

Building Momentum: From Listening to Action



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Editor's Note.

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second quarter edition of Inside CIDRZ for FY 2026. Our theme, “Building Momentum: From Listening to Action,” reflects our commitment to transforming community insights into impactful healthcare solutions.

In this issue, we highlight the A-Men SHIP initiative, currently reaching adolescent boys and young men across ten health facilities in Lusaka. We also celebrate International Women’s Day and profile the dedicated staff whose professional excellence continues to set the gold standard in the region.

To maintain our position as a leader in research and public health, we continue to prioritise protocol adherence and ethical guidelines. We sincerely thank our contributors and staff for consistently sharing their work and for their tireless efforts in the field. We hope this edition inspires you as we turn collective listening into decisive action for a healthy Zambia.

Thank you for the continued dedication that makes CIDRZ a leader in public health. Should you require any assistance, please reach out to us at Comms.Dept@cidrz.org.

Happy Reading!
The Editorial Team

Editorial Team



Moses Nsunge



Jill Morse



Ginah Mudenda



Saboi Songiso



Kiss Abraham



Arnold Chasaya



Emmanuel Lungu

Message from the CEO

Dear Colleagues,

As we conclude the second quarter of 2026, I look back on a period marked by a successful transition into my role as CEO, and the strengthening of our foundation for the months and years ahead.

For me, January was a time of listening and learning. The many conversations with teams across the organisation gave me valuable insight into the incredibly large scope of work done at CIDRZ, the priorities, and aspirations. The ideas I gathered during these conversations have already begun to feed our innovations, efficiencies, and new partnerships. I am grateful for the openness and commitment you demonstrated. During this time, I also engaged closely with our Board, whose guidance and strong support reaffirm our shared commitment to the growth and well-being of CIDRZ.

In February, we translated insight into action. Our strategy development sessions were well attended. They yielded rich perspectives that are actively informing the next phase of our direction. At the same time, we deepened relationships with key funders to sustain our work and continue to position CIDRZ as a trusted collaborator. Internally, we advanced important systems and processes, including the rollout of our Human Resource Management Information System and the launch of our Continuing Quality Improvement initiative. Both are critical steps toward greater organisational effectiveness.

March saw us building further on this progress while looking ahead. We initiated an AI Task Force to explore how emerging technologies can responsibly enhance CIDRZ's impact. We also marked International Women's Day with a renewed focus on advancing equity and opportunity across our organisation.

As we move forward, I encourage us all to remain focused, collaborative, and forward-looking. Thank you for all that you do to support the success of CIDRZ mission.

Warm regards,

Dr Otto Chabikuli
Chief Executive Officer



To uphold CIDRZ institutional values of accountability, respect, equality, honesty, productivity, and transparency, the CIDRZ Board and Management encourage staff and clients to utilise the anonymous and confidential whistleblowing services provided through www.cidrz.org/ceo-drop-box and the CIDRZ compliance hotline +260 965 229373 to report Non-Compliance and unethical incidents in the organisation.





Digital Transformation: New HRMIS System Now Live!



Dear Colleagues,



Over the past few years, many of you have shared valuable

feedback on the challenges experienced with our Payroll and Human Resource Management system, and we acknowledge that these frustrations were felt on our side as well. In response, the HR Department has taken a significant step forward in its digital transformation journey. This quarter, we successfully rolled out a new Human Resource Management Information System, developed using local expertise and internal talent from our ICT Department. The result is a fit-for-purpose solution designed to better meet your needs and enhance your overall experience.

As CIDRZ, the modernisation of internal systems stands as a fundamental pillar of our commitment to sustainable public health, and such transitions represent our strategic investment in building the institutional capacity required to support our expanding health interventions across Zambia.

Modernising for Global Impact
This successful launch, finalised on 10th March 2026, marks a significant shift in how we manage our greatest asset: our employees. Transitioning away from legacy platforms like Norming ESS allows the organisation to embrace a more integrated, agile, and secure digital environment.

Furthermore, high-level upgrades like this ensure that our administrative backbone meets international standards for data integrity, transparency and operational efficiency.

The Strategic Value of Modernization

Operational Efficiency: Streamlined internal workflows reduce administrative turnaround, allowing our technical teams to remain focused on frontline public health interventions and groundbreaking research.

Data Security and Compliance

The HRMIS provides a robust framework for managing sensitive professional data. This ensures that CIDRZ remains a “gold-standard” partner for donors and stakeholders.

