

Supporting community resilience on the frontline of the climate crisis in Zambia with reproductive choice

KEY LEARNINGS

Communities in Zambia are already impacted by and responding to the effects of climate change. To support those on the frontline of the climate crisis in the North Luangwa and Nsumbu National Parks to adapt, MSI Zambia's Mpika outreach team worked in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Frankfurt Zoological Society to expand contraceptive access in these communities.

By working closely through existing community structures and a team of community mobilisers, 9,600 clients accessed contraceptive services from the Mpika outreach team in 2020, and MSI Zambia strengthened capacity in public health facilities in the area through training and supportive supervision.

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THE CHALLENGE

Adapting to climate change impact

Climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21st century.



Zambia is already experiencing the adverse impacts of climate change – including an increase in frequency and severity of seasonal droughts, increased temperatures in valleys, flash floods and changes in the growing season.

The country is responding by developing sustainable and resilient programmes for crops and livestock. MSI Zambia is supporting these efforts to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change by providing SRHR, which helps empower communities to participate more effectively in climate change planning and natural resource management.

WHAT WE DID

Integrating SRHR into conservation

In partnership with the Ministry of Health and Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), MSI Zambia began working with communities and conservation projects in the North Luangwa and Nsumbu National Parks, providing contraceptive services through the Mpika outreach team.

MSI Zambia worked through existing community structures supported by FZS, including Village Action Groups (VAGs), Community Resource Boards (CRBs) and Game Scouts to mobilise and educate communities on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

SRHR activities were integrated into conservation programmes, providing an opportunity for collaboration between conservation officers and public health teams.

WHAT WE FOUND

Addressing challenges

The programme faced some challenges, including poor road networks, nationwide commodity shortages, and communication challenges. These challenges were navigated by procuring a Land Cruiser to navigate rough terrain, and using the radio system of FZS to communicate between teams and mobilisers for planning purposes.

Additionally, the costs of serving clients in very disconnected and remote parts of the country were significantly higher than in other rural areas, made more challenging by increases in costs attributed to COVID-19.



WHAT WE FOUND

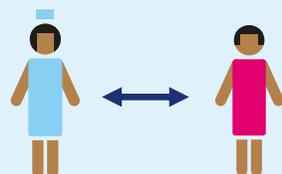
Sustainable access

This mobile service improved access for people who would otherwise have very limited access to care. In game management areas, women would otherwise walk for three hours or more to reach a facility for their preferred method of contraception.

The outreach teams provided services to

9,775

clients in 2020...



...adapting to COVID-19 with new social distancing measures.



72%

of clients were switching from short-term to long-acting methods, and 17% were adopters of contraception.

Community-based mobilisers play an important role in raising awareness about contraception, with 99% (9,662) of clients served by the Mpika outreach team hearing about our services through these mobilisers. Working with FZS's community structures also enabled our teams to deliver community mobilisation and awareness-raising sessions.

MSI Zambia also trained 30 public providers from the area in post-abortion care, contraceptive provision, medical emergency management and infection provision. The outreach team has supported ongoing skill retention for these public providers through on-site supervision and mentorship. Going forward, MSZ intends to train Provincial and District Health Administrators to ensure that they can support facilities in the game management areas with ongoing supportive supervision while securing contraceptive commodities for these vulnerable communities.

WHAT WE FOUND

Aligning with climate change priorities

Through this project, MSI Zambia has changed the way we think about communities and climate resilience, highlighting the interdependency of people and the environment. MSI Zambia has also started working to reduce the organisation's carbon footprint by improving how we operate and using more environmentally sustainable forms of energy and power.



"I have had 10 pregnancies and 8 children. Today I am so happy that I have finally accessed a method of my choice. I shall be a role model and tell everyone in my village about this service."

– Catherine

"MSI Zambia sought to support efforts to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change."



Two Community Resource Board Members inspect a Copper-T IUCD during a training session

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on MSI Reproductive Choices and the work that we do, please contact:

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Alternatively, visit our website: www.msichoices.org.

