



transaid

WORLD MALARIA DAY

25.4.2025



Grace Kalunga and her daughter, Comfort

Makolongo, Serenje District, Zambia.

It was past midnight when Grace Kalunga noticed that her daughter Comfort Chola, who was just a few months old, had a high temperature. Grace alerted her husband who was fast asleep. As they deliberated on what to do, Comfort's condition deteriorated and she started to convulse.

Based on the teaching that they received from Transaid and partners' Mobilising Access to Maternal Health (MAMaZ) and MAMaZ Against Malaria programmes, Grace recognised the danger signs for severe malaria in Comfort and realised they needed to get to the health facility as quickly as possible.

Fortunately, Grace is a bicycle ambulance rider and the custodian, the person responsible for managing the bicycle ambulance, in her community. Within a few minutes, they started the journey to the health facility, which is located 17km from their home - a distance that would take over three hours on foot. Using the bicycle ambulance, the journey took just over an hour.

Upon reaching the health facility, the health professional confirmed that Comfort had malaria. Comfort was weak and not able to breastfeed; her neck was becoming stiff. While Comfort was under observation, Grace and her husband were very worried, she said: "we have seen families lose their children in similar circumstances."

The health professional administered injectable artesunate. Comfort was kept under further observation and later showed signs of improvement; her temperature dropped, and she could breastfeed. Comfort was discharged and Grace continued to give her the medication she was prescribed to support her recovery.

"It brought so much happiness to me and my husband because we were worried we were going to lose her. Since then, our daughter is healthy. We thank Transaid and the MAMaZ

project for the knowledge they shared which taught me to recognise the danger signs of malaria.”

“We also want to thank the project for giving our community a bicycle ambulance, which really helps us as we live very far from the health facility. Who knows, we could have lost our child if we didn’t reach the health facility in good time.”

Nevertheless, Grace also emphasises that her community would benefit from an additional bicycle ambulance: “Our community is big and sometimes it’s not easy for people from the other side of the village to access the bicycle ambulance, which can be almost half the walking distance to the clinic. Some may walk to the health facility in fear of wasting more time getting to the bicycle ambulance.

“The bicycle ambulance has helped many people in my community, in both malaria and maternal health emergencies.”

“Most of the children you see here, are here because of this very bicycle ambulance.”

The MAMaZ Against Malaria and MAM@Scale programmes aim to increase access to effective treatment for severe malaria for hard-to-reach communities with high malaria prevalence.

The bicycle ambulance was established as an Emergency Transport System (ETS) in a context where there are limited formal ambulance services. Staffed by volunteer riders and custodians, they provide a vital link between rural communities and health services.

The MAMaZ programme partners include: Transaid, DAI Global Health Limited, Development Data, Disacare, the Zambia National Malaria Elimination Centre (NMEC), and Serenje District Health Management Team (DHMT).



Grace (second from left) with her family: