

PERSPECTIVES

Zambia successfully launches the first multi-sectoral national action plan on antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

O Kapona

Zambia National Public Health Institute, Lusaka, Zambia

Correspondence: Otridah Kapona (otimy1@yahoo.com)

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Zambia has adopted the “One Health” approach in the fight against Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and has through a consultative process of all line Ministries and cooperating partners, successfully formulated a ten (10) year national action plan (Multi-sectoral AMR National Action Plan 2017) that will guide the country’s response to combating AMR. The multi-sectoral AMR NAP is intended to institute strategic interventions in all key sectors relevant to this fight, that is, the human, animal, plant, and environment sectors.

The main objective of the multi-sectoral Antimicrobial Resistance National Action Plan is to provide a coherent framework for combating AMR using the “One Health” approach embracing human, animal, agriculture and environment sectors in Zambia from 2017 to 2027.

The AMR-NAP outlines the status quo and acknowledges challenges of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in Zambia among its population estimated at about 16,500,000 people in 2016. Excessive or inappropriate use, among other problems that can lead to the emergence of microbial resistance, have been documented.

Furthermore, the plan outlines the Country response in which various stakeholders have been identified and also provides for a governance and leadership structure; strategic plan; operational plan and

budget estimated at US\$ 17,893,100 and, monitoring and evaluation plan.

The focus areas that have been addressed in this plan include; awareness and education, surveillance and research, regulation, infection prevention, sanitation and hygiene, optimising drug use and investment in research and development.

The multi-sectoral AMR NAP which was earlier this year, presented to the World Health Assembly (WHA) of May 2017, by the Honourable Minister of Health, Dr Chitalu Chilufya, MP was officially launched on 14th November, 2017 at hotel intercontinental in Lusaka.

“The government under the able leadership of the President of the Republic of Zambia, His excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu has resolved to act decisively to combat Antimicrobial Resistance using the one health approach” – Dr Chitalu Chilufya, MP

Speaking during the launch, Dr Chilufya said Government, has resolved to act decisively to combat antimicrobial resistance.

In the spirit of ‘one health’, the launch was attended by two other honourable Ministers, the honourable Minister of Fisheries and Livestock, Mr Micheal

Zondani Jay Katambo, Mp and the honourable Minister of

Water development, Sanitation and Environmental protection, Mr Lloyd Mulenga Kaziya, MP who pledged total

commitment to the implementation of the Zambian Multi-sectoral AMR NAP in order to ensure that the environment, every human, animal and crop

life is protected from

infections caused by resistant organisms.

Also present during the launch were their excellencies World Health Organisation country representative Dr Morkor Newman Owiredu and Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations Country representative, Dr George Okechi. And speaking on behalf of the tripartite and other cooperating partners, FAO county representative reiterated the need to develop at a national level, a One Health National Action Plan (NAP) – as required under the Global Action Plan as key to addressing AMR in Zambia.

He further restated FAO's commitment to support implementation of the food and agriculture components of the National Action Plan in partnership with the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, the Ministry of Agriculture as well as the Ministry of Health and in close collaboration with the WHO, OIE and other national stakeholders. This will include support for AMR surveillance in the food and

agriculture sectors, the review of relevant national policies and legislation and promotion of good practices in food

and agriculture in order to minimize the threat of AMR. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), the ability of a microorganism to withstand treatment with an antimicrobial drug to which it was previously sensitive, has for several decades been a growing threat to the effective treatment of an ever-increasing range of infections caused by



Figure 1 the honourable Minister Health Dr Chitalu Chilufy MP (Centre), flanked by the honourable minister of Fisheries and Livestock, Mr Micheal Zondani Jay Katambo, Mp (right) and the honorable Minister of Water development, Sanitation and Environmental protection, Mr Lloyd Mulenga Kaziya, MP (left), jointly cut the ribbon at the launch while The National AMR focal point, Ms Otridah Kapona looks on.

bacteria, parasites,

viruses and

fungi. The magnitude of the problem, the impact of AMR on human health, the costs for the health-care sector and the wider societal impact are potentially immense.

“Once again as the tripartite partnership on AMR, we wish to reiterate our continued support to the Government of Zambia for the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP), which is being launched today.”

In Zambia, like in many other countries, there is emerging evidence of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in several pathogens. The University Teaching Hospital, the highest-

level hospital in Zambia has been detecting multi-drug resistant pathogens, resistant to the first, second and third line antimicrobial agents which has left very limited options for antimicrobial therapy for infectious diseases. Superbugs, which are difficult to treat have been detected, these include pathogens such as Methicillin Resistant Staphylococci (MRSA), Extended Spectrum Beta-lactamase producing *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, and other multidrug resistant enterobacteria. High resistance to most antibiotics used to treat serious conditions such as blood stream infections have been reported. Resistance as high as 80% ciprofloxacin, ceftriaxone 90%, and Gentamicin 70%,

has been reported in some blood stream strains with very limited expensive options for therapy [1].



Join the fight against AMR and let us together, work towards a world free from fear of untreatable Infections

Globally, it is estimated that AMR will be responsible for up to 10 million deaths annually by 2050 if nothing is done to contain and prevent its spread [2], with about 4,150,000 deaths occurring in Africa. Therefore, AMR is currently a major emerging international public health concern with potential to slow down human development (SDG-3).

Antimicrobial Resistance has also affected Global Gross Domestic Products (GDP) and is expected to decrease by US\$ 100 Trillion (3.5 %) by 2050. The cost will be more than 50 times the expected economic output of sub-Saharan Africa.

The use of antimicrobials in all sectors, has come along with the rise in Antimicrobial Resistance and if we fail to act, we will go back into the dark ages of medicine where the treatable infections and injuries will kill once again, and scarcity of food will haunt us.

Because antimicrobial resistant organisms have the potential to move between food producing animals and humans by direct exposure or through the food chain or the environment, AMR is therefore, a multi-sectoral problem encompassing the interface between humans, animals and the environment (FAO,2015). The fact that human and veterinary health, food and feed production systems and agro-ecological environments all contribute to and are affected by AMR, indicates the need for multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional “One Health” approach to curb its occurrence. The FAO/OIE/WHO tripartite, together with public and private organizations, share responsibilities for addressing global activities regarding AMR at the animal-human-ecosystem interfaces.

It is therefore important that, as the country moves into implementation, all stakeholder Ministries and Institutions key to the fight against AMR come on board to ensure successful implementation of the multi-sectoral AMR NAP.

References

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