Building a Future-Ready Workforce

Investing in modern digital tools is central to building an enabling environment for a future-ready workforce. By introducing intuitive, mobile responsive self-service capabilities, we have created a more employee-centered HR environment that empowers staff to manage their own information and engage more effectively with HR processes.

Continuous Improvement

The launch of HRMIS is just one part of a broader institutional strengthening strategy. We are committed to the continuous improvement of our internal processes, ensuring that every resource, is optimised to support a healthy Zambia.

So, enjoy your new system colleagues, and please do give us feedback so that we continue to improve the user experience.

Yours in Service,

Mwansa N. Lombe
Director Human Resources



Maintaining Momentum During Transition

To ensure a smooth leadership transition, Dr Otto Chabikuli, our new Chief Executive Officer (CEO), met with our immediate past CEO, Dr Izukanji Sikazwe, to facilitate a seamless handover. This transition reflects our commitment to leadership continuity and advancing equitable health through research, capacity building, and sustainable public health solutions.

CIDRZ Strategic Planning Process Commences

As CIDRZ strengthens its support for a healthy Zambia, a well-defined strategy will align our efforts towards a common objective.

The CIDRZ leadership team is in the process of developing a strategic plan that builds upon our existing achievements, addresses identified gaps, and responds to the dynamic needs of our partners and communities, leveraging innovative solutions to maximize impact and sustainability.





Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) Nurse Ms Franchesca Silwamba

CIDRZ Urges Staff to Uphold Research Integrity

CIDRZ has urged all research staff to strictly adhere to the approved Source Documentation and Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as part of its ongoing effort to strengthen research integrity and data credibility.

Speaking during recent Standard Operating Procedures training, Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) Nurse Ms Franchesca Silwamba and Senior Research Nurse Ms Martha Phiri emphasised that high-quality, accurate, and verifiable data is the backbone of credible clinical research and must be safeguarded at every stage of study implementation.

Ms Silwamba urged research teams to strictly follow the Source Documentation and Transcription SOP, which clearly explains how to create source documents and case report forms, as well as how to correctly record and transfer study data.

She stressed that accurate source documentation is essential for reconstructing, evaluating, and validating study findings during clinical trials.

“Source documentation is the foundation of credible research,” Ms Silwamba said. “If it is not documented, it was not done. Staff must ensure that every entry is accurate, timely, and complete, because this is what guarantees the reliability and transparency of our studies.”

She further urged staff to apply the internationally recognised ALCOA+PLUS principles in all research documentation. These principles require data to be Attributable, Legible, Contemporaneous,

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Senior Research Nurse Ms Martha Phiri (left) with Ms Silwamba

Original, and Accurate, as well as Complete, Consistent, Enduring, and Available. Adhering to these standards, she explained, ensures that research records remain traceable, reliable, and fit for regulatory and audit review.

Ms Silwamba also called on research teams to thoroughly understand study protocols, pay close attention to detail, and document data in real time using dark ink, as required. She noted that standardising source documentation across CIDRZ studies improves consistency, enhances data quality, and strengthens the organisation’s audit readiness.

Complementing this message, Senior Research Nurse Ms Martha Phiri urged staff to view quality assurance and quality control as a continuous

responsibility rather than a one-off activity. She highlighted that the Internal Quality Control and Assurance SOP outlines clear procedures to ensure all QA/QC activities comply with Good Clinical Practice (GCP) standards throughout the study lifecycle.

“Quality assurance runs from study design right through to final reporting,” Ms Phiri said. “We urge all teams to work closely with QA/QC to ensure data is accurate, complete, and verifiable before it is shared or exported.”

Ms Phiri explained that QA/QC responsibilities include oversight of study design, monitoring protocol adherence, ensuring ethical and regulatory compliance, and maintaining accurate documentation in line with ALCOA standards. She

further urged staff to comply with delegation procedures, maintain up-to-date training records, and support effective communication with sponsors, regulatory authorities, and other stakeholders.

She also emphasised the importance of timely adverse event reporting, audit preparedness, and the submission of progress and final reports to sponsors, Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), and funding agencies. According to Ms Phiri, strict compliance with QA/QC SOPs ensures that study approvals remain valid and that all research activities align with approved protocols.

Dr Caroline Cleopatra Chisenga

Driving Scientific Discovery Through Purposeful Research



Staff Profile

At the heart of impactful public health interventions lies rigorous, innovative research.

