

COUNTDOWN 2030

Leaving no woman or child behind: health inequalities in Zambia

DISSEMINATION WORKSHOP REPORT

2nd August, 2019
Lusaka, Zambia

Background

Although Zambia has achieved reductions in maternal, neonatal and child mortality rates, current levels, are still unacceptably high and Zambia remains one of the countries in sub Saharan region with the highest mortality ratios. Over the past years, significant progress has been made in Zambia leading to reductions in maternal mortality rates from the estimated 729 per 100,000 live births in 2002, declining to 591 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2007 and a further decline to 398 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2014. Despite promising efforts at the national level, in Zambia, accelerated improvement is restricted by disparities. Reduction of mortality and morbidity for mothers and children can be increased by successful coverage and utilisation of services

Tracking progress towards universal coverage for women's, children's and adolescents' health through coverage indicators—which span the continuum of care from pregnancy prevention and planning through to childbirth and postnatal is crucial. Unless additional and significant efforts are made, to identify coverage gaps along the continuum of care and where effective strategies need to be prioritized, Zambia may not attain the desired SDGs by the year 2030.

The countdown 2030 is a multi-institutional partnership aimed at accelerating momentum to achieve Sustainable Development Goals around ending preventable maternal, newborn, adolescent and child deaths. The initiative generates evidence on progress towards universal health coverage, with a focus on Africa. As part of the initiative, the Zambia Ministry of Health and the University of Zambia attended a series of three analysis workshops in 2017 and 2018. The workshops were held as part of the Countdown regional initiative in Eastern and Southern Africa coordinated by African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC).

Dissemination workshop

On August 2nd, 2019, the School of Public Health at the University of Zambia in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Zambia held a dissemination workshop at Pamodzi Hotel in Lusaka. This was a breakfast workshop where the results from data analysis initiative done to track progress towards universal health coverage for women's, children's and adolescents' health were disseminated.

Purpose/Aim of the Workshop

The purpose of the dissemination workshop was to present research findings to stakeholders and partners from various institutions. The theme of the workshop was "*Leaving no woman or child behind: health inequalities in Zambia*". The workshop aimed at sharing evidence generated from the analysis and engaging Government, decision makers and partners/stakeholders in efforts to achieve universal Health Coverage in Zambia

In attendance – stakeholders

The workshop participants (Annex 1) represented; The Ministry of Health, at headquarters and from two provinces, African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) USAID, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), World Health Organisation (WHO), National Health Research Authority (NHRA), PATH, META Zambia, Centre for Reproductive Health (CRHE), University of Zambia, and various Media houses. The workshop was attended by about 56 participants.

The Agenda

Holding a breakfast workshop was deemed as the best strategy to get key people in the meeting within a short time before their busy schedules. The meeting started at 7.30 am and ended at 11.00 am. The agenda (Annex 2) began with attendees taking some breakfast and later some introductions by the moderator Professor Belington Vwalika, an obstetrics and gynaecology consultant and lecturer. The Assistant Director Public Health, Dr Angel Mwiche from MOH delivered the opening remarks, on behalf of the Director Public Health who came a few minutes later. Dr Godfrey Biemba gave a presentation on the overview and mandate of the National Health Research Authority (NHRA), which include technical support for the dissemination of research findings and knowledge translation. Professor Charles Michelo delivered a speech about the University of Zambia, School of Public Health and the school's availability to supporting similar future data analysis and dissemination of scientific evidence. The Assistant Director, for public health at MoH then gave programmatic updates on RMNCHAN and also

shared preliminary ZDHS 2018 results. Ms Grace Kibunja from APHRC in Kenya gave an overview of Countdown to 2030 initiative. Dr Choolwe Jacobs then presented the research findings, which was followed by a question and answer session. Before the closing remarks, the WHO and SIDA country offices made summary presentations.

Presentation of the results

The session presented by Dr Choolwe Jacobs from the School of Public Health. The moderator for the session was Prof Bellington Vwalika. The presentation was for 45 minutes and all comments and questions came after the presentation. The workshop provided space for the ministry of health officials and stakeholders to respond to the presentation and further discuss the findings presented, opportunities for research, the willingness to engage with other stakeholders and the way forward.

Generally the audience was very impressed with the findings and indicated that the presentation was intriguing and timely especially with the current pronouncement by the president of Zambia on *maternal mortality as a public health emergency in Zambia*. The presentation raised a lot of interest to the audience.

