

ENSURING PUBLIC HEALTH SECURITY FOR ITS CITIZENS – ZAMBIA WALKS THE TALK

Editorial

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***O*n Zambia's health sector priority list, strategies and activities to ensure the health of the country's citizens is secured. This mandate is further expanded to contributing to securing the health of the global community by subscribing to the framework of the International Health Regulations (2005), a key driver in the effort to strengthen global public health security.**

Ensuring Public Health Security for its citizens – Zambia Walks Talk!

The Ministry of Health has transformed the way it manages health and put in place systems, strategies and actions that will enhance its capacity to ensure disease prevention, detection and timely response for addressing national public health threats that have the potential to become global emergencies. In the 2017 – 2021 National Health Strategic Plan (NHSP), the Ministry of Health provides a framework for building robust and resilient health systems through the primary health care approach across the continuum of care focused on promotive, preventative, curative, rehabilitative and palliative care. Strategic structures have been included in the health sector to incorporate and enhance strategies that will address and ensure public health security including the creation of a technical arm responsible for public health security, the Zambia National Public Health Institute (ZNPHI). According to the Director of the ZNPHI Dr Victor M Mukonka, “ZNPHI was born out of a need to bridge gaps in Zambia's public health security. This was galvanized by the spirit and broader vision of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) of ‘Safeguarding Africa's Health’.

The Zambian government leadership, at the highest level, recognized that developing a national public health institute (NPHI) would help consolidate and coordinate essential public health functions, including disease surveillance, emergency preparedness and response to outbreaks and other events of public health importance. Established in February 2015, ZNPHI serves as a focal point for integrating and coordinating public health activities and addressing major public health problems that affect our country.” [1] The capacity of the ZNPHI was tested during the 2017/18 cholera outbreak which resulted in close to 6000 cases and 114 deaths nationwide. Activating its recently established Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC) and using the Incident Management Systems strategy, the ZNPHI successfully coordinated an effective multisectoral response that saw high level support. The dedication of the high-level leadership, with the president of the Republic of Zambia, Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, constituted a committee of Ministers for policy direction, a committee of Permanent Secretaries chaired by the Secretary to Cabinet for administrative direction indicates the determination to ‘walk the talk’. Adhering to the core IHR functions does not limit a country to ensuring just the safety of its citizens but beyond by ensuring disease is contained within areas affected and mitigated timely to afford further spread. Zambia strategically positioned as the host country for the Africa Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (Africa CDC) Regional Collaborating Centre (RCC) for Southern Africa is also committed to this cause and actualizes

its objectives to support the Global Health Security Agenda. The ZNPHI in the interim holds the fort of the RCC with its Director Dr Mukonka as Interim Coordinator and the heads of clusters supporting various functions including coordinating trainings, supporting other countries in outbreak response, setting up NPHIs, supervising the volunteers in place to support the establishment of the RCC among other assignment. Strategic trainings aimed to improve the capacity of member states to detect, confirm, respond and report outbreaks and events of public health concern that may hamper global security include: • Extension of Community Health Outcomes (ECHO) project a video conferring platform for Information sharing • Public Health Emergency Management training • Rapid Response Team training • Incident Management Training Having recognised threats and hazards exacerbated by population movement, migration of birds and bats, trade in animals leading to spread of infectious diseases of public health concern, Zambia highlights the importance of strengthened health systems, adequate human resource to quickly detect, confirm, mitigate and report outbreaks. The Editorial team endorses that the Government of the Republic of Zambia through its Ministry of Health, in particular the ZNPHI is walking the talk in the context of ensuring Public Health Security. This issue publishes two manuscripts; one that focuses on determining the knowledge, attitude and practice of women attending gynecological clinic at Ndola Teaching hospital and the other a case report entitled ‘Ocular Surface Squamous Neoplasia (OSSN) in a 17-year-old’. Happy reading!

LIST OF REFERENCES

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Our global voices. Zambia: A regional leader in NPHI development and emergency management. URL: <https://blogs.cdc.gov/global/2018/08/17/zambia-a-regional-leader-in-nphi/>