



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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**PROVIDING NATIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR A COORDINATED MULTI-SECTORAL
HIV/AIDS/STI/TB RESPONSE**

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NAC and Minister of Health Discuss the Path Forward for Zambia's HIV Response



The National HIV/AIDS/STI/TB Council (NAC) leadership met with the new Minister of Health, Hon. Prof. Roma Chilengi, at Ndeke House in Lusaka to discuss priorities for strengthening Zambia's HIV response. The engagement came at a critical time, as declining donor resources continue to underscore the need for sustainable financing, stronger institutions and more efficient use of available resources.

During the meeting, NAC outlined priority areas requiring strengthened Government support. These included predictable and sustainable HIV financing through domestic resource mobilisation, greater private-sector engagement and the operationalisation of mechanisms such as the AIDS Fund. The discussions also highlighted the need to strengthen NAC's mandate and institutional capacity, reconstitute the NAC Board and maintain a strong focus on HIV prevention.

The engagement also looked ahead to a more integrated health response, including opportunities to link HIV services with broader health priorities such as non-communicable diseases. The meeting further explored the potential of Smart Zambia and digital infrastructure to strengthen coordination, information management and service delivery.

The meeting reaffirmed a shared commitment to protecting Zambia's gains in the HIV response while building a more resilient and sustainable national response for the future.



Zambia Launches 2025 HIV Spectrum Estimates

Zambia launched the 2025 HIV Spectrum Estimates to strengthen its HIV response. The estimates show that 1,308,000 people were living with HIV in 2025, while new HIV infections declined by 66 percent, from 68,000 in 2010 to 23,000 in 2025. AIDS-related deaths also fell by 56 percent, from 35,000 to 16,000. Zambia recorded 96-99-97 across the HIV testing, treatment and viral suppression cascade. Lusaka and Copperbelt together account for 43 percent of the national HIV burden, reinforcing the need for focused programming.

These estimates point to significant progress while also highlighting areas that require sustained and targeted action.

Launching the estimates, Ministry of Health Permanent Secretary–Technical Services, Dr. Kennedy Lishimpi, called for intensified efforts in HIV prevention, PrEP, prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT), early antenatal care and retention in care.

UNFPA Country Representative Seth Broekman highlighted the importance of increased investment in HIV prevention among adolescent girls and young women, particularly as external financing declines.

Presenting the 2026 Global AIDS Report, UNAIDS Strategic Information Adviser Dr. John Mwale noted that global progress remains fragile amid disruptions in HIV financing.



From Progress to Sustainability: Keeping Girls at the Centre of Zambia's HIV Response



Investing in young people, youth-friendly services and community engagement is helping strengthen health outcomes for adolescent girls and young women. This was among the key lessons emerging from the Strengthening Girls' Rights (SGR II) programme, which recently reached its close-out stage.

NAC, in partnership with GIZ, convened the SGR II Close-Out Meeting to reflect on the programme's achievements and lessons for the future. Among the results highlighted were increased access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information among young people, a decline in teenage pregnancy in target schools, and public support for the rights of girls and young women from 123 religious and traditional actors.

Outgoing GIZ Head of Project Evelyn Maib-Chatré highlighted the value of youth-friendly spaces and meaningful youth participation, while GIZ Country Director Axel Ulmer emphasised local ownership, strong institutions and the importance of integrating successful approaches into national systems.

Guest of Honour Dr. Kennedy Lishimpi, Permanent Secretary–Technical Services at the Ministry of Health, reaffirmed Government's commitment to adolescent health. He called for stronger combination prevention, expanded adolescent-friendly services and greater attention to rural and hard-to-reach communities. He also emphasised the importance of including boys and considering opportunities to scale the SGR approach beyond the current nine districts.

From Strategy to Action: NAC Strengthens Zambia's Condom Programme

Zambia is taking steps to strengthen condom access, availability and sustainability as part of the national HIV and STI prevention response. NAC convened the National Condom Technical Working Group Meeting and validation of the National Comprehensive Condom Strategy and Operational Plan.

Stakeholders reviewed key areas including condom commodity security, forecasting, distribution, female condom demand creation, reporting and private-sector engagement. Discussions highlighted that approximately 194,000 female condoms were awaiting consumption, pointing to the need for stronger demand creation and more efficient distribution.

The meeting reaffirmed that a sustainable condom programme requires reliable commodities, responsive markets, effective coordination and strong accountability. The discussions marked another step towards translating strategy into practical action that can strengthen access to condoms across Zambia.



New HIV Infections: Is Zambia Losing Ground?



Zambia's HIV response continues to make progress, but the number of new infections remains a critical concern. An estimated 23,000 new HIV infections were recorded in 2025, above the national target of fewer than 5,000 new infections by 2025.