For Dr Caroline Cleopatra Chisenga, research is not merely a profession but a lifelong commitment to generating evidence that improves lives and informs action. “Research gives us the tools to ask the right questions and find solutions that can truly change public health



Dr Chisenga is a Senior Biomedical Research Scientist in the Basic Science and Immunology Department at CIDRZ. She joined the organisation in 2016, drawn by the relevance, scale, and real-world impact of the research being conducted. She began her journey as a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, a role that has grown significantly alongside her own career. “When I joined CIDRZ, I saw an opportunity to grow within an institution that values scientific excellence and meaningful impact,” she explains.

In her current role, collaboration lies at the centre of her work. She thrives in multidisciplinary teams where ideas are shaped into

fundable, impactful research projects. “I particularly enjoy the collaborative aspect of my role, coming together with colleagues to brainstorm ideas and develop strong concepts for grant proposals,” Dr Chisenga notes.

Her career path has been strongly influenced by Professor Roma Chilengi, whose leadership encouraged her to pursue vaccine research with a focus on enteric diseases. Although this was not her original career ambition, it became a defining direction in her life. “Professor Chilengi’s mentorship challenged me to step into vaccine research, and that decision reshaped my scientific journey,” she reflects.

Looking back on her professional growth, Dr Chisenga credits CIDRZ with shaping both her career and personal development. The institution has strengthened her research capacity while refining her leadership and communication skills. “CIDRZ taught me the importance of collaboration, scientific writing, mentoring, and confidently presenting my work at both local and international conferences,” she shares.

She further acknowledges the influence of other mentors and role models, including Professor Roma Chilengi and Professor Samuel Bosomprah, whose leadership styles have left a lasting impression.

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“Their selfless leadership and commitment to developing others have been invaluable, and I strive to emulate these qualities in my own work,” she says.

Dr Chisenga speaks with pride about the feedback she has received from colleagues and supervisors over the years, describing it as deeply affirming. “One of the best pieces of feedback I have ever received described me as diplomatic, hardworking, efficient, mature, and a good leader, and hearing this has been incredibly motivating,” she says.

One of her proudest achievements has been her growth as a leader and mentor, particularly in guiding postgraduate students through their academic journeys. “Seeing PhD and MSc students successfully graduate under my mentorship is one of the most rewarding parts of my

career,” Dr Chisenga notes.

Despite her successes, she acknowledges that the research journey is not without challenges. Limited funding and uncertainty around long-term grant support remain persistent hurdles. “Securing large grants takes time, and this can affect team stability and salary support, but perseverance and strategic planning have helped me stay focused,” she reflects.

What sustains her during difficult periods is the unwavering commitment of her team, even in the face of limited resources. “Having a supportive and hardworking team that remains dedicated even when full time equivalent allocations are not at 100 per cent is humbling and inspires me to keep pushing forward,” she says.

Dr Chisenga draws personal strength from her faith and

often reflects on her favourite inspirational quote. “God my Boss’ reminds me that even when others may not see the sacrifices and hard work, God does and keeps an accurate record,” she shares.

A self-described “busy bee,” Dr Chisenga’s workdays are long and demanding, often starting as early as 3 a.m. and ending around 9 p.m. “While the hours are long, they are sometimes necessary to meet deliverables and maintain high-quality work, but I am intentional about rest and fully switching off during family time,” she explains.

Outside of work, she values structure, service, and simplicity. She enjoys reading, farming, cleaning, and staying organised, and is actively involved in community service as a Dorcas worker. “Serving others by cleaning elderly people’s homes, tidying hospital wards, and feeding orphans and street children is deeply fulfilling for me,” she says.

When asked what career she might have pursued had she not entered research, her answer reveals her love for travel. “If I weren’t in my current role, I would probably have chosen to be an air hostess because I enjoy travelling,” she says with a smile.

If given the opportunity to travel anywhere in the world, her destination of choice is simple. “I would choose Canada, simply because I have never been there,” she says.

Finally, when reflecting on the book that has had the greatest impact on her life, her answer is resolute. “The Bible has shaped my values, perspective, and resilience more than any other book,” Dr Chisenga concludes.

Kaunda Kaunda

Fleming Fund Country Grant, Project Manager



Staff Profile



At the core of effective health systems lies science that is driven by curiosity, purpose, and a commitment to service. For Kaunda Kaunda, his journey into laboratory science was fuelled by a passion for discovery and a desire to contribute meaningfully to public health in Zambia. “Coming out of university with a strong laboratory background, I was eager to join an institution that would allow me to practise my love for science and discovery,” he says.

