Drug-resistant typhoid strains are a growing problem in Zambia, regionally, and across the globe.

Global data show that the multidrug-resistant (MDR) H58 typhoid strain prevalence has increased dramatically since 1992.

An outbreak in Lusaka from 2010-2012 sickened 2,040 people, of which nearly 90% were children under 15 years old. Analysis of samples from the outbreak showed the it was caused by a variant of the H58 typhoid strain.

More than 80% of the isolates analyzed showed high levels of resistance to 5 of the core antimicrobials available to treat typhoid. A few of the isolates also showed low-level resistance to ciprofloxacin, a common treatment for typhoid.

As drug-resistant typhoid becomes more common, it will become more difficult to treat and force the use of more expensive and less readily-available treatment options.
Typhoid conjugate vaccines (TCVs) in Zambia

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the introduction of prequalified TCVs be prioritized in countries with a high burden of typhoid disease or a high burden of drug-resistant typhoid. Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance support for introduction is available now. TCVs:

- Are highly effective and safe for children as young as 6 months of age;
- Require a single dose to prevent 79-85% of typhoid cases in children;
- Offer strong protection for at least 4 years; and
- Can be co-administered with measles-rubella vaccine.

Findings from an economic analysis predict that, even in the absence of a Gavi subsidy, a catch-up campaign with TCV could be cost-effective in Zambia.

Typhoid is endemic in Zambia, with more than 17,000 cases per year.
Zambia’s burden of typhoid is most heavily borne by children younger than 15 years of age.
Data show an increase in drug-resistant typhoid in Zambia, regionally, and globally.

TCVs are safe, effective, and WHO-recommended for routine immunization as part of a cost-effective, integrated approach to typhoid prevention and control alongside safe water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions.

Gavi support for TCV introduction is available now.