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## EDITORIAL

### “SPEAK OUT” - *The ZNPHI on tobacco.*

**Prof Roma Chilengi**

The Health Press-Zambia, Zambia National Public Health Institute, Lusaka, Zambia  
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#### **We firmly endorse Tobacco Bill No. 10 of 2022, and here is why.**

As your institute mandated to address public health security in the country, we cannot keep quiet on tobacco. This proposed Bill amendment brings us close to protecting our communities' well-being and a critical step toward preserving public health. Tobacco use is still one of the biggest preventable, and indeed totally avoidable causes of mortality and disease on the globe.



The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that tobacco use causes over 8 million fatalities yearly, of which over 7 million are directly related to tobacco use and over 1.2 million are caused by secondhand smoke exposure for non-smokers. Tobacco-related ailments have a detrimental effect on Zambia's already precarious healthcare system and economy.

While there are arguments about the economic contributions of tobacco use, its public health implications are in our view, more important and must be carefully watched and regulated strongly.

The bill contains praiseworthy provisions for the regulation of the tobacco industry, which directly or indirectly impact public health. By adhering to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Bill effectively protects individuals from the harmful effects of tobacco smoking, thereby reducing the severity of the consequences associated with tobacco-related maladies. Furthermore, the legislation aims to enforce a ban on smoking in public areas, thus protecting non-smokers from the detrimental consequences of secondary smoke. Even though Zambia has already implemented a moratorium on smoking in public, enforcement remains lax,

thus, the Bill must be enacted immediately to expand current regulations and strengthen enforcement to increase compliance.

**With 7% of school-going adolescents involved in cigarette smoking within Zambia, the negative health consequences of excessive tobacco use, especially in young children, pose a serious threat to our future generations.**

Regulations about the tobacco business may have an impact on the decrease in youth tobacco usage. By enacting measures like licensing requirements, quality standards, and limitations on marketing and sales techniques, the law may make tobacco products less accessible to children and adolescents. Enforcing regulations and encouraging responsible behavior within the tobacco industry are two more ways to stop the youth from using tobacco.

Supporting the Bill represents, in summary, an investment in the long-term health and sustainability of the Zambian people. Investing in tobacco control measures is not only a sound public health strategy but also an economic imperative.

The enormous healthcare costs associated with treating tobacco-related illnesses place a significant burden on healthcare systems and taxpayers. Collectively, we can strive to safeguard lives, mitigate the prevalence of tobacco-related diseases, and establish a setting that harmoniously balances prosperity and well-being. We therefore commend the government's commitment to prioritizing the well-being of its citizens through the introduction of this vital legislation.

Thank you for considering our position on this matter. Should you require any further information or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us on [info@znphi.gov.zm](mailto:info@znphi.gov.zm).

Prof. Roma Chilengi

**Director General/Health Advisor to the  
Republican President**

# Conference on Public Health in Africa (CPHIA) 2023

Zambia National Public Health Institute, Lusaka, Zambia

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The ZNPHI was brought into existence by Government in 2015 as a unit under the Department of Public Health and Research. The US-CDC supported with some seed funding the establishment of the institute (office space and furniture, staff emoluments, activity support)

Following and through a policy decision to operationalize African Union Resolution AU/DEC.554(XXIV), which created the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and its three-tier operational model, the institute was earmarked to become a statutory body under Government.

ZNPHI and the Ministry of Health Zambia were honored to be the hosts of the 3rd Conference of Public Health in Africa .

CPHIA is a unique African-led platform for leaders across the continent to showcase new and exciting scientific discoveries while advancing programs and policies to create a more resilient health system. Following the success of CPHIA 2022 held in Kigali Rwanda that focused on the crossroads between post-pandemic recovery and future pandemic preparedness (at which the continent found itself in 2022), this year, CPHIA focused on ***“Breaking Barriers: Repositioning Africa in the Global Health Architecture.”***

The importance of breaking barriers and repositioning Africa in the global health architecture is multifaceted and carries significant implications for the well-being and development of the continent.

Here are several key points highlighting the importance of this endeavor.

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> CPHIA , the preceding one was hosted in Rwanda and the initial one was an online event .



# CPHIA Through the Years

## 2021

Focused on COVID-19 and Africa CDC's New Public Health Order

Fully virtual

12,190 online participants

7 plenaries, 11 parallel and special sessions

98 oral abstract and poster presentations

## 2022

Theme: "Preparedness for Future Pandemics and Post-Pandemic Recovery: Africa at a Crossroads"

2,800 in-person participants, 11,625 livestream participants

9 plenaries, 16 parallel sessions and 3 special sessions

9 abstract sessions: 225+ oral and poster presentations

Introduction of Youth Pre-Conference

## 2023

Theme: "Breaking Barriers: Repositioning Africa in the Global Health Architecture"

5,100+ in-person participants; 30k livestream participants

9 plenaries, 18 parallel sessions & 3 special sessions

36 abstract sessions with 402 oral, poster & virtual presentations

Introduction of 6-month media fellowship, creative contest & pre-conference virtual programme

The 3rd International Conference on Public Health in Africa (CPHIA 2023) was held in Lusaka, Zambia, from 27-30 November 2023, with a virtual program, including abstract presentations and side events, taking place from 22-24 November.

