



Research for a malaria-free Namibia takes centre stage in Zambezi region

11 November 2015

Namibia's goal of eliminating malaria by 2020 took centre stage on Wednesday 11 November as a large group gathered at the Katima Mulilo campus in support of a vision for a malaria-free Namibia. The event took place with the backdrop of SADC Malaria week, in nearby Kasane, Botswana, where the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria signed a US\$17.8 million grant to support regional malaria elimination efforts. The principal recipient of the grant is the Elimination 8 (E8) Regional Initiative, a coordinated eight-country effort to eliminate malaria in Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland and their neighbors.

Participants at the Katima malaria event provided feedback on research conducted in Zambezi region by the UNAM Multidisciplinary Research Centre and seven public health partners – including the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS), and the University of California, San Francisco's Malaria Elimination Initiative (MEI) – under the banner of the Namibia Malaria Elimination Research Partnership (NAMEP). Dr Bennet Kangumu, the campus director, hosted the gathering which was addressed by Zambezi Governor Lawrence Sampofu, E8 Ambassador Dr. Richard Nchabi Kamwi, and Deputy Director of the MEI Allison Phillips. Also present were the Katima Mulilo mayor Charles Matengu, Marian Sankombo and Dr. Noel Siame (representing the Zambezi MoHSS), UNAM faculty and staff, members of local government, a visiting team from the MEI, and community members.

Within southern Africa, Namibia is a leader in the fight against malaria because of its serious commitment to elimination and the incredible progress our country has made. To further this progress, Dr. Richard Nchabi Kamwi emphasized the need for regional responses to combat malaria by developing a regional surveillance system and laboratory to enhance responses to malaria outbreaks. Dr. Davis Mumbengegwi shared findings from the first phase of ongoing malaria elimination research, which confirmed that Zambezi region is on the way to malaria elimination, although there are individuals within the community who do not have malaria symptoms but carry the parasite, acting as reservoirs for transmission. In addition, this research shows that the groups most at risk of contracting malaria are males between 16-30 years old, individuals outside between 6pm and 9 pm, students, farmers, and those who work or sleep outdoors at night.

The discussion during the event highlighted that community and individual awareness and engagement are crucial to achieving a malaria-free country by 2020. The second phase of the research to evaluate innovative strategies for malaria elimination will begin in January 2016.

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To advance Namibia's goal of eliminating malaria by 2020, seven public health partners came together in April 2014 to establish the Namibia Malaria Elimination Research Partnership (NAMEP). The partnership was originally formed to support the implementation of a randomized controlled trial of innovative and targeted responses to malaria cases. NAMEP partners consist of:

- Namibia Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS), National Vector-borne Diseases Control Programme (NVDCP)
- University of Namibia, Multidisciplinary Research Centre



- University of California, San Francisco Global Health Group's Malaria Elimination Initiative (MEI)
- University of Texas, Southwestern
- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)
- Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI)
- Novartis Foundation

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