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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

WHO ZAMBIA

Zambia responds to cholera outbreak

Zambia declared a cholera outbreak in October 2023, with Lusaka being the epicenter. There was increase in transmission in mid-December 2023 all through to January 2024, putting millions of people at risk. The outbreak that initially emerged in unplanned peri-urban areas of Lusaka is now largely under control with fewer cases being reported. As of 31 March, 2024, Zambia recorded 22,720 cholera cases with 723 cholera deaths.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has been actively involved in the cholera response, collaborating closely with the Ministry of Health and other partners to bolster outbreak control measures and bring the outbreak to an end.

WHO's support to the response cuts across all the key pillars including coordination, surveillance, case management, vaccination, risk communication and community engagement. In collaboration with various partners, WHO has provided technical support, medical supplies, and training to healthcare workers to enhance their capacity in managing cholera cases effectively.

Further, WHO has played a crucial role in coordinating partners, mobilizing resources, supporting selected provinces and sub districts and raising awareness about preventive measures such as improved sanitation and hygiene practices within affected communities.

These concerted efforts aim to control the outbreak, save lives and ultimately bring the cholera outbreak in Zambia to an end.

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Fighting cholera: WHO key interventions

With over 20,000 people affected and over 700 lives lost, our mission as WHO is to support the Government to curb the spread of cholera and protect the health and well-being of the Zambian population. In collaboration with various cooperating partners and donors, we continue to provide vital resources to fight the outbreak. Some of the areas of support or key interventions include:

Leadership and Coordination

- WHO activated its Incident Management System (IMS), collaborating closely with the Ministry of Health and health partners to enhance response efforts and coordinate the health sector response.
- On February 4, WHO and partners joined the President, who is also the Global Cholera Champion for a visit at the national cholera treatment center (Heroes Stadium), to witness milestones, show solidarity and government commitment to respond to the worst cholera outbreak Zambia has ever faced

Health Operations and Technical Expertise

- Over 34 WHO and partner surge staff deployed to intensify response activities across all response pillars
- WHO supported the Oral Cholera Vaccination campaign in hotspot areas vaccinating over 17, 000, 000 people, representing 99% of the target population
- Over 500 volunteer health workers and community-based volunteers (CBVs) were trained and deployed to support cholera treatment centers and oral rehydration points in Central, Copperbelt and Southern Provinces
- With support from WHO, 543 volunteer health workers and community-based volunteers (CBVs) were trained and deployed to the WHO supported cholera treatment centres in Matero (289) and Chipata (254) subdistricts of Lusaka

" We need to address the root causes and implement targeted interventions for us to end this cholera outbreak."

DR NATHAN BAKYAITA
WHO COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE



Fighting cholera: WHO key interventions

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- 25 tones and 145 m3 of cholera supplies procured and distributed mostly to Lusaka, Central, Southern and Copperbelt provinces
- 360 cholera beds and 300 buckets of 45 kg of chlorine procured locally.
- Over USD 300,000 invested in cholera supplies; 26 % invested in IPC materials/ PPE; 25% towards the set-up of CTC's; 23% towards WASH activities; and 17 % for the treatment of patients

Partnership and Resource Mobilization

- WHO activated and coordinated weekly coordination meetings with partners actively supporting the cholera response
- A total of about USD 1.8m mobilized for the response including from the African Public Health Emergency Fund (APHEF), CERF, and ECHO
- Over 5 partner health bulletins published highlighting the partners' work and support towards the cholera outbreak response

- In collaboration with MoH and ZNPHI, WHO supported rapid assessments of health facilities' capacities and modifications needed to sustain service delivery in selected districts of Central, Copperbelt, Lusaka and Southern provinces, to better target interventions and support, in areas most needed.

Operations and Logistics Support

- WHO supported the set-up, upgrading and operationalization of 7 cholera treatment centers in selected subdistricts of Lusaka province (Chipata, Chilanga, George, Matero) and Southern Province (Chipepo, Namoomba, Lumbembe).
- WHO has supplied emergency medical kits to treat over 20,000 patients





WHO hands over \$723,582 African Public Health Emergency Funds (APHEF) to MoH

On 10 February 2024, WHO Zambia Country Representative, Dr Nathan Bakyaita presented a check of US\$723,582 to the Ministry of Health Zambia. The funds were approved by the Africa Public Health Emergency Fund committee at the WHO African Region Office to support the fight against cholera in Zambia.

“I am glad to announce, that WHO working together with MoH and requested by the Honorable Minister of Health, we have been allocated US \$ 723,582.30 equivalent to about ZMW 20 million to support the cholera outbreak response,” announced Dr Nathan Bakyaita.

“We are grateful to our all-weather partners. WHO for always being by our side. We are confident that the funds will go a long way in ensuring that we save more lives and protect our communities from cholera,” said Health Minister, Hon Sylvia Masebo.