Key discussions

The following comments were made;

- **Need to concentrate on what is new – the urban poorest should not be ignored**

There is need to pursue further why the poorest urban are being left behind

- **Need to explore further on the why the urban poor populations are not adequately utilising essential interventions for RMNCAHN**

The finding that the poor women and children in the urban areas are being left behind raised a lot of concern and interest by the audience. The meeting agreed that most times services are taken to the rural areas and yet within the urban areas, some populations are being left behind. This finding raised interest to further explore and understand why this was the case and where the poor women in slums were not accessing the services despite being proximate to the facilities with free services.

- **There is urgent need for integration of the most recent DHS data (2018 ZDHS) for future analysis**

The meeting also noted that it would be good to soon do the same analysis but this time integrating the 2018 DHS data. Although this data has not yet been published, it was thought asking for it from CSO would perhaps enable access to it. The MoH suggested that they would follow it up.

- **Need to include nutrition and adolescent health indicators**

It was stated that there was need to include adolescent and nutrition indicators in such analysis of health inequalities to provide a broader picture on the progress of key RMNCAH indicators. A comment from one participant was that in most cases nutrition indicators are not considered in most analyses and yet it is very critical for the health of populations.

- **Need to consider include inviting officials from other ministries**

It was indicated that for future presentation of results as such, there was need to invite participants from other ministries such as ministry of local government, ministry of gender and ministry of agriculture as some of the gaps in health outcomes are influenced by other factors other than health related factors. An example was given where issues of disparities in relation to wealth quintiles could be also be addressed by other ministries

- **A call for coordinated efforts**

One of the participants from WHO indicated that now was the time for coordinated efforts to achieve universal health coverage as this was a global health call even if if Zambia seems progressing in terms of reducing maternal and child mortality ratios.

- **Need to take forward the dissemination agenda**

The National health research authority commended the findings in the presentation and the use of policy brief and fact sheet to reach out. It was also suggested that beyond this workshop there was need to reach out to parliamentarians as these were also policy makers.

- **Need for regular analysis of data to track**

The meeting indicated that there was need to continue analysing data to track progress to 2030 and also there was need to continue holding similar meeting at regularly intervals to continuously inform the implementers and policy makers

- **Need for use of routine data**

The meeting suggested that it would be good to look at such findings using routinely collected data. However, it was out noted that there is need to ensure that the data is complete and that the directorate of M and E needed to ensure that the data is of high quality

Follow up action plan

Following the discussions from the presentation, the meeting agreed on a road map for the way forward. The following were the discussion points and commitments;

1. There was a suggestion that the results should be presented to the parliamentarians (health committee) before end of August 2019.

Action: A date has been booked for the presentation – Tuesday 27th August 2019 at 14:30 – at the National Assembly. The results will be presented to the health committee at parliament

2. Representatives from the Swedish embassy indicated that they would consider supporting another round of the analysis to track progress.

Action: A meeting was set for 13th August 2019. In that meeting it was suggested that School of Public Health drafts a budget to estimate the cost of analysing data to include a team from the Ministry of Health.

3. There was a call to explore why the poor women and children in the urban areas are being left behind. The meeting expressed interesting to understand this observation.

Action: There is need to continue discussing the possibility of conducting a study to have questions related to this observation answered. A meeting to this effect has been scheduled for 20th August with WHO, Lusaka, Zambia

Conclusion

The meeting closed at 11:00 am with remarks from by Director for Public Health at the Ministry of Health who emphasised that tracking progress towards 2030 for RMNCAHN with programme implementers as well as academic institutions like UNZA was the perfect way to go if Zambia is to meet the SDGs, including in country priority targets.

Acknowledgements

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Compiled by: Dr Choolwe Jacobs
School of Public Health, UNZA

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Photos



Figure 1: Dr Choolwe Jacobs during a presentation of the results on health inequalities in Zambia



Figure 2: Ms Grace Kibunja during a presentation on the overview of the Countdown 2030 and APHRC



Figure 3: The Assistant Director M&E at MoH during interactions/break



Figure 4: Prof Belington Vwalika, the moderator for question and answer session



Figure 5: Dr Geoffrey Biemba, the Director for the National Health Research Authority during his presentation