**5,100+** attendees in person

**90 countries** across the globe represented

**45 sessions** across conference tracks and **97 in-person side events**

## CPHIA Registration in Africa

<b>Northern Africa</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Western Africa</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Central Africa</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Eastern Africa</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Southern Africa</b>	<b>43%</b>

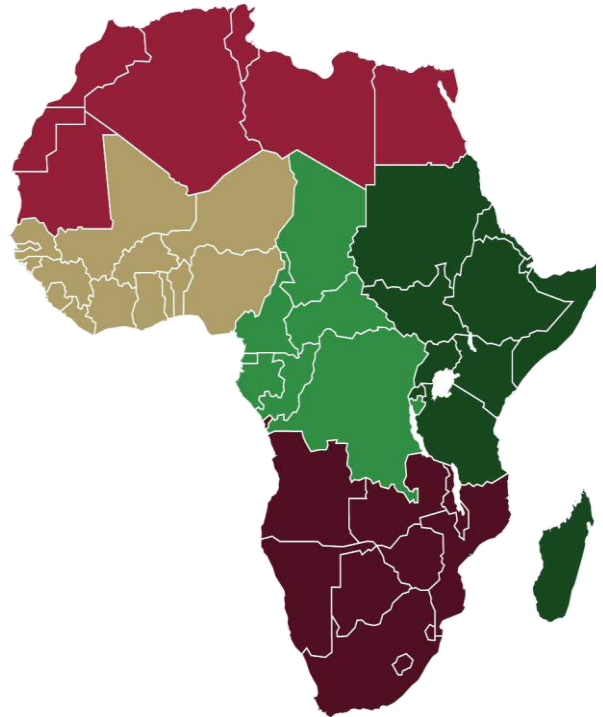


## CPHIA 2023 Opening Ceremony

*“CPHIA is unique in the sense that it is talking about health in a holistic way. Health for one, health for families, health for countries, health for the world.”*

*- H.E. Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia*

- Health solutions are coming from African institutions, startups, entrepreneurs, scientists, researchers, and leaders.
- H.E. the President of Zambia is leading by example, increasing the national health budget from <7% to 12%, in alignment with the Abuja Declaration.
- Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General, WHO, was presented with the CPHIA Lifetime Achievement in Public Health Award.
- Africa CDC and the MasterCard Foundation announced the 2nd phase of the Saving Lives and Livelihoods Program.



*Map showing CPHIA 2023 registration distribution in Africa.*



*His Excellency Hakainde Hichilema President of the Republic of Zambia with some VIP delegates during the CPHIA Opening Ceremony*

“Breaking barriers requires us to think beyond the confines of traditional health care models, to leverage new technologies and innovations, to embrace equity and social justice principles, and to foster robust collaborations.”

**-H.E. Dr Jean Kaseya, Director General, Africa CDC**



## **Ministerial Session: Transformative Leadership for Health in Africa**

*“Transformative leadership is not only a concept – it is a call to action.” - Hon. Sylvia Masebo*

- **Political will** is the key factor required to strengthen health systems.
- Strategies like **economic diversification, decentralized health budgeting** and
- **cross-sectoral collaboration** can help increase domestic health financing.
- Investing in health is not enough – our leaders must ensure funds are allocated appropriately for greatest impact. For this, they need **science and evidence to inform decisions**.
- We need to create more **opportunities for women leaders in health**.





*Minister of Health of the Republic of Zambia Sylvia Masebo and other speakers during the Ministerial Session: Transformative Leadership for Health in Africa*

### **Track 1 : Pandemic Preparedness and Resilient Financing Mechanisms for Africa**

Track leads: Prof Francine Ntoumi, Prof Placide Mbala and Dr Ngashi Ngongo

- Africa has significant disease surveillance gaps. No country is well prepared for the next major outbreak.
- New initiatives like Africa CDC and WHO’s Joint Emergency Preparedness and Response Action Plan (JEAP) will help countries detect, monitor, and respond swiftly to health threats.
- Joint funding mechanisms can help countries and partners finance shared health goals (e.g., AVATT).
- Resilient health systems must be built collaboratively and must focus on the needs of communities.

**“Our strength lies in unified action. The importance of collaboration cannot be overstated.” - Dr Matshidiso Moeti**

### **Track 2 : Fostering African-led Innovation : Advancing Local Production in Vaccines, Diagnostics and Therapeutics**

Track leads: Prof Charles Wiysonge, Akhona Tshangela, and Prof Petro Terblanche

- Africa manufactures **< 1% of all vaccines & < 5% of diagnostics** used on the continent.
- Africa must **produce its own medicines, diagnostics & vaccines** to strengthen health security and self-sufficiency. Not all countries need to produce vaccines - the regulatory system will enable solidarity and **resource pooling**.
- Initiatives like the **Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing (PAVM)**, the **African Medicines Agency (AMA)** & **Gavi’s African Vaccine Manufacturing Accelerator (AVMA)** are key to deliver this mandate.
- Growing Africa’s capacity to manufacture medical tools depends on:
  - Government commitment & funding
  - Creating an enabling ecosystem for African-led innovation
  - Human capital: building a local talent pool.
  - Strong public health & regulatory agencies
  - Public-private, philanthropic, cross-border partnerships
  - Regulatory harmonization to accelerate trade & access.

### Track 3: Delivering Universal Health Coverage in Africa- Strengthened and Equitable Health Systems

*Track leads: Dr Krishna Udayakumar, Dr Landry Tsague, and Dr Ketty Lubeya.*

- **90%** of Africans face catastrophic **out-of-pocket spending**. When accessing health services.
- Most African countries have **integrated UHC** into national health sector strategies.
- **Debt repayments** could undermine African countries' ability to spend on health.
- **AfCFTA** will help advance UHC by growing economies, increasing private sector participation, and paving the way for local vaccine manufacturing.
- Need to leverage **technology** to strengthen health systems (including **cross border surveillance** and **PHC**).
- Increase UHC financing through **pooled procurement** mechanisms, expanded **health insurance** schemes, impact investing, sin taxes, **development impact bonds**, and public-private **partnerships**.

***Health care is not a cost. It's an investment.***  
*- Greg Perry*

### Track 4: For Women by women: Access to Adequate Health care for Young Girls and Women in Africa

*Track leads: Dr Ebere Okereke, Dr Magda Robalo Correia Silva, and Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng*

- Women deliver most health services yet are underrepresented in decision making. They must have **equal space and authority** to make health decisions.
- Laws and commitments are not enough – we need **resource investments** to see change.
- This includes empowering women and girls through **education and economic opportunities**, protecting and promoting **SRHR**, and improving **quality of care**.
- Men have a responsibility to speak up, support women, and engage others as **allies**.

