



UNLOCKING ZAMBIA'S POTENTIAL

**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES:
ZAMBIA'S PREPAREDNESS TO RESPOND TO
EMERGING EPIDEMICS AND PANDEMICS**

I. The adequacy of the policy and legal framework governing the government's response to epidemics and pandemics

The legal framework governing Governments preparedness and response to epidemics and pandemics can be found in various policies and legal frameworks.

Legal Frameworks

1. the Disaster Management Act No 13 of 2010 which is an Act to establish and provide for the maintenance and operation of a system for the anticipation, preparedness, prevention, coordination, mitigation and management of disaster situations and the organisation of relief and recovery from disasters.
2. The Public Health Act No 295 of 1995 of the Laws which provides for activities to be implemented in order to suppress and prevent disease outbreaks including epidemics and pandemics
3. The draft Zambia National Public Health Bill

Policy Frameworks

1. The Ministry of Health National Health Strategic Plan that includes addressing public health security including response to epidemics and pandemics
2. The National Action Plan for Health Security which describes all capacities, capabilities and technical areas that need to be strengthened and adequately addressed in order to protect the country from public health emergencies
3. The All Hazards Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan that provides the framework for managing public health emergencies and the coordination mechanisms available at the various levels, that is national, Provincial, district and local levels
4. The National Action Plan for Antimicrobial Resistance which outlines the programmatic management of the emergence antimicrobial resistance through a "One Health" approach

Other policy directives are given through Presidential Pronouncements as well as Cabinet instructions. The Government is also signatory to various international protocols such as the International Health Regulations (2005) among others. The enactment of the Zambia National Public Health Bill will be important to ensure that the gaps in the legal framework for epidemics and pandemics are adequately addressed

II. The financial mechanisms the government has put in place to effectively respond to epidemics and pandemics

The main sources of health care financing in Zambia are, government budget appropriations, earmarked donor funding through the national treasury, health sector basket under the Sector Wide Approach, donor support to specific projects and activities, and household health expenditure, through user fees.

The Zambian Government also leverages financial resources from cooperating partners through the national platforms such as the National Epidemic Preparedness, Prevention, Control and Management Committee and the National Public Health Emergency Operations Centre.

Overall, the current resource envelope is far below the minimum required for the delivery of an optimum package of both health care and preparedness and response for epidemics and pandemics. Despite significant increases in the flow of funds to the health sector, external support is currently mainly targeted towards vertical programs such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB. Vertical donor support is characterised by certain rigidities and cannot be moved to other priority areas less favoured by donors. It is therefore imperative that the budgetary funding towards the health sector be increased to meet international standards, in order to ensure that there exist adequate finances targeted towards financing the response to epidemics and pandemics.

Therefore, the establishment of the National Emergency Fund that has been proposed to be created through enactment of the Zambia National Public Health Bill will complement the existing funding mechanisms and will be cardinal for meeting the shortfall that currently exists in funding for epidemics and pandemics in the country.

III. The role of non state actors in complimenting the Governments efforts in the early detection, mitigation and management of infectious disease outbreaks

In complimenting the Government's efforts towards addressing early detection, mitigation and management of infectious disease outbreaks, non-state actors mobilised resources usually from cooperating partners to ensure adequate financial and technical capabilities. These include but not limited to the World Bank Zambia Covid -19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project (P174185), The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFTATM), the World Bank Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF) among others. Non-state actors were also key in conducting research in order to generate empirical evidence for strategic policy and programmatic decision making.

IV. The measures that the government has put in place to enhance the country's preparedness and response to epidemics and pandemics

Under the fourth pillar of the Seventh National Development which aims to enhance human development, highlights Government's aspiration to enhance Epidemic control and preparedness programmes for prevention and reduction of disease incidences. As a way of achieving this, the Zambia National Public Health Institute coordinates public health emergency preparedness and response activities and report to the Ministry of Health to carry out relevant policy decisions.

Some of the objectives of the institute include;

1. To ensure that national policies, plans, procedures and protocols for public health emergency preparedness and response conform with the International Health Regulations.
2. To coordinate all public health emergency preparedness and response activities in the country. The ZNPHI is responsible for coordinating all preparedness and response through ensuring that existing structures such as the NEPPC and MC, PEPPC, DEPPC are strengthened.

