



Pan American  
Health  
Organization



World Health  
Organization  
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE  
Americas

## Concept Note: Launch of the Malaria Champions of the Americas 2019 and Integration with the “Municipalities for Zero Malaria” Initiative

### Background

Consequent to the November 2018 “Consultation Meeting on Addressing Malaria in High-burden Municipalities” [1], PAHO seeks to promote coordinated action with greater impact in the form of an initiative that will be formally known as **Municipalities for Zero Malaria**. Directing efforts to municipalities with the highest incidence of malaria in the Region, the initiative seeks to contribute to the goal of reducing malaria morbidity established by Resolution CD55.R7: Plan of Action for Malaria Elimination 2016-2020 [2], and in the same sense respond to the Global Technical Strategy against Malaria of WHO (3) and to Resolution A / RES / 72/309 of 2018 of the United Nations [4]. The Municipalities for Zero Malaria initiative is also inspired by the "High burden to High Impact" approach promoted by the WHO as a country-focused approach to triggering advances against malaria [5]. To promote this Initiative, starting in 2019, the annual search for the Malaria Champions of the Americas will focus on enabling high burden municipalities with great challenges to become the new generation of Malaria Champions in the Region [6].

The concept of "Municipalities for Zero Malaria" is based on the need to act more decisively and at a more local level to impact malaria in areas with high burden of the disease. The focus is on empowering all those affected and interested in fighting malaria and attracting the attention of new actors in the countries about possibilities to contribute. The initiative also involves the support of key partners (international and local) and relevant government agencies at the national and local levels for the establishment of public health policies, the reorientation of health operations, and the creation of supportive environments that enable the elimination of malaria.

### Concept

**Municipalities for Zero Malaria** is a collaborative effort that directly addresses the noted concentration of most malaria cases in a relatively few municipalities and specific foci throughout the Region [7]. The initiative also recognizes the strong repercussions that these sources of transmission have on the spread of malaria within and between countries.

**Municipalities for Zero Malaria** is inspired by PAHO’s decades of experience with the Healthy Municipality Initiative [8], which acknowledged municipalities as crucial units where local organizations, citizens and elected authorities / decision makers can enter into an agreement and take the lead in implementing a plan of action that will continuously improve the social conditions that produce health and well-being for all the people that live in that space.

**Municipalities for Zero Malaria** affirms the same principles of local empowerment and continuous improvement and applies them to the malaria elimination objectives of the Region. It will involve municipalities that share a common concern and commitment to address malaria, even in the most difficult areas and circumstances in the Region of the Americas. The initiative incorporates the elements

of the WHO Framework for the Elimination of Malaria and is focused on interventions at the local level. The municipalities would be supported by a community of partners that provide diverse forms of relevant and well-coordinated cooperation; and are at the forefront of the fight against malaria.

### **Framework: Attributes and Key Elements**

Network of municipalities. Specific attention is directed to municipalities with high number of cases or municipalities with main challenges for malaria control and elimination in the specific country context as well as municipalities where malaria burden has increased or plateaued in recent years. Municipalities with documented experience in overcoming their respective malaria challenges are likewise encouraged to engage and contribute in terms of best practices that can be replicated in other areas with similar challenges.

Commitment to the concept of change. The technical roadmap for the elimination of malaria has been clarified in the WHO Framework for the Elimination of Malaria [9]. This framework contributes to the implementation of the Global Technical Strategy for Malaria (GTS) 2016-2030 [3] and, in the Americas, to the Action Plan for the Elimination of Malaria 2016-2020 [10]; and should guide the malaria elimination plans in the countries. Based on the concepts of the "continuum" of elimination and "surveillance as an intervention", promoted in the Global Framework, PAHO promotes operational changes (Annex A) to be implemented in areas with active transmission and that will serve as the technical framework for the activities of the network.

Focus on local actions/ solution of operational bottlenecks. Reinforcing and recognizing the essential role of malaria programs at the national and local levels, corresponding leaders are called on taking on the challenge of eliminating malaria in municipalities that account for the greatest burden. This will require a problem-solving approach at the field level, guided by micro- stratification actions and the implementation of key interventions (DTI-R) promoted by PAHO. The approach is designed to catalyze the development of innovations and documentation of model experiences that will encourage similar efforts in other municipalities.

Enabled by a community of partners. Affirming further the UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72/309 [4] emphasis *"that close collaboration with community leaders and implementing partners, including non-governmental organizations, health workers and volunteers, is an essential factor for success in combating malaria"*, malaria partners across the Region, within countries, and from various sectors are challenged to respond and extend different forms of support - financial, logistics, promotion, communications-- for the network and its members. This initiative will promote, in this sense, a platform to support the efforts initiated with the leadership of the local level.