Kaunda joined the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ) in 2010 as a TB laboratory intern, gaining hands-on experience that laid a strong foundation for his career. “CIDRZ provided the ideal environment for learning, growth, and applying science to real-world health challenges,” he recalls. He later became a Research Associate, overseeing molecular testing and staff training, and then Assistant Manager under Dr Annika Kruuner, supporting initiatives

such as the rollout of the first GeneXpert instruments. “That transition allowed me to take on leadership responsibilities while deepening my technical expertise,” he explains.

Currently, Kaunda is Project Manager for the Fleming Fund Country Grant, providing strategic oversight to CIDRZ’s core team and engaging stakeholders including the University of Zambia (UNZA) Vet, PATH, government partners, and 14 health facilities nationwide. He ensures the grant is

implemented according to plan, within budget, and on schedule, spanning staff oversight, procurement, and budget approvals. “Ensuring accountability and efficiency across all aspects of implementation is critical to the success of such a large and complex grant,” he notes.

What he finds most rewarding is witnessing the tangible impact of the work on antimicrobial resistance

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(AMR) surveillance and patient care. Zambia has revitalised microbiology services and begun generating robust local evidence. “Seeing Zambia produce its own AMR data and contribute to dozens of publications has been incredibly fulfilling,” he says. Kaunda attributes his career growth to curiosity, a love for discovery, and opportunities within CIDRZ. “Laboratory science was always my passion, but the growth into project management came as I responded to the needs and opportunities around me,” he reflects.

His achievements include shaping data that informs patient care and national policy. “The data we have generated is now strengthening systems in ways that will benefit the country for years to come,” he says. Despite challenges, such as working with lean government teams, these obstacles were overcome through collaboration and strengthened partnerships.“

Kaunda draws inspiration from strong role models, including his late father, who taught him the value of hard work and accountability, and Dr Kruuner, who mentored him in leadership and team management. Recognition, including feedback from supported sites and an Integrity Award, reinforces his commitment to service. “These moments reminded me that impact matters more than personal gain,” he reflects.

During challenging times, Kaunda stays motivated knowing the work affects real lives. “Our work touches many people I may never meet, and some beneficiaries could even be related to me. This reality keeps me grounded and driven,” he says proudly.

A typical workweek involves careful planning, coordination, and engagement with stakeholders. His days are filled with team meetings, supervisory check-ins, approvals, reporting, and strategic planning. “My role requires constant prioritisation

and communication across government, funders, and internal teams,” he explains. Balancing a demanding role with family life is not always easy, but Kaunda makes a deliberate effort to protect family time. “I try to restrict work to office hours and reserve weekends for my family, even though the balance can be challenging,” he says. Outside of work, he enjoys spending quality time with his wife and children, mentoring couples and families. “Family is central to who I am, and investing time there keeps me grounded,” he notes.

He is actively involved in church and community service, finding fulfilment in supporting others. “Seeing hope and joy restored in people’s lives through community work reminds me that I am part of a bigger purpose,” he says. If he were not in his current role, Kaunda says he might have pursued a career in law or public relations. “Both fields appeal to me because they involve advocacy, communication, and influencing positive outcomes,” he shares.

Finally, when reflecting on resources that have shaped his life, Kaunda points to faith and learning. “The Bible has had the greatest impact on me, alongside books like *The Four Seasons of Marriage*, podcasts such as *Diary of a CEO*, and films like *Crush*,” he concludes.

A-Men SHIP: Empowering Adolescent Boys and Young Men in Zambia



Insights Into CIDRZ Projects



The A-Men SHIP is a three-year initiative (2025–2028) funded by ViiVHealthcare - Positive Action, targeting Adolescent Boys and Young Men (ABYM) aged 15–24 years.

The programme operates across ten health facilities in Lusaka, including Matero Main Clinic, George Clinic, Kanyama West Clinic, as well as Kanyama and Chawama Level 1 Hospitals. It also covers Kuku Health Post, Chilenje Level 1 Hospital, Bauleni and Chainda Main Clinics, and Ng’ombe Clinic.

Objectives

1. Increase uptake of HIV testing, PrEP, VMMC and SRHR services among ABYM aged 15–24 using the men’s clinic

model adapted for youths.

2. Strengthen male engagement in gender-equitable relationships to reduce HIV transmission and support AGYW’s SRHR.

3. Build capacity of youth-led and community-based structures to lead sustainable, community-driven HIV/SRHR initiatives targeting ABYM.

