While mortality from malaria has drastically decreased in Zambia over the past decade, more than 1,000 deaths are still reported annually. Malaria prevalence varies both between and within districts and is endemic across all ten provinces. The Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) has set ambitious timelines for the elimination of local malaria infection and disease.¹

The Program for the Advancement of Malaria Outcomes (PAMO) is a flagship malaria program for the U.S. government President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI) in Zambia. PAMO helps the GRZ accelerate progress towards eliminating local malaria infection and disease. Implemented by PATH, PAMO supports GRZ at the national level through the National Malaria Elimination Centre (NMEC) and in four high malaria burden provinces: Luapula, Muchinga, Eastern, and Northern.

PAMO’s strategy focuses on:

- Increasing coverage of proven malaria interventions in alignment with the National Malaria Strategic Plan.
- Strengthening management capacity of the provincial and district Ministry of Health personnel to provide oversight and supervision of delivery of malaria interventions.
- Strengthening the health management information system (HMIS) at the provincial and district levels to improve data reporting, analysis, and use for decision-making.

Implementing proven malaria interventions

In alignment with the national strategy, PAMO is supporting the GRZ in implementing integrated community case management of malaria training and deploying community health workers to confirm and treat malaria within communities. PAMO is training health care workers (HCWs) in malaria treatment guidelines to reduce presumptive treatment, increasing delivery of intermittent preventive treatment in pregnancy (IPTp) as part of an integrated package of antenatal services, supporting insecticide-treated bed net distribution, and supporting the PMI pre-elimination program in Eastern Province. Community access to prompt malaria diagnosis and treatment has improved dramatically in PAMO focus districts.

Building management capacity to deliver malaria interventions

To reduce malaria deaths, limit the use of anti-malarial drugs, and contribute to malaria elimination, HCWs should confirm each case of malaria, instead of relying on presumptive treatment. Outreach training and supportive supervision (OTSS) has shown to improve HCWs malaria diagnostic and treatment skills. PAMO is helping decentralize OTSS by strengthening provincial and introducing district-level supervision, effectively expanding the technical and geographic scope of mentorship.

To strengthen management capacity, PAMO also trains health managers at the district and provincial levels in management skills for effective management of malaria programs. The training includes enhancing management skills such as planning, human and financial resources, and health commodities management.

¹ https://www.nmec.org.zm/malaria-overview

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Laboratory specialists (right standing and seated) mentor a lab technician (left) in malaria microscopy during an OTSS round. Photo: PATH/Paul Tembo, Case Management Officer.

Strengthening health information systems to improve reporting, analysis, and decision-making

PAMO enables the use of data to improve intervention implementation and inform decision-making at all levels. Training and mentorship provided to facility and district health care workers has improved the completeness, accuracy, and timeliness of data reporting. Data quality audits ensure consistency between data recorded in papers registers and HMIS. PAMO facilitates biannual district-wide data review meetings where health facility staff present data to their peers, district, and provincial health officials to review progress on key indicators (malaria deaths, incidence, provision IPTp). The institutionalization of the harmonized workplan and malaria scorecard facilitates coordinated implementation and real-time tracking of progress at all levels.