***“Women are the backbone of every African nation.”*** - Prof Nkandu Luo

### Track 5: Safeguarding Africa's Health Security : Health Emergencies, Biosecurity, Climate Change and Multisectoral Response Mechanisms

*Track leads: Dr Githinji Gitahi, and Prof Roma Chilengi*

- **Climate change is the biggest health threat** facing the 21st century.
- Climate-induced natural disasters are driving disease outbreaks; there is an increase in **zoonotic diseases**.
- A **One Health Approach** is vital for effective management of health emergencies: building climate resilient health systems.
- We need **transformative adaptation towards resilience**:
  - Strengthen biosafety and biosecurity (BSBS)
  - Build ongoing relationships with communities to support climate adaptation and so there is trust during outbreaks.
  - Develop a skilled workforce – harmonize training across countries
  - Revisit IHR regulations to ensure they are fit for purpose.

***“No single country can act alone; we must be prepared by putting systems and institutions in place.”***- Hon. Minister Kalumbi Shangula (Minister of Health – Republic of Namibia )

## Track 6: Transforming Health in Africa through Digital Innovation

*Track leads: Jean Phil Nsengimana, Dr Edem Adzogenu, Abimbola Adebakin*

- Technology has the potential to revolutionise healthcare in Africa, e.g., through **telemedicine, AI diagnostics, and mobile platforms**.
- Africa CDC launched its **Digital Strategy for Africa** this year.
- We need **financial and political commitment** from governments, private sector partners, and digital entrepreneurs.
- Countries and partners should implement **interoperable systems; digitize health data** for better monitoring and improved decision-making; leverage **AI and tech** for improved service delivery and UHC (e.g., drones for vaccine delivery); involve **youth**; and explore **digital financing solutions** for climate-related health challenges.

*“The continent with the youngest population can be the center of innovation.”*

*- Dr Edem Adzogenu*

## Track 7: Whole-of-society – the Power of Engaging Civil Society, the Private Sector and Local Philanthropy

*Track leads: Dr Amit Thakker, Kedest Tesfagiorgis, and Claudia Shilumani*

- **Respectful, action-oriented, and multi-sector partnerships** that span the continent can help combine expertise, resources, and innovation across sectors.
- **Local philanthropy, individual giving and African CSR** are relatively nascent sources of funding that can help bridge health financing gaps.

- Scientists need to engage with healthcare providers to better understand the gaps and challenges where **research and innovation** could create the greatest impact.
- Providing healthcare to citizens is the responsibility of governments, but partnerships are essential to help **fill gaps in resources or capacity**.
- **Philanthropic risk capital** can help direct resources towards new research, innovations, and discovery.

*“Science can pave the way for breakthroughs that save lives, but people and partnerships pave the way for science.”*

*- Kedest Tesfagiorgis*

## Track 8: Combating Infectious Diseases, NTDS and Anti-Microbial Resistance in Africa

*Track leads: Prof Rose Leke, Dr Thomas Nyirenda, and Dr Christine Manyando*

- We have made **remarkable progress against infectious diseases** like HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria and NTDS, despite setbacks from COVID-19.
- Access to tools including **antimicrobials, vaccines and diagnostics** are vital to accelerate progress. Preventative measures such as **WASH and PHC** are also essential to reduce the burden of infection.
- **AMR is one of the top threats** we face globally. The **triple planetary crisis** is making a direct contribution to the emergence of AMR in Africa.

- African leaders must present a united front: we need to increase the influence of **Africa's global governance** on AMR.
- Africa must adopt a **One Health approach** that combines research, surveillance, interventions, and advocacy across human, animal and environmental health.

### **Track 9: Unmasking the Silent Epidemics: NCDs, Mental Health and injuries.**

*Track leads: Dr Mary Nyamongo, and Dr Wilbroad Mutale*

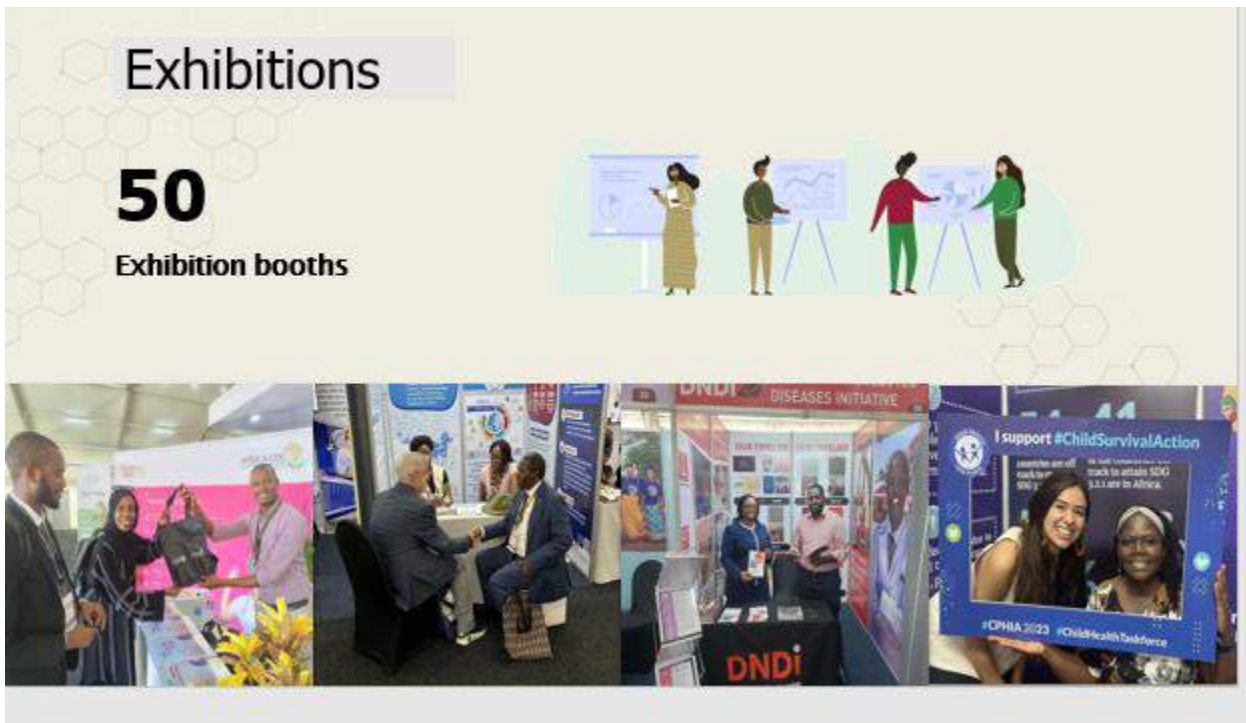
- The burden of **NCDs, mental health disorders, and injuries is on the rise** in Africa.
- These are major neglected health concerns & require a **multi-sectoral approach** for prevention and control. Key actions include:
  - **Strengthen surveillance systems** to inform decision-making.
  - **Strengthen the workforce** to manage the disease burden.
  - **Integrate** NCDs and mental health support into **PHC and EPR**
  - Ensure widespread adoption of **preventive and protective strategies.**
- We need more information and deliberation around the **impact of substance abuse** on NCDs, injuries and mental health – including how we can engage governments and industry to balance political, economic and health interests.

