

Data Uptake Series: ZAMBIA 2022

This brief describes how the Countdown collaboration has helped a culture of data use to thrive in Zambia.



“We say, numbers don’t lie,” reflected Charles Michelo, professor at the University of Zambia during a June 2022 dissemination event. “Yet numbers can be hidden. In hospitals, see how many files may be on the floor, inaccessible. This also may be true in our offices: we have the data, and we need to learn from it, use it.”

Similarly, Brivine Sikapande of the Ministry of Health said, “The culture in the country is mostly to collect this huge amount of data but when it comes to using that data, there is very little or no use of it.” Sikapande has been working on the Countdown collaboration since 2019 and she said has seen progress toward more data use. “Through our products we have been able to stimulate a lot of interest from partners, as well as within the Ministry of Health, to be able to use the data to inform programming,” she said.

Strengthened capacity for data analysis within Ministry of Health and other collaboration partners has led to the development of several country-level communications products and participation in cross-country analysis projects,



Countdown collaboration researchers at a data dissemination event in June 2022.

such as the [COVID-19 analysis](#), the [urban health study](#), and [health facility data analysis workshops](#). The Countdown collaboration prepared a [midterm review](#) of the [National Health Strategic Plan \(NHSP\) 2017-2021](#). This analysis also included a color-coded [executive summary](#) comparing progress to targets. This report was also used to develop the new NHSP. A [subsequent report](#) focused on equity in reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health (RMNCH).

In June 2022, more than 60 people attended a

Action Points from 2022 Tracking Progress Meeting

- Scale-up and sustain implementation of child health interventions that can be provided in rural and remote communities, with increasing attention to newborns.
- Re-adjust and reshape interventions to contextually target children and mothers in poorer groups for selected indicators in urban populations.
- Develop continued and coordinated multisectoral approach for responding to reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and nutrition.
- Document lessons learned on ensuring continuity of essential health services during epidemics and other health system shocks, using routinely collected data (DHIS2).

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meeting about progress toward equity in RMNCH, health policy and systems analysis, and COVID-19’s impact on RMNCH services. Hosted by Countdown, attendees were from the Ministry of Health, the Zambia Statistics Agency, several United Nations organizations, the country’s largest teaching hospital, international nonprofit organizations, the United States Agency for International Development and the University of Zambia.

The annual data review meetings have shown encouraging progress and also identified gaps that still need to be addressed, noted Patricia Bobo, acting director public health and research at the Ministry of Health during the June 2022 event. “Reviewing data is important because otherwise we may do things just because we did them in the past, without thinking about what impact is being achieved.”

The Countdown collaboration has also helped reduce duplication of efforts between the Ministry of Health and the university researchers. “Ultimately, all the research we are doing should be able to improve how we are doing our service delivery and how we actually program to achieve improved outcomes,” Sikapande said “We have seen that as we partner, as we collaborate, we are able to reduce duplication of efforts because we are all working towards a common goal.”

Choolwe Jacobs, a lecturer and researcher at the University of Zambia who is part of the Countdown collaboration said, “This collaboration, particularly in-country between the Ministry of Health and the university, has been strengthened through capacity building in analytical and knowledge translation skills and increased data sharing and demand.” Although Zambia’s DHIS platform includes extensive information, previously Countdown collaboration partners at the University of Zambia, had little access to the data. Through the Countdown collaboration their use of the data has increased, and graduate students are able to access the data for their practicums and dissertations.

For example, in April 2022 findings from analysis of health facility and Demographic Health survey data conducted by the Countdown collaboration was shared in an event at the University of Zambia’s School of Public Health. The event included oral presentations followed by open discussion. This was the first event of its type at the School of Public Health, and it motivated university leadership to start having similar research presentations every month.

As we plan to move forward, I would emphasize the need for collabo-

ration, collaboration, collaboration,” said Dr. Hikabasa Halwiindi, dean of the University of Zambia’s School of Public Health. “If you want to go first, go alone; if you want to go far, you need others.”

Related documents: [Midterm report](#) • [Equity report](#) • [Policy brief: Child health](#) • [Presentations from June 2022 dissemination](#) • [Nairobi June 2020 workshop report](#)

Partner organizations of the Countdown to 2030 country collaboration in Zambia



Purpose of the Data Uptake Series

If research is to have an impact it needs to be taken up or used by people with the ability to change policies and programmes. Research uptake includes all the activities that facilitate and contribute to the use of research evidence by policy makers and other development actors. This series documents successes and challenges around this process under the Countdown to 2030 collaboration.

To learn more visit:
www.countdown2030.org