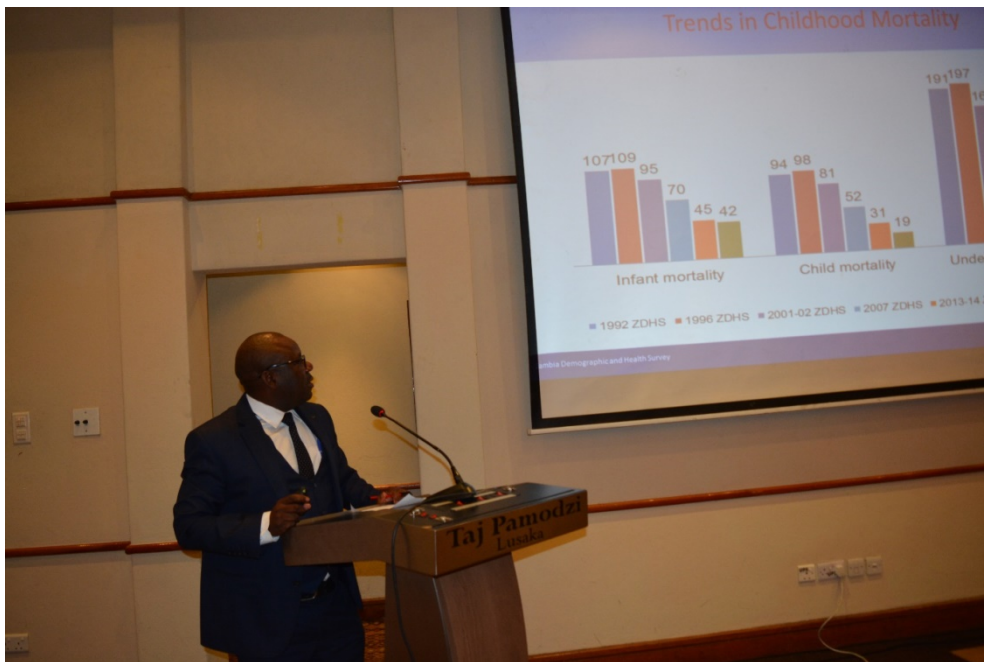


Figure 6: Dr Angel Mwiche, the assistant Director for Public Health at MoH providing programmatic updates



Figure 7: Dr Christopher Mlelemba, Director of programs for the event



Annexes

Annex 2: Attendance List

#	Name	Organization	Designation	Email	Mobile #
1	Doreen Sitali	UNZA	Lecturer	sitalidoreen@yahoo.co.uk	0977892417
2	Prof. Charles Michelo	UNZA	Dean	ccmichelo@yahoo.com	0979232403
3	Patson Chibwe	UNZA	FO	chibsp@gmail.com	0979421490
4	Mumbi Chola	UNZA	SDF	Mumbi24@gmail.com	0968832646
5	Nauthalile Mugala	PATH	Country Director	nmugala@path.org	0965768766
6	Earnest Muyunda	PATH	D/Country Director	emuyunda@path.org	0966587388
7	Constance Sakala Banda	MoH-CHU	CEPIO	constancesakala@gmail.com	0962783956
8	Eunice H. Peleka	MoH-CHU	PIMCICO	ephasalama@gmail.com	0977835237
9	Agness M, Aongola	MOH Nutrition	Chief Nutrition officer	aaongola@yahoo.com	0965744954

1 0	Dr. Francis Dien Mwansa	MOH	NEPIN	fmdien@gmail.com	0977700083
1 1	Dr Patricia Mupeta Bobo	MOH	Acting Director Public Health	drbobopm@gmail.com	0955754584
1 2	Dr Christopher Mlelemba	CRHE	Program Director	cmlelemba@gmail.com	0976243320
1 3	Dr Angel Mwiche	MOH-HQ	Assistant Director	amwiche@yahoo.com	0976045959
1 4	Abel Kalikiti	MOH-HQ	MIS Specialist	abel.kalikiti@gmail.com	0979212780
1 5	Brivine Sikapande	MOH-HQ	Chief M&E Officer	Brivine.sikapande@gmail.com	0977964065
1 6	Trust Mufune	MOH-HQ	Chief M&E Officer	T.mufune@gmail.com	0977837326
1 7	Cindy Chirwa	MOH-HQ	Programme Coordinator-SIDA	cindychirwa78@gmail.com	0977491144
1 8	Mutale Sampa	UNZA	SDF	Mutalesampa65@gmail.com	0977287091
1 9	Jenipher Mijere	UNFPA	Program officer	mijere@unfpa.org	0969415976

2 0	Dr Manoj Mathews	MOH/UTH	National Coordinator- peads		0977625727
2 1	Liyoka Liyoka	META Zambia	National Coordinator	Liyokaliyoka7@yahoo.co.uk	0977520640
2 2	G Sikapizye Zimba	META Zambia	Assistant Coordinator	gsikapizye@yahoo.com	0977625727
2 3	Clevinah Mizanda	MOH	QI officer	clevinah.mizinda@moh.gov.com	0955270197
2 4	Clemmy Sooka	MOH	PNO MCH	clammy_sooka@yahoo.com	0977431218
2 5	Hilda Kabanda	MOH	Nursing Officer	hilda.nachingak@yahoo.com	0977419952
2 6	Dr Christopher Kombe	MOH	Public Health Specialist	Mwapekombe3@gmail.com	0977180423
2 7	Dr Charles Msiska	MOH	PHD-Kabwe	myeka@yahoo.com	0966372836
2 8	Dr Mutinta Nalubambe	USAID	Child Health Advisor	mnalubamba@usaid.gov	0955830065
2 9	Maybin Mumba	MOH	Diver	NA	0974796880

