



MINISTRY OF HEALTH MEDIA BRIEFING

Wednesday, 2nd April 2025

LUSAKA

Good morning fellow country men and women,

I have called you here today for our fortnightly health security briefing, in light of the ongoing Cholera and Mpox outbreaks in the country.

Cholera

We have been responding to cholera since 24th December 2024 when we recorded the first few cases in Nakonde, Muchinga. Over the past three months we have gone on to record cases in Eastern, North-western, Copperbelt, Lusaka, and Central provinces. Our other four provinces, namely Luapula, Northern, North-western and Southern, have remained cholera-free during this outbreak.

In the last 24hours, **we recorded seven new cholera cases** and discharged **45 patients**, all from **Kabwe**. Currently, we have 16 cases in admission at our Cholera Treatment Centres (CTCs); these are also in Kabwe.

In terms of cumulative numbers, we have recorded a total of **471** cases, broken down as follows: Copperbelt (265), Central (104), Lusaka (67), Muchinga (30), North-western (4), and Eastern (1).

We have discharged a total of 446 patients, but sadly lost nine lives in the early days of the outbreak. The majority of these were community deaths, as a result of delayed health seeking. I am happy to report that we have continued to be zero-reporting for cholera mortalities for close to two months now. It is our fervent hope that our people continue to respond to our risk communication messages on seeking care early in order to avoid adverse outcomes.

On an encouraging note, Lusaka has not recorded any new cases in the last five days and currently does not have any active cases. Similarly, Chililabombwe has been zero-reporting for one month now, and Nakonde last reported a case on 20th March this year. This reduction in cases and slowed down spread of infections is a clear indicator that our concerted response measures are working and we applaud our hardworking teams on the ground for their tireless efforts.

Regarding the Cholera cases in Kabwe, we saw a sudden and concerning surge in cases in the last week, most of which were linked to a David Ramusho Combined School in Mines

compound, starting on 27th March, 2025. This surge accounts for 97 of the cases recorded under Central province. Following the confirmation of the initial case, the district swung into action and carried out further investigations. I wish to commend the Kabwe District and Provincial Health Office for their prompt response action, which included identification of treatment facilities and good case management, distribution of chlorine in affected areas, and operationalising two chlorinators at the borehole suspected to be the point source of infection.

In addition to these preliminary actions, the following are also under way:

1. Planned drilling of a borehole at the school away from original site with support from government. The original borehole was found to be less than 10 metres away from the septic tanks and water from the borehole was being consumed untreated.
2. Provision of essential supplies, food, protective equipment, disinfectants, and other commodities through ZAMMSA and DMMU.
3. Training of Community-based volunteers, engagement with area councillors and faith based organisations, radio programmes and other risk communication and community engagement measures.
4. We have conducted assessments in the affected communities for the set-up of oral rehydration points (ORPs) and will begin to put these up starting today in collaboration with ZNPHI and cooperating partners such as Zambia Red Cross, UNICEF and WHO. ORPs are an essential community based response measure which help to prevent community deaths, particularly for severely dehydrated cases, by providing immediate access to lifesaving oral rehydration solutions that can quickly and effectively stabilise patients before they are admitted to a CTC.
5. We are scheduled to launch an OCV campaign today, targeted at the school pupils, staff and residents in the surrounding areas. Five thousand (5,000) doses of the vaccine have already arrived in Kabwe and orientation of health workers, teachers and community based volunteers has been successfully completed ahead of the launch.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Health has engaged the International Coordination Group through the World Health Organisation country office for approval of additional vaccine supply to cover identified high risk wards in Kabwe District.

Away from Kabwe, we concluded the Lusaka OCV campaign in the high risk areas of Kanyama and Matero, which ran from 24th to 29th March. A total of 723,378 doses were administered (representing 99.8% of our target).

Mpox

With regard to Mpox, in the past week, we recorded five new cases:

- i. Three new cases under **Lusaka** recorded from Bauleni (1), UTH (1), and Matero (1).
- ii. One new case from **Isoka** in Muchinga
- iii. One new case from **Lukulu** in Western province

The cumulative total number of cases recorded countrywide now stands at **36 broken down as follows: Lusaka province (20); Copperbelt (10); Muchinga (3); Western (2) and Central (1)**. Of these, 26 have been successfully treated and discharged. There are currently nine active cases, eight of whom are under home isolation (3 in Lusaka, 3 on the Copperbelt, 1 in Isoka and 1 in Lukulu); while one case is under facility isolation in Lusaka.

The government remains committed to the swift identification of Mpox cases, ensuring timely treatment and isolation, so as to protect the public and prevent further spread of the disease. We are carrying out active case search in new districts reporting cases, that is Lukulu and Chinsali, more so that the identified cases were not linked to previously confirmed cases and neither did they have any travel history to affected areas. As part of our response efforts, we have also made significant headway with our vaccine request through the Expanded Programme on Immunisation, with support from our partners and we will keep the nation updated on the progress.

In closing, I urge our citizens to remain vigilant and take necessary precautions to prevent the spread of cholera and Mpox. We all have a role to play in protecting our health—practice good hygiene, ensure access to safe drinking water, uphold proper sanitation, and avoid close contact with individuals showing signs of Mpox. By working together, we can prevent the spread of disease and safeguard our communities.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Hon. Douglas Siakalima, MP.
Ag. Minister of Health