priority issues, designing solutions, setting targets, communication and engagement, implementation, progress tracking and adjustment, and sustaining change. The workshop also provided an opportunity to share best practices, challenges, and innovations in health delivery, ensuring that the DFI approach is effectively applied to Zambia's unique health context.

The 2022-2026 National Health Strategic Plan outlines Zambia's vision for a healthier future, and WHO's support through the Delivery for Impact approach is a critical component in making that vision a reality.

Mid-term Review of the National Health Strategic Plan: A Collaborative Effort to Strengthen Zambia's Health Sector



The Ministry of Health, with support from the World Health Organization (WHO) African Region, WHO Zambia Country Office, and various partners, recently conducted a comprehensive Mid-term Review of the National Health Strategic Plan (NHSP) 2022-2026. This critical review aimed to evaluate progress, identify challenges, and refine health programme implementation as Zambia continues its commitment to improving health outcomes and achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

The National Health Strategic Plan serves as a roadmap for the country's health sector development, guiding efforts to strengthen health systems, promote public health, and ensure access to essential health services. By conducting a mid-term review, the Ministry of Health and its partners are reaffirming their dedication to continuous learning and improvement, ensuring that the plan remains relevant and responsive to emerging health needs.



Speaking at the opening session, Dr. George Sinyangwe, Zambia's Permanent Secretary for Donor Coordination in the Ministry of Health, commended the collaborative efforts and reiterated the Government's commitment to ensuring that every Zambian has access to quality health services. "As we review the progress of our National Health Strategic Plan, let us remember the many Zambians we are working for, the Zambians that yearn for better health services," he stated.

And speaking on behalf of WHO Country Representative for Zambia, Dr. Nathan Bakayita, Dr Azmach Gebregiorgis called for participants to approach the review with receptivity, prepared to learn and adapt. "Let us cultivate an environment of collaboration and knowledge-sharing, recognizing that the National Health Strategic Plan's success hinges on all stakeholders' collective efforts," Dr. Gebregiorgis remarked.

During the review process, all key indicators, programme objectives and interventions in the NHSP were closely examined to determine progress, areas of improvement and acceleration. The review also highlighted the impact of ongoing initiatives in various health programmes, and efforts to bolster the health workforce.

The Ministry of Health, together with WHO and its partners, remain committed to fostering a resilient and sustainable health system that can deliver quality care for all Zambians, ensuring that no one is left behind in the journey toward health equity and UHC.



7th African Medicines Quality Forum (AMQF) Technical Annual Meeting - Safeguarding Africa's Health

Zambia proudly hosted the 7th Annual African Medicines Quality Forum (AMQF) Technical Meeting, bringing together leading experts and key stakeholders from across Africa to address the critical issue of medicine quality on the continent.

The event was a collaborative platform under the umbrella of the African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), with active support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and other stakeholders committed to ensuring access to safe, effective, and quality-assured medicines.

Held from 17 to 18 July, the meeting featured in-depth discussions on harmonizing medicine quality standards, strengthening regulatory systems, and enhancing the capacity of National Medicines Regulatory Authorities to safeguard public health across Africa. This year's meeting focused on scaling up efforts towards AMQF's role in advancing vaccine manufacturing and operationalizing the African Medicines Agency (AMA), among other key areas.

Dr. Nathan Bakayita, WHO Country Representative, underscored the importance of collaboration. "Collaboration among national laboratories is the cornerstone of our collective success. By pooling our expertise, resources, and data, we can build health systems capable of addressing quality issues efficiently and effectively. Let us embrace the spirit of collaboration so as to ensure that every person has access to safe, effective and high-quality medicines," he noted.

Similarly, AUDA-NEPAD emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement in improving the quality of medicines in Africa. By bringing together regulatory authorities, partners, and policymakers, the AMQF continues to spearhead efforts to create a safer pharmaceutical environment for all Africans.





Turning the Tide: Evaluating the Impact of Rufunsa's Community-Driven Malaria Fight

The fight against malaria in Zambia remains a priority as the country works toward achieving its goal of malaria elimination. In 2021, Zambia adopted a 2-year community-based malaria reactive, and response (1,7mRCT) project implemented from 01 January 2022 to 31 December 2023 in Rufunsa District. The objective of the project was to validate the impact of the test and treat community-based strategy in a medium to high transmission epidemiological setting.

With support from the Chinese Institute of Parasitic Diseases, an Independent End-of-project (Terminal) Evaluation of the malaria was conducted from 6 to 8 August 2024, offering an opportunity to reflect on the achievements, challenges, and potential for sustainability.

The 1,7mRCT project was launched in Rufunsa District to complement Zambia's National Malaria Elimination Strategic Plan. Rufunsa, a rural district located in the eastern part of Lusaka Province, is highly endemic to malaria, with its population facing persistent challenges due to limited mosquito control interventions, and effective malaria surveillance.

The project's core focus was to enhance malaria case detection and response using community-based strategies. This comprised deploying community health workers (CHWs) to conduct reactive case detection, treatment of malaria-positive individuals, and distribution of long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs). In addition, CHWs were trained to educate communities about malaria prevention and health-seeking behaviors. The 1,7mRCT Project utilized a responsive surveillance system that enabled early detection of malaria cases, swift response to outbreaks, and effective reporting and follow-up.

While the project achieved considerable success, it also faced several challenges including;

1. Geographical barriers: Rufunsa's vast and difficult terrain posed significant logistical challenges for CHWs, particularly in reaching remote communities for surveillance and treatment.
2. Limited Resources: Despite the project's success in improving malaria response, there were ongoing limitations in funding for transportation, medical supplies, and surveillance equipment, affecting the overall reach and impact and
3. Sustainability concerns: With the project's conclusion, there are concerns about sustaining the gains made in malaria case detection and community engagement.

The 1,7mRCT project has had a positive impact on reducing malaria in Rufunsa District through its reactive case detection and response model. The terminal evaluation underscores the project's success in empowering communities, improving malaria detection, and enhancing local health systems. As Zambia continues its journey toward malaria elimination, the lessons learned from this project will be invaluable in shaping future interventions and ensuring lasting impact.

Other stories

In Brief...



Polio SIAs launched targeting over 2.7 million children

WHO Zambia joined the Minister of Health, Hon Dr Elijah Muchimba at the launch of the first round of the novel oral polio vaccine type 2 campaign targeting 2,710,500 children under 5 in four provinces namely, Central, Copperbelt, Luapula and Northwestern.

The campaign that ran from 25 to 29 July 2024, was door-to-door vaccinations, and targeted areas and gatherings such as markets, schools and churches.

WHO supported the MOH in training vaccinators, deployed national supervisors and supported the monitoring and implementation of the campaign as well as terminal evaluation of round 1 to assess the quality of the campaign.



National HIV Testing, Counseling, and Treatment (HTCT) Day 2024

On National HIV Testing, Counseling, and Treatment Day 2024, UN joined Ministry of Health, Chongwe community and partners to enhance ongoing efforts to combat HIV, hosting a community-wide event that emphasized the importance of early detection, counseling, and treatment. The day, held under the theme "Free your mind; test for HIV today, secure your future," aimed to raise awareness and encourage individuals to get tested, seek counseling, and access life-saving antiretroviral therapy (ART)

Social Media highlights



Photo highlights



**We thank you for your
continued support in
our efforts to contribute
toward achieving
Zambia's health goals.**

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