Approach:

A-Men SHIP offers youth-friendly, male-responsive services designed to be accessible and supportive

for young men. It adopts a community-led and relationship-centred approach, integrating HIV prevention with SRHR services. The program emphasizes strong youth engagement and community ownership to ensure sustainability.

Project Activities:

1. Expand Access to HIV Prevention and SRHR Services

The programme adapts men’s

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clinics to meet the needs of ABYM. It provides HIV testing, PrEP, VMMC, STI services, and condoms. Mobile outreach services are delivered to reach underserved communities. Confidential, non-judgmental counselling and SRHR support are offered through peer-led models.

2. Promote Gender-Equitable Relationships

The project conducts gender-transformative sessions on masculinity, consent, and respect, and facilitates joint sessions for ABYM and AGYW couples. It also implements school- and community-based dialogues addressing gender norms and SRHR.

3. Capacity Building

The programme strengthens youth-led and community-based organisations by partnering with them to implement outreach and advocacy campaigns. ABYM peer educators and youth leaders are mentored to champion local initiatives. Support is provided for youth-led outreach, campaigns,



and community events to foster sustainability.

4. Monitoring, Learning, and Adaptation

The programme tracks uptake and trends using routine service data. Feedback is collected from youth and communities to guide program improvements. Lessons learned are documented and shared with the Ministry of Health (MOH) and partners. Strategies and approaches are adapted based on evidence of what works best for ABYM and AGYW.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes include stronger, youth-friendly HIV and SRHR services for ABYM, ABYM who are informed, empowered, and actively engaged in prevention, and youth-led and community organisations capable of sustaining HIV and SRHR initiatives. The programme also produces evidence-based models and tools that can be adapted and scaled by the MOH and partners.

Effective Strategies for HIV Prevention



HIV prevention involves a combination of proven strategies that help stop the transmission of HIV. Using more than one method provides stronger protection.

Types of HIV Prevention

1. Biomedical Prevention

These are medical products or procedures that reduce the biological risk of getting HIV.

PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis)

PrEP is used before exposure to prevent HIV. It is for people who are HIV-negative but at risk.

PrEP options include:

- A daily tablet
- A long-acting injection every two months (Cabotegravir)
- A long-acting injection every six months (Lenacapavir)
- PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis)
- PEP is emergency HIV prevention used after a possible exposure.

Key points about PEP:

- Taken for 28 days as antiretroviral pills
- Must be started within 72 hours of exposure (the sooner, the better)

- Used after situations such as condomless sex with a partner of unknown or HIV-positive status, sexual assault and needlestick or occupational injuries

Important: PEP is not for regular use. If you need PEP often, you should consider PrEP.

ART and U=U (Undetectable = Untransmittable)

Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) is treatment for people living with HIV.

When a person on ART has an undetectable viral load, they cannot transmit HIV through sex.

Condoms

- External (male) and internal (female) condoms are highly effective when used correctly and consistently
- Condoms protect against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC)

- Reduces the risk of

heterosexual HIV acquisition in men

2. Behavioural Interventions

- These focus on maintaining safer practices through education and support.
- Risk-reduction counselling to help individuals and couples plan safer behaviours
- Adherence support to help people take PrEP or ART consistently

3. Structural Interventions

These address social and environmental factors that affect HIV risk.

- Reducing stigma and discrimination
- Economic empowerment
- Improving access to quality health services

Key Messages

Regular HIV testing and open communication with partners are essential. Knowing your HIV status helps you choose the right prevention method and protect yourself and others.

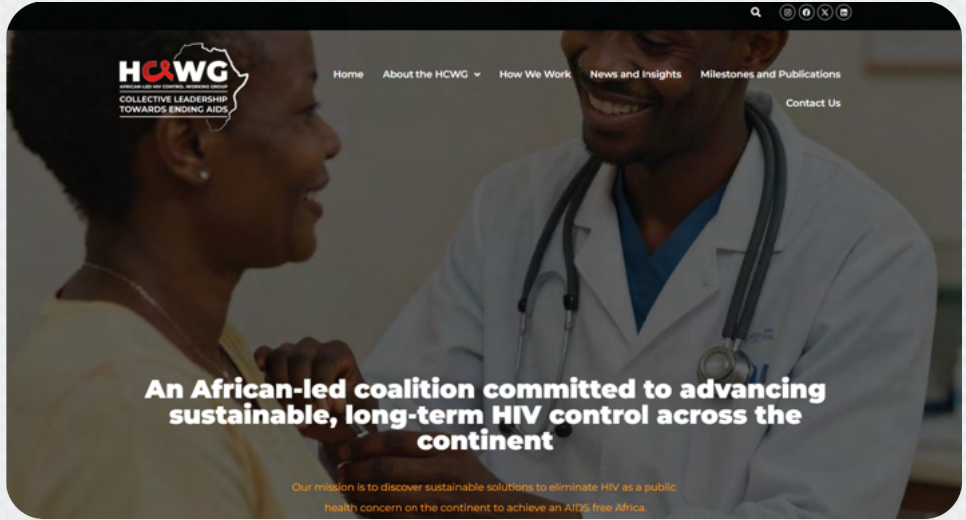
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Communications and Visibility Outputs this Quarter