The APHEF fund was established by WHO/AFRO member states to support emergency response. Member states contribute to this fund annually and can therefore apply to draw from it during times of emergencies.





Active case-finding helps to curb Zambia cholera outbreak

Zambia declared a cholera outbreak in October 2023. Three months later, cases began to decline as response efforts were strengthened through a concerted push by the national health authorities with support from international and local partners, frontline health workers and community-based volunteers.

Among the key outbreak response measures that have helped turn the tide against the outbreak is early detection and reporting of cases at community level. Every day, active case-finding teams visit households where cases have been reported to ensure that other potential cases are detected quickly, so preventing further transmission. The teams also provide households with comprehensive information on how to prevent cholera.

Through its Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response platform, World Health Organization (WHO) has supported the Ministry of Health's surveillance efforts, at both community and health facility levels. The Organization provides technical guidance, tools and support with data analysis and interpretation. Active case finding is very important to the cholera outbreak response, says Chola Shimangwala, Environmental Health Officer for Lusaka District.

Read more here: <https://www.afro.who.int/photo-story/active-case-finding-helps-curb-zambia-cholera-outbreak?country=882&name=Zambia>



WHO Zambia launches Cholera Assessment Mission in Central Province amid growing outbreak



In response to the increasing number of cholera cases in Zambia's Central Province, in February, WHO Zambia undertook a crucial mission to assess the situation on the ground and map areas for immediate support.

Working with the Ministry of Health at the National, Provincial, and District levels and in collaboration with the Zambia National Institute for Public Health (ZNPPI), WHO Zambia has conducted a thorough assessment of the cholera situation in the province. The team evaluated the extent of the outbreak, identified high-risk areas, and understood the underlying factors contributing to the rapid spread of the disease. Read more here: <https://www.afro.who.int/countries/zambia/news/who-zambia-launches-cholera-assessment-mission-central-province-amid-growing-outbreak>

WHO conducts progress check on alternative livelihoods to tobacco growing project

From 26 to 28 February 2024, a combined team consisting of World Health Organization (HQ & AFRO), World Food Programme, Ministry of Health Zambia, and Ministry of Agriculture at national and district levels was in the field to review implementation progress toward achieving target indicators and identification of strategies for the next phase of expansion of the Alternative Livelihoods to Tobacco Growing Project in Chipangali District, Eastern Province.

500 farmers have so far transitioned to growing other crops and adding value to them. 10 learning hubs have been established, and savings groups formed, fostering economic growth while promoting health and environmental sustainability.

Eastern province permanent secretary, Mr Paul Thole commended WHO and FAO for implementing the project as it is helping to save lives and improve the well being of Chipangali communities.





200 volunteer health workers trained in community integrated cholera response strategy

In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Zambia National Public Health Institute, 200 volunteer healthcare workers and community-based volunteers from three hotspot districts on the Copperbelt-Kitwe, Ndola and Chililabombwe have been trained across four pillars of the cholera community integrated response strategy, including community cholera surveillance, infection prevention control measures, case management, and laboratory diagnostics aimed at intensifying community-based interventions to end the cholera outbreak in the province.

289 volunteer health workers trained and deployed

Despite the cases of cholera going down, a lot still needs to be done, especially at community level. WHO Zambia supported the training and deployment of 289 volunteer public health nurses and environmental health specialists in two of the hard-hit sub-districts of Matero and Chipata to enhance our frontline healthcare workers' skills and knowledge to strengthen cholera community-based response and ensure that more lives are protected and saved at the community level.





Cholera vaccination launched

With funding from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the World Health Organization (WHO), through its International Coordinating Group (ICG) on vaccine provision, facilitated the procurement of 1.7 million doses of the Oral Cholera Vaccines for the Zambian Government. Unicef Zambia supported the timely delivery of the vaccines from the Global Emergency Stockpile.

On 16 January, the Minister of Health, Ms Sylvia Masebo, launched the mass Oral cholera vaccination campaign targeting over 1.5 million people across targeted areas with a high risk of transmission in Lusaka district, including Kanyama, Matero and Chawama. At the end of the campaign, 1,870,375 people were vaccinated accounting for 99% of the target population.

WHO donates a vehicle to Mwinilunga Health Office

On Saturday 16 March, World Health Organization Zambia generously handed over a vehicle to Ministry of Health Zambia's Mwinilunga District Health Office to strengthen active disease surveillance, manage public health issues, and facilitate the provision of essential health supplies in the Northwestern district's border areas.

The Provincial Health Director, Dr Lackson Chindikita, expressed gratitude for the generous donation of the vehicle and assured WHO the vehicle would be used for the intended purpose so as to strengthen public health services in hard-to-reach areas.





PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS





SOCIAL MEDIA



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