*“Mental health is inseparable from physical wellbeing.”*

*- Dr Naeem Dalal*



*Pictorial focus on the Conference*



*Exhibition booths at the CPHIA Conference*

## Media Statistics

**139**

Accredited media onsite

**105**

Onsite interviews conducted with global health experts and leaders

**200**

Media outputs produced during conference week

**45**

Media fellows supported through scholarships

**2**

Media Fellowship training workshops conducted



*Media Statistics of the Conference*

## Social Media Statistics

**6.5K**

Tweets using #CPHIA2023

**2.8K**

Unique tweet authors

**23M**

Reach of #CPHIA2023 hashtag

**186M**

Social media impressions

**40**

Countries participating

**10**

Creative Contest Winners

**6.5K**

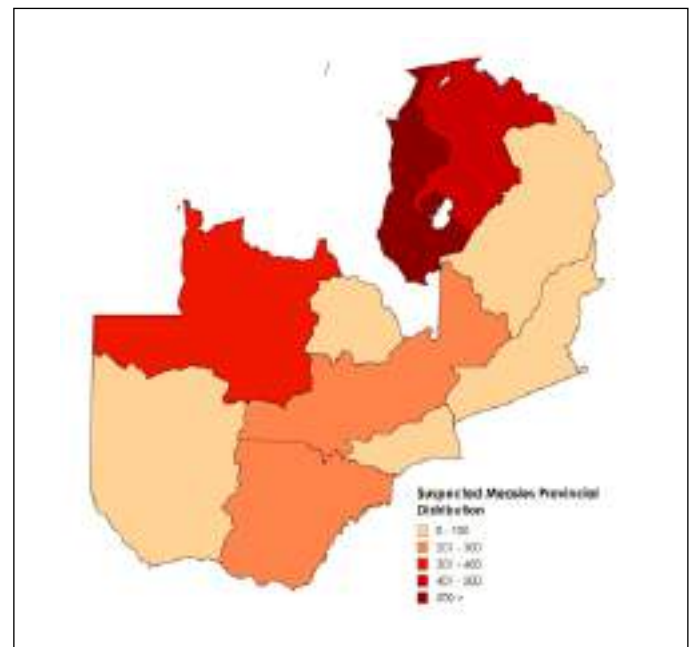
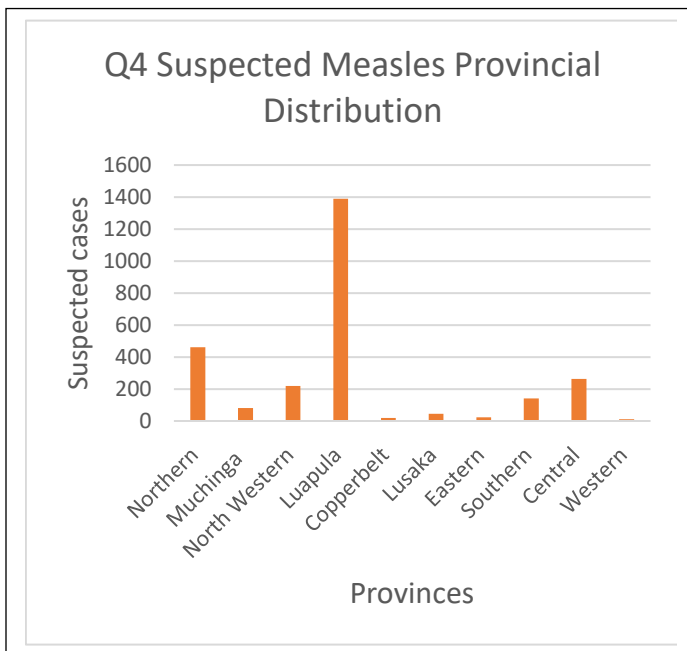
CPHIA Twitter Followers

In the three years of CPHIA, online conversation continues to grow.

	CPHIA 2021	CPHIA 2022	CPHIA 2023
# of Tweets	3.1K	6.6K	6.6K
Unique Authors	1.3K	2.2K	2.8K
Reach	12M	19M	23M
Impressions	97M	138M	186M

*Social Media Statistics of the Conference*

**Summary of outbreaks**



Measles, a highly contagious and potentially severe disease, posed a significant public health challenge in Zambia throughout 2023.

A total of 8,365 suspected measles cases were reported across all four quarters of 2023. While the initial quarter saw a substantial number (1,404 cases), there was a glimmer of hope with a decrease in confirmed cases in Q2 (26) compared to Q1 (127).

However, this progress was not sustained. A rise in the cases occurred in Q4 with a significant number of suspected cases (2,654).