Champions of Malaria Elimination. The network is envisioned to give rise to the new generation of Malaria Champions which will henceforth mainly recognize the efforts of malaria programs at the municipal level or the joint action of the community; as well as the efforts of other public or private actors whose work, as part of their corporate social responsibility, is relevant and contributes to the achievement of the objectives of the elimination of malaria in the affected communities. Network members are challenged to intensify their malaria efforts, reach key operational and technical milestones and achieve corresponding malaria elimination targets towards becoming the Region's new cadre of Malaria Champions. The Champions of Malaria platform is directed in this way to empower and promote improvements in the municipalities with the greatest challenges.

### **What does participation in the initiative mean for municipalities?**

- Subscription to goals that help catalyze stronger local efforts towards the elimination of malaria
- Dissemination of experiences that catalyze the interest of other actors in promoting more actions
- Learnings about successful experiences of municipalities with similar problems
- Strategic positioning of the malaria problem locally and externally
- Attraction of the interest of local and external actors on the malaria problem
- Opportunities for further development of technical capacities
- Exchange of experiences and south-south collaboration among participating municipalities and institutions
- Opportunities to be honored as a Malaria Champion of the Americas and be featured in various malaria advocacy and communications platforms of PAHO, United Nations Foundation, the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health (MISPH), the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs (JHU-CCP), the Global Health Consortium at the Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work, Florida International University (FIU-GHC), and the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH)
- Collaboration with PAHO to provide periodic updates on the progress of malaria efforts within the municipality / locality using the criteria of Malaria Champions of the Americas (Annex B)

### **What are the high burden municipalities?**

This refers to municipalities (or corresponding administrative level depending on the country) that register the highest number of malaria cases in the country and that constitute the main challenges in reducing transmission and moving towards elimination. The municipalities with the highest burden generally also contribute to the spread of malaria cases to other territories within the country or neighboring countries.

### **How to be part of the movement?**

- The high burden municipalities that participated in the November 2018 consultation meeting are the founding base of the movement: Cruzeiro do Sul (Brazil), Andoas (Peru), Quibdó (Colombia), Les Anglais and Les Irois (Haiti), Puerto Lempira (Honduras), and La Gomera (Guatemala).
- More high-burden municipalities, nominated to participate as Malaria Champions for their efforts towards elimination, will also become part of the movement.
- Other high-burden municipalities with significant challenges to elimination as may be indicated by national and local authorities

### **Which municipalities can be nominated for Malaria Champions of the Americas 2019?**

- High burden municipalities that are making significant efforts to reduce malaria transmission towards elimination
- Municipalities which are already part of the movement since the 2018 consultation meeting will be able to self-nominate to the Malaria Champions
- The Ministries of Health of the countries will be consulted for the nomination of other high burden municipalities that are not yet part of the initiative.

- Annexes A, B, and C present elements of changes towards elimination that should be considered when nominating municipalities and should be promoted towards reducing transmission and malaria elimination.
- High-burden municipalities nominated to the Malaria Champions will become part of the Municipalities for Zero Malaria initiative

### Next Steps for 2019

- April 25: Launch of Municipalities for Zero Malaria and the 2019 Malaria Champions of the Americas (via media announcement and press releases)
- May 24<sup>th</sup>: Deadline for nominations
- May onwards: Continued actions to eliminate malaria in high burden municipalities and efforts to document the efforts and achievements in during the year.
- June: Profiling of nominated municipalities
- July: Screening of nominees and selection of candidates for Malaria Champions 2019
- August to September: Field visits to film and document progress of efforts in selected municipalities
- November 5 and 6: Regional Commemoration of Malaria Day in the Americas (including the meeting of the Municipalities for Zero Malaria and recognition ceremonies for the Malaria Champions of the Americas)

### References:

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## **Annex A: Operational Changes to reduce malaria transmission**

Under the concept that change from control to elimination must mean changes in operations at the local level, a set of key elements that correspond to improvements towards elimination in the are promoted among municipalities that are part of the “Municipalities for Zero Malaria” initiative. They refer in general to reorientation measures for local actors and resources towards resolving operational gaps in basic interventions. The concept of change does not necessarily mean incorporating new interventions but implementing with good quality the actions and basic tools already recommended in malaria.

1. Plan and coordinate the malaria elimination "operation" at the most local level, in the foci of malaria, where the operational problems are. Adopt a management model focused on the "foci" of malaria.
2. The objective of the action must be to transform the active foci into eliminated foci (do not keep them as active foci)
3. Prioritize the diagnosis and early treatment of cases over other actions. Improve mainly the passive detection of cases, multiplying the capacity for case suspicion and diagnosis with community agents and the primary care network. Install permanent capacity for detection, diagnosis and treatment in malaria foci and not through occasional brigades.
4. When detecting a malaria case, the action does not end in the treatment. The detection of cases should trigger additional efforts to detect other associated cases (active detection). Optimize active detection efforts. Active detection should not replace the gaps in passive detection.
5. Stimulate the health-seeking behavior of the community as an action synchronized with the concrete improvements in services and use communication to guide on mechanisms and facilities for access to services.