Documentation of CEO's on-boarding activities.



Support in the redesign of the African-led HIV Control Working Group (HCWG) website.



Facilitated awareness and visibility of CIDRZ and MoH commemoration of World TB Day 2026.



Supported the Human Resources Department to facilitate Womens Day commemoration activities.



Supported the successful hosting of the African-led HIV Control Working Group (HCWG) side event at UNECA with the production of various branding and infographic materials.



Supported the Human Resource Department to host coffee with the CEO.



Production and broadcasting of videos on CIDRZ TB action.



Facilitated mainstream media appearances in commemoration of World TB Day.





Frame of the Month







Selected Highlights of the Quarter



CIDRZ joined Ministry of Health and partners at Muchinga Grounds to mark the 2026 World TB Day. Themed “Yes! We Can End TB: Led by Zambia, Powered by the Community,” the event reaffirmed our decades-long commitment to fighting this preventable and curable disease.

[Read More](#)



CIDRZ was honoured to host Ofra Farhi, Ambassador of Israel to Zambia, at our Lusaka HQ. Discussions focused on collaboration in health innovation and research on Shigella, a leading cause of diarrhoeal disease in children under five.

[Read More](#)



New findings from the TB MEDZ Study by CIDRZ show that extended multi-month anti-tuberculosis therapy (ATT) refills in Zambia improve treatment success and reduce both clinic visits and patient costs. [Read More](#)



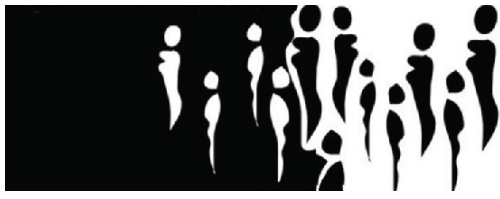
As part of the recent three-day PHEM Orientation, CIDRZ, Lusaka Provincial Health Office & ZNPHI led participants to PHEOCs to see how info systems, coordination spaces and real-time data tools support rapid, evidence-based decisions. [Read More](#)



Lusaka Provincial Health Director Dr Simulyamana Aspha Choonga has commended CIDRZ and the IHM for partnering with the LPHO to strengthen DigitalHealth capacity and improve Health Service delivery through Health Information Systems orientation programmes. [Read More](#)



A delegation from the Gates Foundation visited Chawama Level I Hospital to appreciate programmes led by CIDRZ. The team observed integrated care for NCDs, HIV, TB and AHD, and how data systems support clinical decision-making. [Read More](#)



CIDRZ

for a healthy Zambia

About CIDRZ

The Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ) is an independent nongovernmental organisation committed to improve access to quality healthcare in Zambia through innovative capacity development, exceptional implementation science and research, and impactful and sustainable public health programmes. CIDRZ supports local ownership of high-quality, complementary, and integrated healthcare research and services within the Zambian public health system and facilitates clinical research, and professional development training.

CIDRZ has over two decades of ongoing strategic collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) and its relevant ministries. CIDRZ longevity and success are attributed to the deep relationships with leading local and international universities, foundations, and partner organisations.

CIDRZ Vision

A Zambia, and a region, in which all people have access to quality healthcare and enjoy the best possible health.

CIDRZ Mission

To improve access to quality healthcare in Zambia through innovative capacity development, exceptional implementation science and research, and impactful and sustainable public health programmes

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Contacts

CIDRZ Head Office
Stand 378A / 15, Main Street, Ibex
Lusaka, Zambia

Reception +26 0 211 242 257/58/59

Mobile 0950 693971, 0966
661417,0977 640930

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 34681
Lusaka, Zambia 10101

General inquiries: info@cidrz.org

