



PHIM

PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE
of MALAWI

NEWSLETTER



Participants of the AMR stakeholders meeting



Incinerators being places at treatment isolation centers



Graduants and their mentors during the 3rd cohort graduation

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the first edition of the Public Health Institute of Malawi (PHIM) Newsletter that will be coming your way bi-annually. In this newsletter, we will share our achievements, activities, announcements, updates and highlights of our work as an institution and anything else that is public health related.

Let me take this opportunity to share with you a bit of background on who we are and what we do. PHIM was established in 2013 under the Ministry of Health to provide leadership in disease surveillance, research, prevention and control as well as generate evidence that informs policy and practice in public health service delivery. In this respect, the institute is building the capacity of the country to effectively respond and deal with public health challenges such as emerging communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Three units constitute PHIM and these are the Epidemiology Unit-responsible for disease surveillance, implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR) and outbreak investigation as well as response in collaboration with the reference lab; The Research Unit-provides support and direction on essential health research; and finally the National Reference Laboratory- that oversees public health laboratory services in the country.

In the first half of this year, one of our projects, the Field Epidemiology Training Programme (FETP) graduated its third cohort of students and is now working towards the fourth cohort. The Ebola project continues to makes strides in its preparedness and response strategy through the construction of treatment wards and many more. For detailed updates read on.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Health leadership and all colleagues that have contributed to the success of this first newsletter.

It will take team work amongst various stakeholders to make PHIM a success and it is our hope that you will be one of them. Happy reading...

Jan-June 2017

Issue 1

10 graduate in FETP Cohort 3



Some of the graduates in Mzuzu

The Frontline Field Epidemiology Training Programme (FETP- Frontline) graduated its third cohort of trainees in March this year. Seven trainees working in disease surveillance – both human and animal health enrolled for the programme.

The graduands comprised of six officers from Blantyre District Health Office and one officer from Blantyre Animal Health Office.

FETP- Frontline program aims at advancing epidemiological capacity at the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (Department of Animal Health and Livestock) by training health professionals in basic field epidemiology. Trainings, carried out in cohorts of about 10-15 trainees, last for about 12 weeks. The course is structured into workshops and field work. The first and second workshops are classroom sessions each lasting five days. The third and last workshop is a graduation ceremony where trainees

present fieldwork findings, carried out after the first two workshops, and receive a certificate of completion.

Classroom sessions cover introduction to public health surveillance, data collection, case definitions and line-lists, data quality, summary statistics, displaying data, data interpretation, taking action guided by the data, monitoring and evaluation, outbreak investigation and response, linking the investigation with the laboratory, problem analysis using the fish bone method and scientific presentations. The fieldwork course 1 & 2 requires the trainees to carry out two of the following projects: a data quality audit, surveillance summary report, outbreak investigation, problem analysis and case investigation.

The Frontline Field Epidemiology Training programme (FETP-Frontline) in Malawi, with funding from Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), was launched on 18 April 2016.

New Website underway

The re-development of the Public Health Institute of Malawi (PHIM) website has been long coming. The website is being updated into a more engaging and responsive design that will make it easy for you to navigate and find the information that you need.

We would like to position ourselves as the hub of all issues of public health and give you a platform of information, which you can trust and is reliable.

We envision to have it up and running before end of the year so bare with us but look forward to something that will meet your expectations.

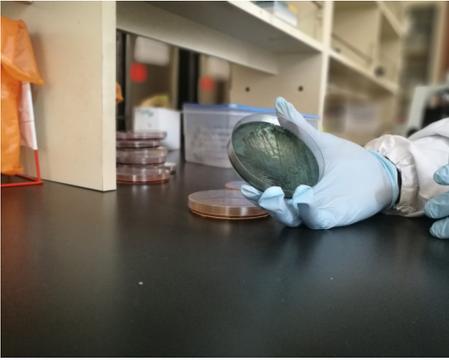
PHIM welcomes NCA members of staff

The Public Health Institute of Malawi (PHIM) welcomes on board two members of staff from Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) on secondment.

Mwakamwereti Kanjo joins as the Communications Officer and is responsible for the visibility and awareness of PHIM and its programmes while Grace Funsani joins as the Surveillance Officer to strengthen and support surveillance and response at the institution.

The two have been hired by the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) through Norwegian Church Aid (NCA).

NIPH has since 2008 supported PHIM in its establishment and is now offering technical support for the strengthening of the International Health Regulations IHR (2005) implementation.



The reference laboratory received samples from Chikwawa that tested positive

Cholera outbreak in Chikwawa

Over the months, suspected cases of cholera were reported in Chikwawa. Stool samples were sent to the National Reference Laboratory and the very first case was confirmed in January this year.

