



Better Immunization Data Initiative in Zambia

Better data plus better decisions will lead to better health outcomes

PATH/Gabe Blenczycki



Routine immunizations and new vaccine introductions have proven to be two of the best investments for improving health in Zambia and around the world. Immunization coverage in Zambia is estimated at 68 percent, according to the 2013 national Demographic and Health Survey. Reaching at least 90 percent, a key component of Zambia's immunization priorities, will require better data.

The BID Initiative in Zambia has partnered with the Ministry of Community Development Mother and Child Health (MCDMCH) and the Ministry of Health (MOH). Together, these partners will create an environment where reliable, easily accessed, and actionable data can be used to increase immunization rates.

THE CHALLENGE

Government officials working to enhance immunization coverage in Zambia have been hampered by limited and often unreliable and inaccurate data that may not reflect the actual challenges on the ground. In partnership with the MCDMCH and MOH, the BID Initiative identified a number of critical data-related challenges:

The **Better Immunization Data (BID) Initiative's** vision is to enhance immunization and overall health service delivery through improved data collection, quality, and use. Led by PATH and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the initiative will identify practical, country-owned, country-led solutions in immunization that could spread to other health interventions. It began by evaluating countries in sub-Saharan Africa to identify demonstration country partners. The process included a preliminary desk review, followed by in-depth analysis of demographics, governance, data from the Expanded Program on Immunization, eHealth infrastructure, and other factors. After an initial round of scoping visits followed by in-depth visits to potential implementation sites, Tanzania and Zambia emerged as strong country partners.

- Incomplete or untimely data.
- Multiple vertical data collection systems.
- Complex data collection forms and tools.



- Insufficient supply chains and logistics management.
- Inadequate data management and use capacity throughout all levels of the health system.
- Inaccurate or uncertain denominators for calculating immunization rates.
- Difficulty identifying children who do not start immunization or who drop out (defaulter tracing).
- Poor data visibility into supplies at the facility level to district-level data and stock.

INTERVENTIONS

Zambia’s Expanded Program on Immunization Multi-Year Plan (2011–2015) set a goal to strengthen the management, analysis, interpretation, use, and exchange of data at all levels. Based on conversations and consultations with MCDMCH representatives, the BID Initiative is working in the Southern Province to test the following key interventions and help overcome challenges in increasing immunization coverage:

- Electronic immunization registry.
- Automated, simplified report generation.
- Barcodes on child health cards.
- Supply chain monitoring system.
- Creation of a “data culture” that will systematically improve the use of data to improve service delivery.
- Peer support networks.
- Targeted supportive supervision for health workers.

When testing is complete, we will move to the implementation phase and roll out to other regions. We are also actively seeking additional resources to help Zambia plan for national scale.

In addition, the initiative established a User Advisory Group to be champions of change and participating in the development of interventions, as well as a peer-to-peer learning network with representatives from sub-Saharan African countries grappling with similar challenges. The BID Learning Network is a platform

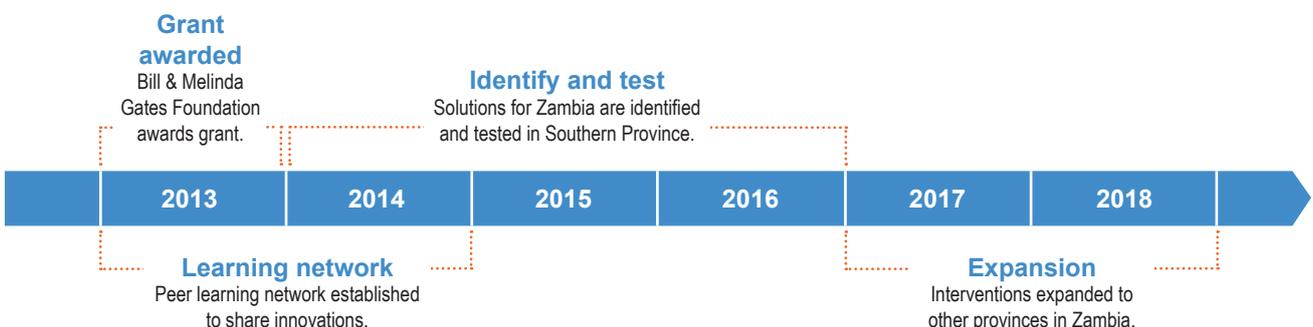


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to offer ideas, share perspectives, and provide feedback to ensure that proposed solutions will work not only in Zambia but also in many other countries.

If the initiative is successful, a true tipping point will occur. All levels of Zambia’s health system will have the ability to access, analyze, and act upon accurate immunization data—anytime, anywhere, resulting in improved health outcomes.

MILESTONES TIMELINE



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