



## WORLD HEPATITIS DAY COMMEMORATION REPORT

Theme: It's time for Action

Organized by: HEP Initiative Zambia

Date: 28/07/24

Venue: Kalingalinga Grounds, Lusaka



Figure 1 The winning Football Team posing for a photo with HEP Initiative CEO

## **Introduction**

The HEP Initiative successfully organized and commemorated the World Hepatitis Day event on 28th July, 2024, at Kalingalinga Ground, Lusaka, Zambia. This event aimed;

- To raise awareness about Hepatitis
- Foster community engagement through sport (football tournament)
- Provide free testing services to the public
- Provide counseling and linkage to care for those who test positive

## **Event Overview**

### Participants

- Community members
- Healthcare professionals
- Local leaders
- Representatives from the Ministry of Health

### Key activities

- Football tournament to bring the community together

Sports events attract a broad audience, allowing health messages to reach diverse groups, including different age demographics and socioeconomic backgrounds. This engagement facilitated conversations about hepatitis.

- Educational sessions on hepatitis prevention and treatment
- Free hepatitis B testing

Free testing enabled accessibility by anyone who was willing to get tested as the test is not readily available in most health facilities.

- Media coverage by local and national broadcasters

This enabled a wide spread of information to a wider audience and enhanced visibility of the Project, sponsors and the gravity of viral hepatitis.

## **Key Highlights**

### **Football tournament:**

The tournament served as a vibrant platform to bring the community together, with players wearing branded T-shirts (Abbott/HEP Initiative logos) featuring the year's theme. The area Councilor graced the event as the guest of honor, promoting the importance of hepatitis awareness.



Figure 2 Football was used to draw the community together and created a platform for educational activities about viral hepatitis

**Educational Sessions:**

- Sessions were conducted to educate the public on hepatitis prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Interactive Q & A sessions enabled participants to engage directly with healthcare professionals and clarify their misconceptions.
- The team provided IEC materials alongside the educational sessions



Figure 3 The HEP Initiative and MOH Teams provided educational sessions



Figure 4 HEP Initiative CEO taking the lead in Information dissemination

#### Free testing services:

- A total of 184 individuals received free hepatitis B testing.
- Counseling services were provided to those who tested positive, with 11 being linked to care at the University Teaching Hospital



Figure 5 Free onsite testing for Hepatitis

**Media coverage:**

The event received extensive media coverage from the National Broadcaster and the Ministry of Health communications team. The Media houses helped amplify the messages, reaching a wider audience and raising public awareness. The event was equally published on the Ministry of Health Social media page thereby reaching a wide audience.



*Figure 6 HEP Initiative CEO being interviewed by the Journalist from Zambia National Broadcasting Cooperation ZNBC*



Figure 7 Dr. Edford Sinkala - Consultant Physician, hepatologist and lecturer was on hand to give insights on the Viral Hepatitis situation in Zambia as well as its management

## Achievements

### Community engagement:

- The football team successfully brought together community members, fostering a sense of unity and collective action against Hepatitis. Participation from local leaders underscored the importance of the event.
- When communities are engaged at every stage of implementation, it builds a sense of ownership, program acceptability and more sustainable health outcomes.



Figure 8 Community members taking part in raising placards with hepatitis messaging





Figure 9 Community participation on awareness creation



Figure 10 Leaving no one behind in hepatitis awareness creation

### **Awareness Raised:**

- Significant increase in public awareness about hepatitis through educational sessions and media coverage.
- Social media engagement spread key messages about hepatitis prevention and treatment.

### **Testing and Diagnosis:**

- Successful identification of new hepatitis cases, enabling early detection, intervention and treatment
- Strengthened partnerships with healthcare facilities to ensure continuous support for those affected
- Enhanced referral system



Figure 11 Free onsite testing

### Testimony from a participant

Participant X who tested positive to Hepatitis had this to say, “ *I am glad I attended this event and have been educated on hepatitis and saw the need to test. With the availability of treatment options, my mind is at peace now that I know where to seek care from*”.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned

#### Challenges

- Inadequate time to prepare adequately for the event due to late accessibility to funding. We recommend a more timely accessibility to resources in future events to enable ample time for preparations.

## **Lessons Learned:**

- Early planning and robust logistics are critical to managing large- scale health events
- Continuous community engagement is essential for sustaining awareness and promoting healthy practices. Critical to programme acceptance and sustainability
- Leveraging the popularity and communal nature of sports can effectively enhance awareness and education about hepatitis, foster community engagement, and encourage healthier behaviors related to liver health.

## **Conclusion**

- The World Hepatitis Day commemorations organized by the HEP Initiative Zambia at Kalingalinga Grounds were a resounding success. Through a combination of community engagement activities, educational sessions, and free testing services, the event made a substantial impact on public awareness and health.
- Moving forward, the HEP Initiative remains committed to its mission of combating hepatitis and improving public health outcomes. We hope to continue running such community tournaments around Lusaka and other provinces to raise awareness and offer free testing to attendees and the players.

## **Acknowledgements**

The HEP Initiative extends its gratitude to all partners, volunteers, healthcare professionals, and participants who contributed to the success of the event. Special thanks to the Ministry of Health and Abbott for their unwavering support, to whom this event would not have been a success without them.

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