6. Understand and address social and cultural aspects and work on transmission hypotheses that guide concrete solutions to the barriers and gaps of the operation.
7. Involve other stakeholders (including the private sector and industries) within the municipality around specific solutions in the preventive, surveillance and case management aspects.
8. Develop surveillance as an intervention. Periodically reorient the strategy based on monitoring the basic indicators of the malaria operation, and improve analysis and decision-making at the most local level (the outbreaks).
9. Prevent relapses in *P. vivax* more effectively through a comprehensive strategy of improvements in case management, supervision and surveillance.
10. Maintain good coverage with MTILD or indoor residual spraying (RRI) in prioritized communities based on stratification and targeting.

## **Annex B: Malaria Champions of the Americas criteria**

### **Diagnosis-Treatment-Investigation and Response (DTI-R) / Capacity Building**

Exhibits use of the PAHO / WHO best practice in malaria prevention, control, elimination, and prevention of re-establishment, particularly in terms of DTI-R (diagnosis, treatment, investigation and response) as outlined in the *reinforced strategy based on 10 Key Changes (Annex A)*

### **Innovation**

Demonstrates the use of approaches to foster equity and increase the quality and uptake of services. This could include use of integrated service delivery; community-based strategies, behavior change communication efforts, efforts to combine treatment with prevention, integration of gender, ethnicity, human rights, health promotion, primary health care, and social protection frameworks, etc., to promote malaria control, elimination, prevention of re-establishment of local malaria transmission, and other health outcomes.

### **Political Commitment**

Exhibits support of a broad range of civil and community leaders, at various levels of society, including the public sector, the private sector, nongovernmental organization (NGO) leaders, religious leaders, and other influential citizens; can manifest in terms of official policies and declarations, investment of resources, etc.

### **Collaboration**

Foster partnerships with stakeholders within and across sectors that fortify and broaden the scope and reach of activities.

### **Impact**

Demonstrate measurable contribution to decreasing malaria-related morbidity and mortality in the community, country, region or globe

## **Annex C. Key elements suggested during the 2018 Consultation Meeting on Addressing Malaria in High-burden Municipalities**

Decision and political commitment. Effective action against malaria should consider political empowerment as a key element. The greatest empowerment at the local level should be a characteristic

of the municipalities in this initiative. Empowerment at the local level can generate greater empowerment at national levels.

Empower society and raise social awareness about the problem and the feasibility of solving it in these municipalities. Sensitize the communities of the affected municipalities and key actors of society in the countries. Importance of appealing to the political authorities who represent the affected communities. Promote mechanisms for a social dialogue within the municipalities, and actions to convene other key actors within those municipalities. Place the issue of malaria on the public agenda and with other actors at the level of the country and affected municipalities. The "malariometer" as an example of local innovation to raise community awareness about maintaining the collective effort to eliminate transmission.

Community health agents as a key element. Community agents are a key element in the response to malaria, especially in recognizing passive case detection and immediate treatment as the main action in elimination. The importance of promoting strategies based on the role of community agents in diagnosis, treatment, and case finding was also highlighted.

Monitoring and evaluation. The initiative of the municipalities with the highest burden should consider objective elements of monitoring and evaluation. Incorporate specific goals and consider processes such as subnational verification promoted by WHO. Channel external support to strengthen objective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Domestic financing. Recognizing the need for external support highlights the need to promote domestic financing at the national and local levels. The sustainability of the actions depends on structural improvements and public health processes that must be strengthened.

Address bottlenecks and concrete operational gaps that are essential to change the situation. Attention is drawn to the persistence of basic gaps in the provision of services. The importance of clearly establishing the roles of the actors facing the basic gaps. The need to work on solutions to operational bottlenecks (supplies, transportation in dispersed areas, insufficient personnel).

Address the determinants or social factors related to malaria. Design the basic interventions of detection, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention adapted to the populations and the circumstances that influence transmission. Mechanisms to facilitate the detection of cases among temporary agricultural workers, and displaced indigenous communities. Address environmental aspects in the same way.

Successful experiences. Recognize and work on the experiences that have already been positive in these municipalities and in other municipalities in the region. Highlights achievements in these same municipalities and concrete actions that have been effective.

The initiative must have an impact on regulatory and regulatory aspects that may serve as barriers or key opportunities for the elimination of malaria. It is often about actions from the national level in the regulatory platforms that affect the elimination efforts.