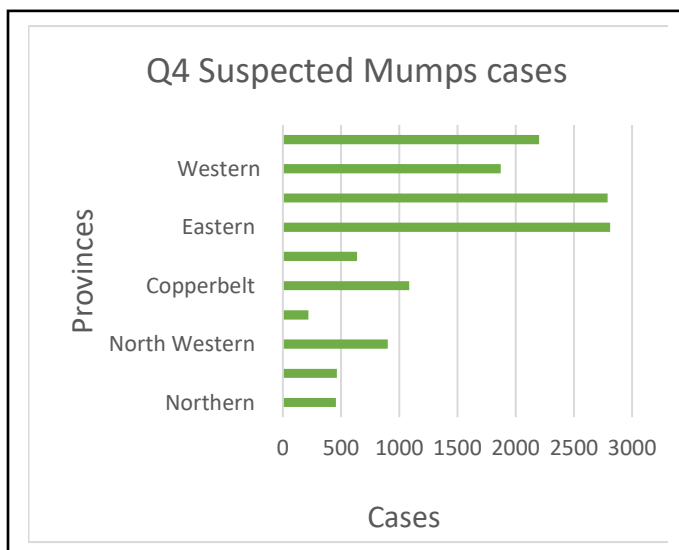
Luapula province emerged as a major concern throughout the year. It reported the highest number of suspected cases in both Q1 (586) and Q4 (1,389). Northern province also grappled with high caseloads, particularly in Q2 (356), Q3 (711), and Q4 (462). These geographical variations highlight the need for targeted interventions in these high-burden areas.

Measles is highly contagious, with an estimated 90% of susceptible individuals contracting the disease upon exposure. Vaccination with two doses of the measles-containing vaccine (MCV) is essential for achieving herd immunity (at least 95% coverage) and interrupting transmission. This is why strengthening vaccination efforts is critical to controlling the outbreak.

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2. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/measles>
3. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/meas.pdf>

## Mumps





Mumps, a vaccine-preventable viral infection, has become a growing public health concern in Zambia. The year began with a surge in suspected mumps cases compared to previous years. The first quarter recorded a total of 22,377 reported cases, with Lusaka and Southern provinces being the most affected (5,023 and 5,065 cases respectively). This significant increase highlights the potential severity of mumps, a disease capable of causing serious complications like orchitis, encephalitis, deafness, and even death.

The data throughout 2023 consistently emphasizes the critical role of vaccines in preventing mumps and its complications. Vaccination is one of the most effective and safest ways to protect individuals and communities from infectious diseases. Vaccines work by exposing the body to a weakened or inactive form of the virus, allowing the body to develop immunity without experiencing the full-blown illness. This approach provides both individual protection and herd immunity, significantly reducing transmission within the population.

The fourth quarter of 2023 saw a continuation, though a slight decrease, in suspected mumps cases. A total of 13,439 cases were reported, with Eastern Province 2,811 cases, followed by Southern Province 2,789 and Central Province 2,202. Notably, Luapula Province reported the fewest cases 220 throughout the year.

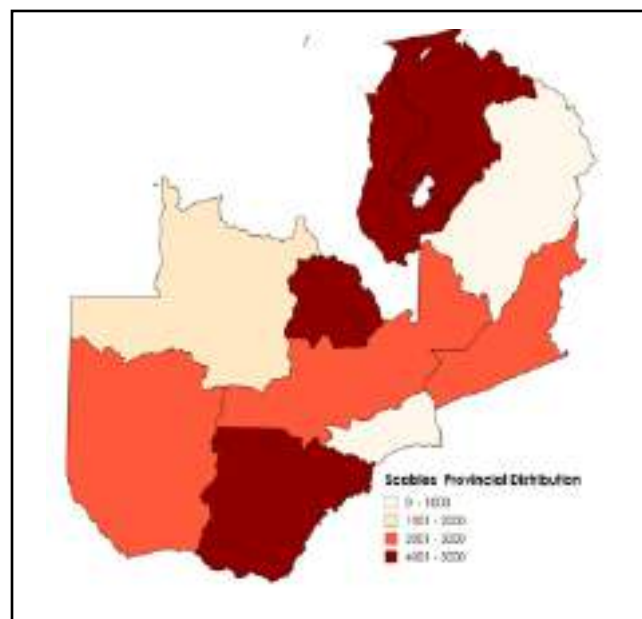
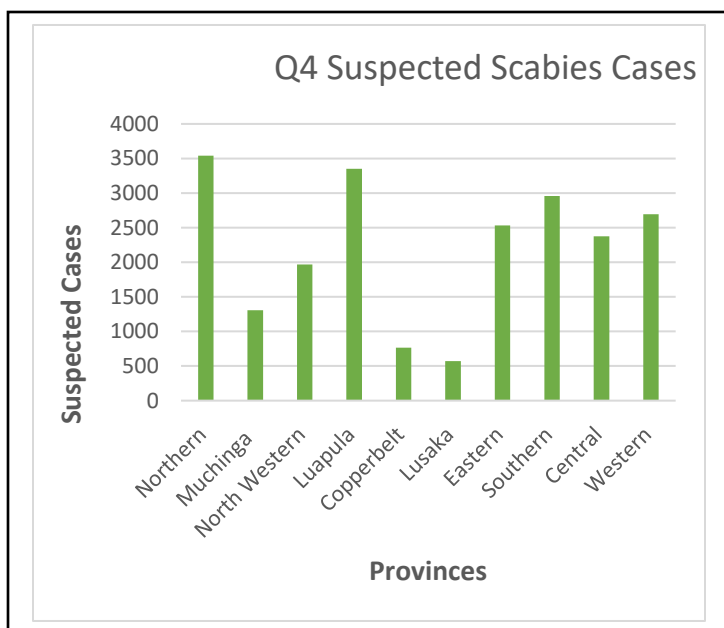
The significant increase in mumps cases throughout 2023 necessitates a renewed focus on strengthening routine childhood MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) vaccination programs. Additionally, targeted vaccination campaigns in high-burden areas are crucial for controlling the outbreak. Public awareness campaigns are essential to educate communities about mumps symptoms, complications, and the importance of vaccination for both children and adults who may not have received the MMR vaccine. Finally, healthcare providers must remain vigilant in identifying and reporting suspected mumps cases to facilitate effective public health interventions.

By implementing these recommendations, Zambia can effectively control the mumps outbreak and protect its citizens from this preventable disease.