The issue was highlighted by Professor Lloyd Mulenga during the Sustainable Community-Driven Approaches for Lenacapavir (SCALE-IT) stakeholders meeting. The discussion drew attention to an incidence-to-mortality ratio of 1.87, indicating that new infections are outpacing AIDS-related deaths.

The meeting noted that Zambia would need to reduce new infections by approximately 23 percent annually to get back on track, compared with the current reduction rate of 9.5 percent. Against this backdrop, the meeting highlighted innovation as an important part of the prevention response, including a proposed pharmacy-based PrEP delivery model that could create additional access points for HIV prevention.

ZAMRA emphasised the importance of pharmacovigilance, monitoring adverse effects among pregnant and breastfeeding women, and maintaining proper PrEP user registers at participating pharmacies. Civil society welcomed the proposed model and committed to supporting demand creation, while stressing that PrEP must be consistently available.

Beyond Borders: Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique Strengthen Health Services for People on the Move

Health needs do not stop at national borders. Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique are working together to strengthen access to health services for people on the move through the SRHR-HIV Knows No Borders (KNB) Project, supported by IOM, Save the Children and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Zambia joined the two neighbouring countries in Tete, Mozambique, for a cross-border health meeting as the project approaches its conclusion. Representing Zambia were NAC's Provincial AIDS Coordination Advisor (PACA), the Department of Immigration, and Save the Children representatives.

Stakeholders reflected on progress in improving access to health services for mobile populations, strengthening cross-border referral systems and fostering collaboration among health workers, immigration officials and community leaders. Particular attention was given to ensuring continuity of care and strengthening referral pathways across borders.

As the project draws to a close, these three countries are focusing on sustaining the gains and integrating them into routine government systems.



NAC Strengthens HIV, STI and TB Awareness at 2026 Southern Tourism, Agricultural and Commercial Show



NAC exhibited at the 2026 Southern Tourism, Agricultural and Commercial Show in Southern Province under the theme "Promoting Agriculture, Boosting Tourism, Driving Commerce, Building Partnerships". The regional exhibition brought together farmers, government institutions, local authorities, development partners, private-sector organisations and members of the public.

NAC's participation focused on raising awareness and promoting access to HIV, STI and TB prevention and testing services, while encouraging uptake of available prevention commodities, including condoms and PrEP. The engagement also created an opportunity to strengthen collaboration with local stakeholders and health service providers.

Through such community and public engagement platforms, NAC continues to support efforts to improve access to HIV testing, early diagnosis, linkage to treatment and prevention services.

NAC Strengthens HIV Prevention Messaging for Young People

Young people need HIV prevention information that is accurate, relevant and easy to understand. Recognising this need, the NAC is strengthening youth-focused communication as part of Zambia's broader HIV response.

With support from the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ), NAC, through the Social and Behaviour Change Technical Working Group (SBC TWG), convened a three-day meeting to review and adapt HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health and rights communication materials for adolescents and young people.

The meeting reviewed messages on HIV self-testing, PrEP, condom use and other prevention services. The TWG also reviewed HIV Self-Testing (HIVST) Standard Operating Procedures and practical job aids for healthcare workers. This is intended to strengthen demand for prevention services and support young people to make informed choices about their health.



37% of New HIV Infections Are Among Young People: Strengthening the Prevention Response



Young people aged 15–24 account for 37 percent of new HIV infections in Zambia. This highlights the importance of targeted, innovative and youth-responsive approaches to HIV prevention and testing.

HIV testing remains an important entry point to prevention, treatment, care and support. HIV self-testing (HIVST), in particular, provides young people with a convenient and private option to know their status and make informed decisions about their health.

To strengthen this response, NAC and the Ministry of Health, with support from the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) through the Accelerating Self-testing Access for Efficiency and Navigating Transitions (ASCENT) Project, convened an SBC TWG meeting to review and adapt HIVST communication materials so that they are relevant, engaging and responsive to the realities of adolescents and young people. The effort is also aimed at increasing demand for HIV self-testing and other prevention services.

From Knowledge to Action: Empowering the Next Generation of Public Health Leaders

NAC joined students, lecturers, researchers and public health professionals at the University of Zambia (UNZA) School of Public Health Symposium, under the theme “Trained for Impact” and sub-theme “Impact Everywhere for a Strengthened Public Health.”

The symposium provided a platform to share knowledge, exchange ideas and explore approaches to strengthening Zambia’s public health. During the event, NAC showcased HIV prevention options, including abstinence, condoms, oral PrEP and injectable PrEP. The interaction gave students an opportunity to ask questions, deepen their understanding of HIV prevention options.