According to Chikwawa District Health Promotion Officer, Settie Piriminta, as at June 2017 the district had recorded 70 cholera cases. He said the district health office has since been carrying out hygiene promotion and awareness meetings to eradicate the disease.

“There is so much that we have been doing. We are carrying out pot-to-pot chlorination and encouraging the communities to use sanitary facilities. We have taken advantage of existing community structures to help us in the sensitization and behavior change. In the coming months we shall be administering oral cholera vaccine and we hope to see the numbers drop,” said Piriminta.

PHIM develops 2018-2023 Strategic Plan

The PHIM Strategic Plan which was developed in 2012 will expire in December 2017. Following which, the Ministry of Health (MoH) with support from I-TECH, International Association of National Public Health Institutes (IANPHI) and other stakeholders has initiated the process of reviewing the strategic plan in order to make necessary updates that will reflect changes that occurred in the health and related sectors in the last 5 years.

Malawi is among the few countries in the world that have developed their national public health institute strategic plans.

The purpose of the review is to assess the functionality and effectiveness of the current plan through time, availability of data as well as engaging national expertise and collaboration of partners, through a participatory approach to help understand the level to which the plan has met its goals. This will allow PHIM to provide stakeholders with a foundation for informed decision making regarding the future of public health in Malawi.

The review process involved reviewing and appraising some relevant public health documents collected from the Ministry of Health and other institutions. The Materials were processed and adapted in content and

context to the nature and dynamics of health practice in Malawi. Two stakeholders’ workshops followed which brought together variety of participants and facilitators used a combination of different methods; PESTEL and SWOT analysis, presentations, group discussions and sharing of best practice while encouraging high level of participation from stakeholders.

In the updated plan, functional components were streamlined into five major categories namely: National Reference Laboratory, Research & Development, Epidemiology & Surveillance, Governance & Management and Support Services.

It is expected that the final PHIM Strategic Plan will be endorsed by MoH Senior Management before end of this year.



Find us on social media. Like our facebook page Public Health Institute of Malawi and join a community of more than 200 thousand people: and get some updates on issues to do with public health in Malawi and the world

Construction of treatment isolation wards resumes



The Mchinji ward, like the others being constructed with prefabricated materials

Construction of Isolation wards was resumed after the project had stalled due to the absence of Environmental and Social Management plans- a requirement by the World Bank. The project was launched as an emergency response to the outbreak of the Ebola Virus that hit West Africa in 2014. Malawi was at the time identified as one of the countries at risk of getting the virus.

With funding from the World Bank through the National Aids Commission (NAC), the Public Health Institute of Malawi (PHIM) embarked on

Reference Lab confirms contamination of Area 18 Water

On 18 June 2017, Malawians woke up to the rude awakening that residents of some parts of Area 18 in Lilongwe, were drinking contaminated water. It is said that an underground supply line burst near a sewer broken system that was emitting sewer water into the supply line.

For days, it remained unclear to what extent the water was contaminated. As part of its mandate the Nation

an Ebola Project that is looking into preparedness, response and control of Ebola and other infectious diseases.

Under this project, PHIM is constructing six isolation wards in Karonga, Mzuzu, Mchinji, Dedza, Mwanza and Blantyre. A seventh ward is being constructed at Kamuzu Central Hospital with funds from the Government of Malawi.

The construction of isolation wards also comes with installation of medical incinerators for hospital waste management.

Microbiology Reference Lab, collected a sample of water from the area and conducted extensive tests. It was discovered that the water had *Ecoli and Enterobacter cloacae* normally found in sewage and can cause diarrhoea.

The results were shared with the Ministry of Health and the President's Special Task Force on Area 18 Contamination to guide them in decision making and on the possible treatment of the pathogens.

Antimicrobial Resistance recognized as a health risk

Antimicrobial resistance was in February this year recognized as a public health risk that needs to be given priority. This was discussed and agreed upon during a key stakeholders meeting that took place at Bingu International Conference Centre (BICC) in Lilongwe.

The meeting attracted people from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, non-governmental organization including the World Health Organization (WHO) which is driving the campaign globally, the academia, pharmaceuticals and members of the public.

One of the key action points was the development of a National AMR Strategy in line with the Global Action Plan that would inform the activities and interventions for AMR.

The strategy is currently in place waiting on approval from the responsible authorities. As a sign of commitment, Malawi will this year join the world in commemorating Awareness week from 12 to 19 November.

9 pathogens showing resistance to commonly used antibiotics

As part of its core duties, the National Micro-Reference Laboratory does a routine check on antibacterial resistance of various pathogens. In the first half of this year, the lab has reported that 9 pathogens are showing very high resistance to commonly used antibiotics.

The pathogens include *Methicillin-resistant Staph aureus (MRSA)*, *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Escherichia coli*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Acinetobacter salmonella*, *Typhi* and *Shigella*.