## **References**

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/mumps/index.html>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK534785/>
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK563971/>

## Scabies



Scabies, a contagious and itchy skin condition caused by mites, remains a persistent public health concern in Zambia, particularly in subtropical areas. Neglected for too long, this disease thrives where hygiene is poor, and people's immune systems are weak (World Health Organization:

The situation in Zambia is concerning. The first quarter of 2023 saw a staggering number of suspected scabies cases - over 39,000 - with the highest concentration in Western Province. This trend continued throughout the year, although confirmed case numbers are unavailable.

Scabies affects an estimated 200 million people globally each year, causing intense itching and a significant decrease in quality of life, though it's not fatal. In Zambia, factors like poor hygiene and weak immune systems contribute to the high prevalence, especially in Northern Province where suspected cases remained consistently high throughout 2023 (Ministry of Health, Zambia, Q1-Q4 Public Health Bulletins, 2023).

To effectively control scabies in Zambia, a multi-pronged approach is crucial. Public health efforts should focus on improving hygiene education, ensuring access to clean water, strengthening healthcare systems for diagnosis and treatment, and raising public awareness about scabies symptoms, how it spreads, and how to prevent it.

By implementing these measures and prioritizing hygiene promotion, Zambia can significantly reduce the scabies burden and improve the well-being of its citizens.

### **References**

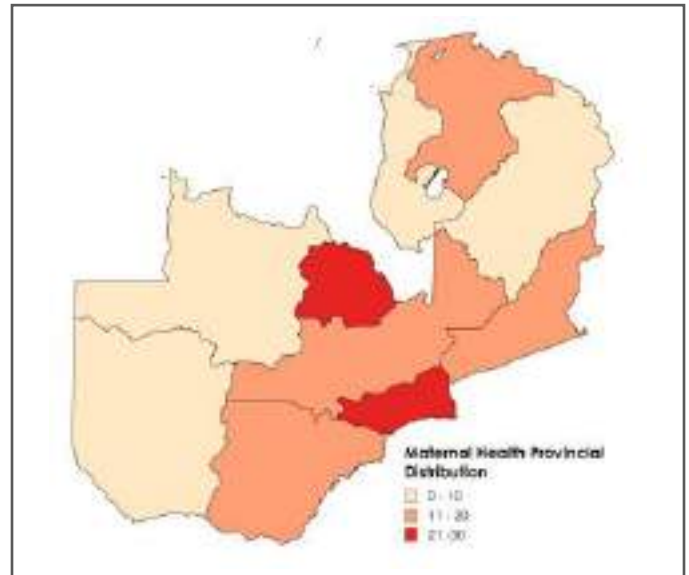
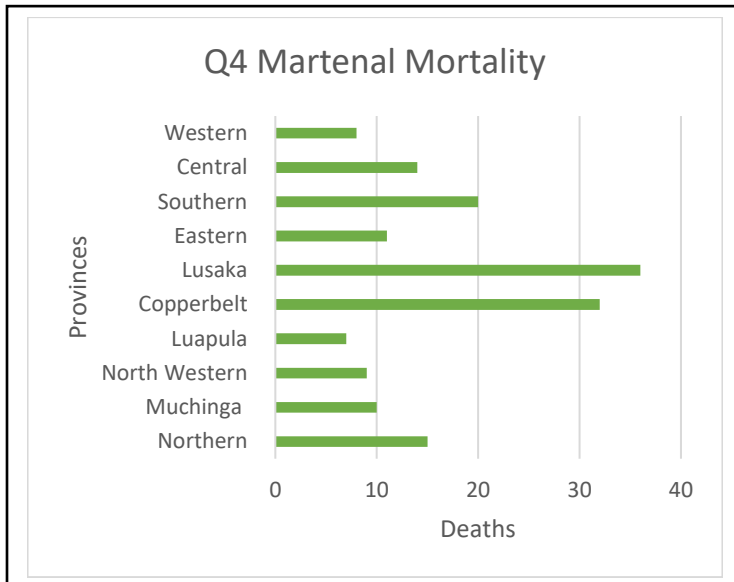
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2. <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies/prevent.html>](<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies/prevent.html>)
3. World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/scabies>](<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/scabies>)

## Summary Report Priority Diseases, Conditions and Events ()

Disease/Event/Condition	Week 45 - 52		
	Suspected	Tested	Confirmed
COVID-19	339,090	313,105	15,601
HIV	680	680	2
Malaria	12,725,004	12,523,278	6,421,001
Non bloody diarrhea	1,064,627	45,635	33,554
Maternal deaths	759	0	759
Influenza	5,314	5,070	0
Dysentery	43,654	2,738	566
AFP	680	680	0
Cholera	1,520	1,688	393
Meningitis (Neisseria)	502	259	133
Measles	8,260	1,630	555
Scabies	154,302	0	0
Mumps	90,235	959	642

## Specific diseases and summarized conditions

### Maternal Mortality



Maternal mortality, the death of a woman during pregnancy or childbirth, remains a significant public health concern globally. Zambia has taken strides to address this issue, and this commentary examines maternal death data for the entire year 2023.

