

Hon Chota Opens MeTA Zambia Forum

MeTA Zambia chairperson Hon Lazarus Chota opened the MeTA Forum for stakeholders at Chrismar Hotel on 28 August 2014. The annual Forum brought stakeholders from Government, the Private Sector and Civil Society Organisations together to share information and take stock of MeTA activities implemented during the year and map the way forward.

Hon Chota informed stakeholders that the Forum was called to brief everyone and bring them to the same hymn book page. More than 60 participants met to listen and discuss the presentations from Government, Medical Stores and the private Sector represented by the Zambia Pharmaceutical Business Forum.

Below is the full text of the chairperson's remarks to the Forum:



MeTA Forum 2014. The aim of this forum is to share information, actions as a multistakeholder organisation.

we have called you to this Forum so that we are on the same hymn book page. As a multistakeholder organisation we must always move together to find ways of working together on medicines issues – their quality, efficacy, accessibility, availability and affordability.

MeTA Zambia last held a forum in 2010 at Cresta View Hotel during the pilot phase. This phase started in 2011 though the funding for MeTA Zambia was only received in June 2013 when activities took off.

We are going towards the end of our funding year. This is one reason we have called this Forum so that we can share our experiences, the activities that have kept MeTA Zambia alive these past months.

In brief we have implemented the following activities

1. Five CSO sensitisation workshops in Solwezi on 27 August 2013, Ndola on 29 August 2013, Lusaka on 22 October 2013, in Kabwe on 18 July 2014 and Livingstone on 28 July 2014.

2. 26 radio programmes on the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation's radio 4
3. Two radio programmes on radio Kabangabanga in Solwezi, two radio programmes on Sun FM in Ndola, one radio programme on KC Radio in Kabwe and three radio programmes on Radio Mosi-oa-Tunya
4. We have held two procurement workshops in Lusaka and Livingstone to sensitise procurement officers in public health institutions on good governance in medicines and the best practices in procurement

In terms of programmes on radio we made history by putting on air at the same time on the same day three programmes in three districts of Livingstone, Ndola and Solwezi. This happened on 28 October 2014.

There is no doubt that we have had a busy one year especially that these activities have also produced 16 focus groups in 16 districts. Out of these 16 districts we have selected eight which will be involved in a pilot programme to collect information on accessibility and availability of medicines in these districts.

Yesterday we brought the eight districts to start the formation of the CSO Coalition for Transparency in Medicine. This coalition will be an umbrella organisation of our CSO stakeholders just as the Zambia Pharmaceutical Business Forum is for the private sector. We want our CSOs to grow their voice within MeTA. We want our CSOs to speak with one strong voice.

To achieve this the pilot in the eight districts will be involved in conducting coalition meetings to bring out the weaknesses in the medicines chain. We hope all other stakeholders – the Government and the Private Sector will accept and assist this new development.

By taking the step we have taken with regards to the CSOs MeTA Zambia has not forgotten the private sector and the government. Sometime in September MeTA Zambia will hold a Round Table which will bring the Government and the Private Sector face to face to discuss the various issues affecting the pharmaceutical sector.

Of further concern to MeTA Zambia, apart from issues of accessibility and availability of medicines, is the cost of medication. A technical team has been set up comprising the Private Sector, the Government and CSOs. The Pharmaceutical Society of Zambia is the lead organisation on this activity. We hope the Zambia Medical Association, the Private Sector and the Government will work together to gather information that will provide data to the planned Health Insurance Scheme and the projected medicines basket.

At MeTA Zambia, we believe that we must cater for all sectors of Zambian Society. We must speak for the industry, but we must also understand the Government's view and must take note of the concerns of our Zambian citizens with regards to medicines issues. In short we must bring everyone together and keep all concerns to the fore.



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I will briefly look at how we have designed this forum. We have three themes that will be presented to us. We will give you our experiences some of which I have already alluded to.

We have taken note of the fact that Zambia is celebrating 50 years of political independence. With this in mind our presentations will attempt to reflect this political achievement. Our discussions on Health will reflect what has transpired from 24 October 1964 when we gained our independence to date. What have we achieved and what have we failed to achieve?

Hence the three topics that form the basis of our discussions today are as follows:

1. Medical Stores will present to us their view of 50 years of procurement and distribution of essential medicines (including wholesaling and retailing)
2. 50 years of Manufacturing Essential Medicines in Zambia – this will be a view of the private sector
3. 50 years of Health Services – Accessibility, Availability and Affordability in Zambia – this will be a view of the Ministry of Health of Government.

I do not want to spoil your enjoyment, experience and participation in discussing these topics. I am therefore leaving it to you and to the presenters. Please do make this day and time memorable through your full participation in this event. Thanking you.



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