3 0	Dr Jelita Chinyonga	MOH	Director Performance Impact	jelitachinyonga@gmail.com	0977619833
3 1	Dr Choolwe Jacobs	UNZA	Researcher/Lecturer	choolwe23@yahoo.com	0965346014
3 2	Caren Chizuni	MOH	Chief Safe motherhood	cchizuni@gmail.com	096587126
3 3	Dr Peter Hangoma	UNZA	Lecturer	peterhangoma@unza.zm	0955560556
3 4	Dr Mary Katepa Bwalya	WHO	Child Health Specialist	mary_katepa@yahoo.co.uk	0955743999
3 5	Herryman Moono	UNICEF	Social policy Specialist	hmoon@unicef.org	0977209985
3 6	Gift Kanyembo	MOH	Diver	NA	0966795095
3 7	Dr Godfrey Biemba	NHRA	Director	gbiemba@gmail.com	0974770293
3 8	Prof B Vwalika	UNZA	Consultant Obstetrics	vwalikab@gmail.com	0966782971
3 9	Dr Sarai Malumo	WHO	Maternal and Newborn Specialist	malumos@who.int	0977879590

4 0	Kerin Sverka	Emb of Sweden	HOC	karin.sverka@gov.se	0977771287
4 1	Phanuel Mandebvu	Emb of Sweden	Programme manager	phanuel.mandebvu@gov.se	0971616936
4 2	Audrey Mwendapole	Emb of Sweden	Program manager Health	audrey.mwendapole@gov.se	0978775359
4 3	Grace Kibunja	APHRC	Advocacy unit manager	gkibunja@aphrc.org	+ 254 734 141 480
4 4	Meggie Mwoka	APHRC		mmwoka@aphrc.org	
4 5	Dr Victor Chalwe	NHRA	Researcher	victorchalwe@yahoo.co	0977885211
4 6	Dr Felix Mulanda	MoH – Northern	District Health Director - Mungwi	felix.mulanda@yahoo.com	09773591224
4 7	Ms Emelia Muko	MoH – Northern	District MCH Cordinator - Mungwi	emuko35@yahoo.com	0977353580
4 8	Mr Ignituous Mweetwa	MoH –Central	Driver - Mukushi	N/A	0955201345
4 9	Ms Alice Keembela	MoH – Central	District MCH Cordinator - Mukushi	Keembela.p@yahoo.uk.co	09778852911

5 0	Dr Chipo Mudenda	MoH – central	District Health Director - Mukushi	chipomudenda@gmail.com	0953234012
5 1	Nancy Chindalo	News 24	Journalist	nancy.chindalo@yahoo.com	0972345034
5 2	Cynthia Nkata	New Vision	Journalist	cnkhata@gmail.com	0979594521
5 3	Doreen Bwalya	MoH – M/E	M/E officer	dbwalya80@gmail.com	0966888206
5 4	Njojo Mbonyiwe	MoH – M/E	M/E Officer	jojombonyiwe@yahoo.com	0977411885
5 5	Francis maingaila	Muvi TV	journalist	francis23@yahoo.com	0955231678
5 6	Antonito mubanga	Kwacha Newspaper	journalist	mubanga2007@yahoo.com	0965347816

Annex 3: Attendance List



Leaving no woman or child behind: health inequalities in Zambia Breakfast Dissemination Meeting

***Friday - 2nd August 2019
07:30 – 10:30hrs
Taj Pamodzi Hotel, Lusaka***

Time	Activity	Responsible Person
07:30 – 08:00	BREAKFAST	All
08:00 – 08:05	Introductions	Moderator - MoH
08:05 – 08:15	Remarks	Director Public Health - MoH
08:15 – 08:30	Presentation from NHRA	Director - NHRA
08:30 – 08:45	School of Public Health - UNZA	Dean – Prof Michelo
08:45 – 09:00	Programmatic Updates	Directorate of Public Health
09:00 – 09:15	Overview of maternal and child health Inequalities (Countdown to 2030)	APHRC
09:15 – 09:45	Research findings	SoPH-UNZA/MoH
09:45 -10:15	Questions and Answers	Assistant Director - MoH
10:15 – 10:30	Open Discussion	WHO
10:30 – 11: 00	Closing Remarks	Director Public Health