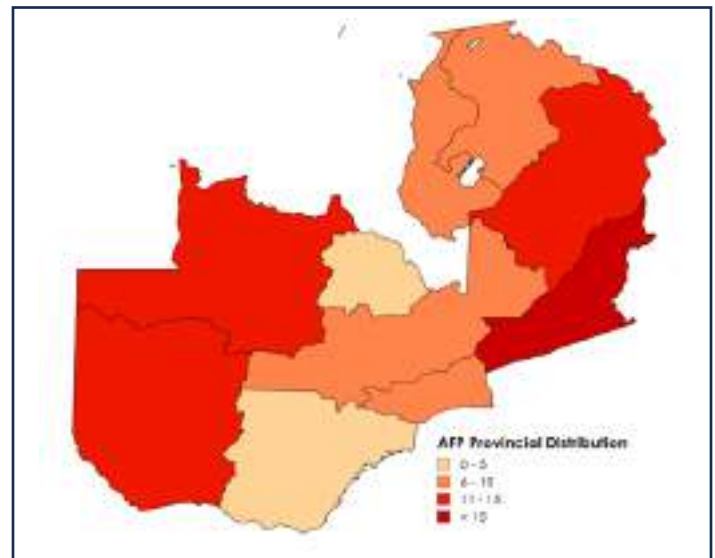
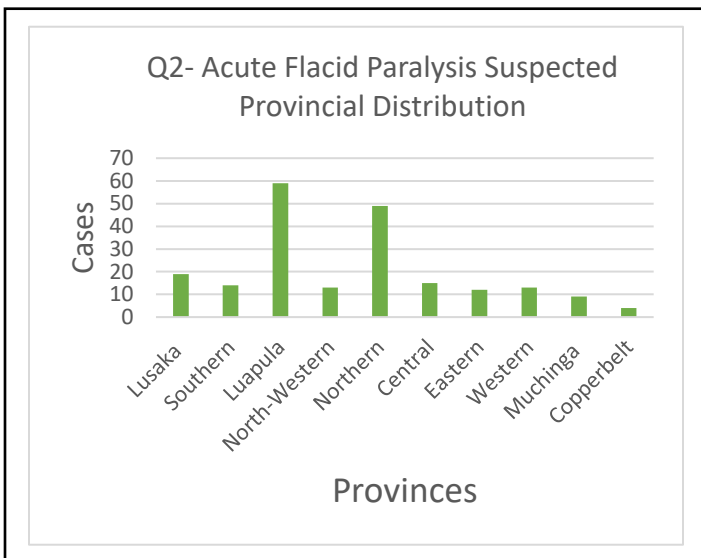
- 721 maternal deaths were reported across all 10 provinces in 2023.
- Lusaka province recorded the highest number of deaths (121), followed by Southern and Copperbelt provinces.
- Obstetric hemorrhage remained the leading cause of maternal mortality throughout the year.
- The positive decrease in Q3 continues in Q4 with 162 deaths recorded compared to 181 in Q3
- Lusaka (32 deaths), Southern (20 deaths), and Copperbelt (32 deaths) provinces had the highest numbers in Q4 while Luapula recorded 7 deaths.

Combating maternal mortality demands a multi-pronged approach. Zambia's efforts in 2023 have shown some positive results, but continued focus on identified challenges is essential. With improved data collection and targeted interventions, Zambia can work towards a future where childbirth is safer for all mothers.

## References

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2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8055191/>
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK361917/>
4. <https://www.who.int/data/gho/indicator-metadata-registry/imr-details/4622>

## Acute Flaccid Paralysis



The year 2023 demonstrated a well-functioning surveillance system. This was shown by Early detection through testing of all suspected cases allowed for prompt identification of potential polio outbreaks. There was a decrease in suspected cases from Q2 (210) to Q3 (107) followed by a further decrease in Q4 (110) suggests potential progress.

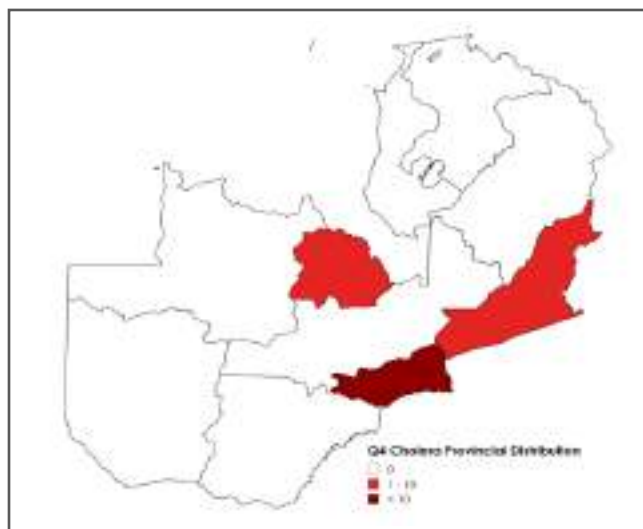
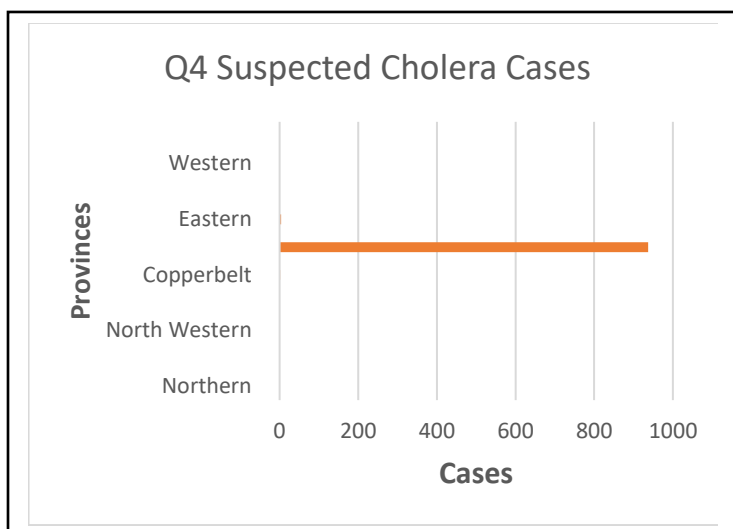
While no polio cases were confirmed in 2023, continued vigilance is crucial it was noted Central province in Q1, Luapula/Northern provinces in Q2, and Eastern province in Q4 reported the highest numbers of suspected cases. Investigating these variations might reveal underlying factors.

Vaccination remains the primary defense against polio and investigations of the reasons behind geographical variations in suspected cases and tailors' interventions according to distribution surveillance serves as a vital tool in the fight against polio. The data presented highlights both progress and areas for continued focus. Maintaining a strong surveillance system, ensuring high vaccination rates, and implementing targeted interventions are crucial for complete polio eradication.

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## Cholera



A worrying surge of cholera cases in Zambia demanded immediate public health attention. This highly infectious diarrheal disease, fueled by contaminated water and sanitation issues, has become the ongoing seventh pandemic globally. Since mid-2021, over 60 countries, particularly those lacking proper sanitation, have been affected.