Government through the Ministry of Health has been building capacity of health care workers and other relevant care providers in emergency preparedness and response activities such as the following;

- i. Enhanced training and mentoring of health care workers in the various disciplines and specialties
- ii. Intensified mentoring, monitoring and supervisory activities at all levels of care

- iii. Increased the investment in human capital for health and recruited more health care workers to reduce the gap and improve health workers' morale.

The Zambian Government has also invested in infrastructure development such as the construction of the Mwembeshi Infectious Diseases Isolation Facility including renovation and upgrading of health facilities to be able to manage the high volumes of patients adequately.

In the case of Covid 19, the Ministry of Health, in February 2020, developed a **COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan** in partnership with the World Health Organization. Further in March 2020, Zambia developed **the COVID-19 Multi-Sectoral Contingency and Response Plan**.

Structure for Coordination of the COVID-19 Response

According to COVID-19 Multi-Sectoral Contingency and Response Plan, the coordination of the COVID-19 response was being led as follows:

a. The National Coordinator (DMMU)

The National Coordinator of DMMU is tasked with working with all the Permanent Secretaries in line Ministries leading the implementation of the response at technical level.

b. The Committee of Permanent Secretaries on Epidemic Preparedness and Response

The Committee of Permanent Secretaries on Epidemic Preparedness and Response is chaired by the Secretary to the Cabinet. It provides policy recommendations to the National Disaster Management Council of Ministers.

c. The National Disaster Management Council of Ministers

The National Disaster Management Council of Ministers is chaired by the Vice President. It is responsible for coordinating response to the Pandemic while communication on the COVID-19 response was led by the Chief Government spokesperson, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting.

WHAT OTHER FRAMEWORKS EXIST?

A. AIDS Response Fast Track Strategy 2015-2020

The Zambia Fast Track Roadmap presents a detailed epidemiological situation analysis of the HIV epidemic and the responses to date, highlights opportunities and challenges for actualization of the Fast Track, highlights critical considerations for the Fast Track such as leadership, sustainable financing and innovative approaches to monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the Roadmap presents strategies for enhancing timely achievement of the Fast Track targets, treatment cascades at national and subnational levels, annualised Fast Track targets and resource needs estimates.

B. Zambia Ebola Preparedness and Response Plan-2015

The objective of the Ebola Preparedness and Response Plan is to ensure that the country has the capacity to prevent, detect, report, investigate and respond to any potential case of Ebola Virus Disease in a coordinated and timely manner.

The Key focus areas of the plan are as follows:

1. Coordination and Resource mobilization
2. Epidemiology, surveillance and Laboratory
3. Case Management and Infection Prevention
4. Social mobilization and Media communication
5. Logistics
6. Recovery

V. The challenges (if any) that the government is facing with regards to early detection, mitigation and management of infectious disease outbreaks.

1. Limited funds to ensure timely procurement of the necessary supplies and commodities that are required for mitigating pandemics and for the continuation of essential health services
2. Limited infrastructure and equipment to meet the demand and especially so when there is a resurgence of cases
3. The failure to Operationalise the National Disaster Relief Trust Fund,
4. Limited diagnostic and testing capabilities including inadequate resources for extensive and sustained surveillance activities at the community level countrywide
5. Delayed Preparation of the Multi Sectoral Contingency and Response Plan,
6. Failure to Prepare Monitoring and Evaluation Reports at Provincial and District Level,
7. Inadequate human resource to meet the demand for COVID- 19 response as well as attend to other equally important health services and disease control programs
8. Failure to Obtain Reports on Donations in the Provinces and Districts,
9. Irregularities in the administration of Donations,
10. Delayed preparation of the procurement Plans

VI. Recommend the way forward

- i. There is need for the enactment of the Zambia National Public Health Bill will be important to ensure that the gaps in the legal framework for epidemics and pandemics are adequately addressed
- ii. The National Disaster Relief Trust Fund must be immediately operationalised to ensure funds are readily available.
- iii. A dedicated Highly Infectious Disease Isolation Hospital should be constructed in each province to handle infectious diseases such as COVID -19 and Ebola,
- iv. The Multi-Sectoral Contingency and Response Plan should be reviewed frequently, and sensitisation conducted among stakeholders,
- v. Strengthen risk communication and community engagement at all levels
- vi. Guidelines must be developed and adhered to in the receipt, allocation, and distribution of pandemic and epidemic related donations,

