

New Project Summary Page:

Transforming Childhood NCD Care in Zambia

SSHE leads community and systems strengthening under the national PEN-Plus Expansion Project (2024–2028)

Introduction

Systems Strengthening for Health and Education (SSHE) is contributing to the **PEN-Plus Expansion Project in Zambia**, a national initiative led by CIDRZ and supported by the Scottish Government. The programme aims to strengthen Zambia's capacity to diagnose, treat, and manage severe childhood non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through decentralized care delivered at primary health care (PHC) facilities.

SSHE leads key components focused on *community engagement, health systems strengthening, and early detection pathways*, working across PHC facilities in **Ndola and Chipata**. The project forms part of a broader multi-partner effort to improve equitable access to paediatric NCD services in Zambia.

About the Project

Childhood Non-Communicable Diseases -such as asthma, congenital heart conditions, and sickle cell anaemia -contribute significantly to Zambia's paediatric disease burden. These conditions are particularly prevalent in underserved and rural populations, where access to early diagnosis and ongoing care remains limited.

The “**Strengthening Primary Health Care Systems for Childhood NCDs in Zambia (2024–2027)**” project aims to decentralize care, enhance PHC-level capacities, and build resilient systems for managing severe NCDs in children. It aligns with Zambia's **National Health Strategic Plan (NHSP 2022–2026)**, the **Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP)**, and the **WHO PEN-Plus framework**.

Why Childhood NCDs Matter;

Non-communicable diseases such as **asthma, congenital heart conditions, epilepsy, and sickle cell disease** are increasingly recognised as major contributors to Zambia's paediatric disease burden. Yet many children remain undiagnosed or receive delayed care due to limited awareness, weak referral systems, and constrained health system capacity.

The **Strengthening Primary Health Care Systems for Childhood NCDs in Zambia Project (2024–2028)** addresses these gaps by:

- Decentralizing care for severe NCDs to first-level hospitals and PHC facilities
- Strengthening early detection and referral pathways
- Building health worker capacity to manage complex chronic conditions in children

The initiative aligns with Zambia's **National Health Strategic Plan (2022–2026)**, the **Eighth National Development Plan**, and the **WHO PEN-Plus framework** for severe NCD care.

Our Role in the Partnership

SSHE contributes technical leadership in **community systems strengthening, service linkages, and behaviour change communication** to ensure that children with chronic conditions are identified early and connected to appropriate care. Our work focuses on bridging the gap between **communities, schools, and health facilities**, ensuring that improvements in clinical capacity are matched by stronger community awareness and referral systems.

Key areas of contribution include:

- Community engagement and awareness campaigns
 - Development and validation of IEC and job-aid tools for frontline providers
 - School and community outreach for early identification of childhood NCDs
 - Strengthening referral pathways between communities and PHC facilities
 - Monitoring and learning systems to support evidence-based programme adaptation
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Project Overview

Funded By: Scottish Government – International Development Programme

Prime Recipient: CIDRZ

Project Duration: 2024–2028

Implementation Sites: Primary health care facilities in **Ndola (Copperbelt Province)** and **Chipata (Eastern Province)**

Target Population: Approximately 5,000 children aged 0–14 years requiring improved NCD detection, referral, and care.

Key Interventions

The partnership is implementing a comprehensive package of health systems strengthening activities:

- Establishing integrated NCD service delivery at PHC level
 - Training and mentoring health workers in paediatric NCD management
 - Leveraging **NHS Scotland technical expertise** through global citizenship partnerships
 - Community engagement through IEC materials, school outreach, and CHW-led activities
 - Strengthening monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems
 - Supporting multisector collaboration for sustainable NCD response
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Expected Outcomes

- Increased access to and quality of care for childhood NCDs
- Strengthened PHC capacity and referral systems
- Improved community awareness and care-seeking behaviour
- Scalable, sustainable models for national NCD policy integration

Project Partners & Roles:

The PEN-Plus Expansion Project brings together national and international partners;

- **CIDRZ** – Prime recipient; coordination and oversight
- **SolidarMed** – Technical partner for health systems integration
- **ZNPHI** – Policy alignment, data harmonization, national health surveillance
- **SSHE** – Paediatric NCDs implementation and Community Engagement
- **NHS Scotland Global Citizenship Programme**-Technical mentorship, quality improvement
- **The Logie Legacy** (Friends of Chitambo)Capacity-building, training, and mentorship
- **Edutainment Health Foundation (EHF)** -Community engagement and BCC delivery.

About Us

Systems Strengthening for Health and Education (SSHE) advances **equity-driven solutions to strengthen health and education systems in Zambia**. Through partnerships with national institutions, international technical partners, and community-based organisations, SSHE designs and implements interventions that empower health workers, strengthen service delivery systems, and expand access to care for vulnerable populations.

Our leadership within the Scottish Government-supported PEN-Plus programme reflects SSHE's commitment to advancing scalable, evidence-based approaches to child health and health system resilience

Our Work: Featured Project

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs): Transforming Paediatric Care at Primary Level

Under the Scottish Government's International Development Strategy, SSHE is implementing a key component of the PEN Plus Expansion Project, dubbed as ***"Strengthening Primary Health Care Systems for Childhood NCDs in Zambia"*** initiative in partnership with CIDRZ, SolidarMed, ZNPHI, and global health partners.

Our efforts focus on decentralizing paediatric NCD care for high-burden conditions like asthma, sickle cell anaemia, and congenital heart disease. By equipping PHC workers, developing job aids, and implementing inclusive community strategies, we are helping shape a future where no child is left behind due to chronic illness.