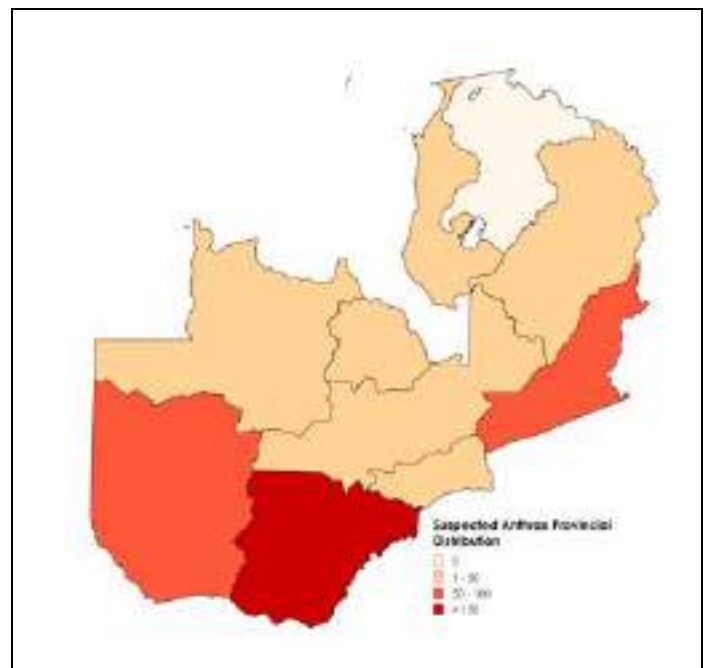
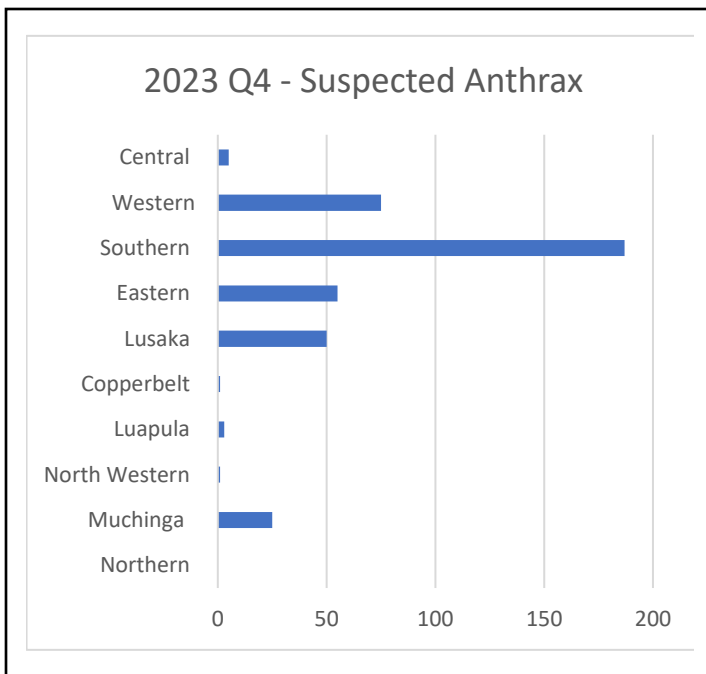
Zambia is no stranger to cholera, experiencing outbreaks regularly since the late 1970s. Most cases are concentrated in high-risk areas like fishing camps and peri-urban slums in Lusaka and the Copperbelt. The recent surge is particularly concerning, with Zambia being identified alongside Zimbabwe as countries with a worrying rise in cases. In the last quarter of 2023 alone, Zambia reported a staggering number of cases, with Lusaka province bearing the brunt (over 940) and additional cases in Eastern and Copperbelt provinces.

This calls for a multi-pronged public health response. Strengthening surveillance for early detection, improving case management with proper hydration and antibiotics, and promoting hygiene practices like handwashing and safe water consumption are crucial. Additionally, implementing oral cholera vaccination campaigns in high-risk areas can be a valuable preventive measure.

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## Anthrax





Anthrax, a serious bacterial infection caused by *Bacillus anthracis*, has returned as a public health concern in Zambia, particularly in the latter part of 2023. This bulletin provides an overview of the recent outbreak and emphasizes the importance of public health interventions.

Anthrax is a zoonotic disease, meaning it can jump from animals to humans. It primarily affects animals like cows, sheep, and goats, but humans can become infected through contact with infected animals or contaminated animal products. This spore-forming bacteria produces toxins that can cause severe illness, with symptoms like fever, nausea, vomiting, and difficulty breathing. Early diagnosis and treatment are crucial to prevent complications.

According to the National Institutes of Health, an estimated 2,000 to 20,000 human anthrax cases occur worldwide each year, with additional cases in animals. Specific regions, including parts of Africa, Asia, and Europe, are considered endemic for anthrax, with millions living in areas where the disease is prevalent.

While data specific to Zambia might be limited online, reports from 2023 indicate a multi-country outbreak in East and Southern Africa. The World Health Organization reported over 1,100 suspected cases and 20 deaths across five countries, including Zambia, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. This highlights the potential for regional outbreaks in Southern Africa, and Zambia was not alone in experiencing a surge in cases.

The fourth quarter of 2023 saw a surge in suspected anthrax cases in Zambia. A total of 402 cases were reported across nine provinces, excluding the Northern Province. Southern Province recorded the highest number of cases (187), followed by Western Province (75). Notably, Northwestern and Copperbelt provinces reported only one case each.

The resurgence of anthrax underscores the need for heightened public awareness and education. Public health authorities should focus on educating communities about identifying sick animals and avoiding contact with carcasses. Additionally, safe handling and consumption of animal products, along with the importance of immediate reporting of suspected cases to healthcare providers, are crucial elements of public education.

Veterinary authorities also play a critical role. They are responsible for monitoring animal populations for anthrax, implementing animal vaccination programs, and promptly investigating and handling suspected cases in animals.

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