WORKSHOP ON CIVIL SOCIETY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

This is Activity 4.2c - Conduct awareness campaign on pricing, quality and availability of Medicines for pilot phase CSO Coalition

Organisation

The workshop on 29 August 2013 in Ndola was organized on behalf of MeTA Zambia by Treatment Advocacy Literacy Campaign (TALC). The local organizer for Ndola was the provincial TALC officer based in Chililabombwe.

The workshop took place at Fatmols Lodge in Ndola from 08.30 to 16.30 hours. The workshop was attended by 45 participants from various Civil Society Organisations in four districts namely Ndola, Mufulira, Luanshya and Kitwe on the Copperbelt.

The Ministry of Health was well represented by some nurses from various clinics and the pharmacist from Arthur Davison Hospital.

Presentations

The workshop started with registration followed by introductions of participants and facilitators. The facilitators from Lusaka included Masautso Phiri, Banza Chela and Zindaba Ngwenyama and local facilitator pharmacist at Arthur Davison Hospital Arnold Phiri.

The workshop’s two objectives were outlined as follows:

1. Create awareness of the issues of medicines, their pricing, quality, accessibility and availability to ordinary Zambians on the Copperbelt.
2. Create a sense of ownership of MeTA Zambia’s objectives by the local community so they can take it upon themselves to claim the right to access quality, affordable medicines and encourage the establishment of a district focus group that can draw funding on the Constituency Development Fund

The expected outputs of the workshop were listed as follows: That participants would

1. Understand the importance of access to essential medicines especially with regards to their pricing, quality and availability in Solwezi
2. Be able to understand the difference between counterfeit, substandard, generic and branded medicines
3. Have a good understanding of the Medicines Supply Management System and their role in it.
4. Be able identify medicines issues for advocacy in their district
5. Be able to understand the MeTA pilot phase studies and the role of CSOs in phase two.
6. Agree to establish a MeTA Zambia Focus Group on the Copperbelt.

As the main facilitator Masautso Phiri talked about MeTA’s background, its principles and objectives and how Zambia became involved in the project. He explained that United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) funded the project piloted in seven countries. He explained about MeTA Zambia during the pilot phase, the role of Civil Society Organisations then which was separately funded. He discussed the CSO training programme and the lessons learnt which have led to the role of CSOs in the second phase. He noted that because CSOs such as NZP+ and Treatment Advocacy Literacy Campaign (TALC) were involved in the pilot and applied lessons learnt to their national network, MeTA Zambia would use these CSOs in the second phase as a basis for MeTA Zambia focus groups.

The main advocacy message repeated during the workshop was that Medicines were a Human Right and that the community through CSOs must be involved in demanding this right is fulfilled especially with regard to the availability, accessibility and affordability of medicines.
Arnold Phiri a pharmacist at Arthur Davison Hospital was one of the facilitators. As for Solwezi, Phiri discussed issues related to counterfeit, substandard, branded and generic medicines. The presentation generated a lot of discussion on the quality of medicines on the Copperbelt. It also brought to the fore the question of shortages (or as some preferred rationing) of ARVs and the non availability of the BCG vaccine. The common anxiety and worry was what would happen to babies that were not vaccinated at birth.

Banza Chela discussed advocacy and through group work asked the participants to identify medicines issues on the Copperbelt and how these would be addressed through the MeTA Zambia focus groups. Four MeTA Zambia focus groups were created for the purpose.

FOCUS GROUPS

The following focus groups were set up:

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RADIO PROGRAMME ON SUN FM

The programme on Sun Fm a new radio station in Ndola was implemented on August 29, 2013 starting at 17.13 hrs to18.13 hrs. It was a live phone-in programme that looked at

MeTA Zambia Focus Group Concept

Under the pilot phase MeTA Zambia was active in three provinces – Lusaka, Central and North Western. It ran radio programmes in Lusaka on ZNBC’s Radio 4, on Radio Maranatha in Kabwe and Radio Mkushi both in Central province and on Radio Solwezi and Radio Mwinilunga in North Western province. MeTA Zambia also carried out Road Shows in Solwezi, Mkushi and Kabwe. From lessons learnt during these activities it was clear that thirst for information was big in these communities which could only be satisfied through a continuous presence in any district. The other lesson learnt was that while a number of organizations such as NZP+, TALC and others existed in these districts MeTA Zambia with its principles and objectives is the only organization that would bring them together in a multi-stakeholder alliance for a common purpose that would benefit the majority.

Impact of Workshop

This activity involves an awareness campaign in Ndola disseminating advocacy messages from the pilot studies as part of capacity building for CSOs. A short review of the pilot phase training will be made and the role of the CSO Coalition spelt out. However, emphasis will be placed on the role of CSOs in the second phase especially that they will be encouraged to form MeTA Zambia district committees to advocate medicines issues within their district.
This activity is being implemented on August 29, 2013. It includes a one day workshop, a live one hour phone in programme at 17:30 hours on Radio Sun FM and a focus group meeting to chart the way forward.