The engagement went beyond information sharing as it provided an opportunity to connect with and inspire the next generation of public health professionals who will spearhead the multisectoral HIV response into communities, workplaces and institutions.



From Guidelines to Action: Strengthening Zambia’s Condom Market



Zambia is taking steps to make condoms more accessible, available and responsive to the needs of different population groups. NAC, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Africa Health Business, convened a two-day meeting to operationalise Zambia’s Condom Total Market Approach (TMA).

The workshop focused on translating the Condom TMA Guidelines into practical action and strengthening sustainable access to condoms as an essential HIV and STI prevention commodity. The meeting validated the national condom market segmentation framework, linking population groups to appropriate market channels, outlet types and product portfolios.

Stakeholders also reviewed outlet mapping and market assessment findings to strengthen last-mile distribution. Discussions further explored the development of a Condom Market Performance Dashboard to support routine monitoring, accountability and evidence-based decision-making.

NAC Advances Youth-Friendly Access to Long-Acting HIV Prevention

To make HIV prevention services more accessible, acceptable and youth-friendly, the Ministry of Health and NAC in collaboration with CIDRZ and Ciheb Zambia, held a two-day workshop on optimising the implementation of cabotegravir (CAB-LA) for HIV prevention.

The meeting brought together researchers, healthcare workers, adolescents, peer educators and partners to examine Zambia-specific evidence and identify practical approaches for expanding CAB-LA among young people.

Findings from the SCALE UP study showed 97 percent adherence among 180 adolescent girls and young women initiated on CAB-LA. The study identified privacy, convenience and trusted healthcare providers as important factors influencing acceptability, while also pointing to challenges related to stigma, commodity availability and service delivery.

The meeting, therefore, highlighted the importance of designing HIV prevention services around the needs and realities of young people while addressing the service-delivery barriers that can affect access and continued use.





Zambia is reviewing its HIV Testing Services (HTS) algorithm to explore approaches that could support earlier detection of HIV. The national review, convened by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with NAC and partners was held in Livingstone.

The focus of the meeting was the potential use of fourth-generation HIV assays, which detect both HIV antibodies and the p24 antigen and may identify infection earlier than antibody-only tests. Earlier diagnosis could strengthen prevention and linkage to treatment, particularly as Zambia expands access to PrEP.

The review also considered practical issues including cost, laboratory capacity, accessibility and quality assurance. These considerations will be important in determining how new testing approaches can be effectively integrated into Zambia's health system.

Syphilis Can Be Cured: Why Are Cases Rising in Zambia?

Syphilis cases in Zambia have increased substantially, rising from 44,788 in 2021 to 114,663 in 2025. The highest numbers were recorded in Lusaka, Copperbelt, Eastern, Central and Southern Provinces, with young people among the groups of concern.

The increase has been associated with factors including high-risk sexual behaviour, declining condom use, socio-economic vulnerabilities and gaps in partner notification. Syphilis is preventable, detectable, treatable and curable. However, if left untreated, it can cause serious complications, including damage to the brain, eyes and hearing, infertility, miscarriage and congenital syphilis.

Speaking at the launch of the Stop Syphilis Campaign, Ministry of Health Permanent Secretary Dr. Kennedy Lishimpi represented by Director of Clinical Care Dr. Lisulo Walubita, reaffirmed Government's commitment to strengthening the national HIV and STI response through reliable testing commodities, healthcare worker training, and accessible screening and treatment services.

Representing the NAC Director General, Director of Programmes Ms. Katongo Silwiza reiterated NAC's commitment to strengthening coordination of interventions aimed at reducing the burden of HIV and STIs in Zambia.

AHF Africa Bureau Chief Mr. Martin Matabishi called for expanded access to STI testing, treatment and condoms. The campaign provides an opportunity to renew attention to syphilis prevention, early diagnosis and treatment, particularly among populations experiencing a growing burden of the infection.



Shaping Zambia's HIV Future: NAC Begins NASF 2027–2031 Validation



NAC has commenced validation engagements in Eastern Province to inform the development of Zambia's 2027–2031 National HIV & AIDS Strategic Framework (NASF). As the current framework approaches its end in 2027, the new NASF is expected to provide strategic direction for Zambia's Multisectoral HIV response over the next five years.

The validation process is focusing on key priorities including adolescents and young people, sustainable domestic HIV financing and strengthened HIV prevention. The NAC team visited health facilities in Chipata, Petauke, Mambwe, Katete and Chadiza Districts to engage healthcare providers and assess the implementation of HIV prevention services, including lenacapavir.

The engagements provides an opportunity to gather perspectives from frontline health workers and communities and identify lessons from implementation. These insights will contribute to shaping priorities and approaches for the next strategic framework.