

AFRICAN LEADERS MALARIA ALLIANCE CAMPAIGN: 'ZERO MALARIA STARTS WITH ME' #ZMSWM

Digitalisation, youth, end malaria councils and funds, and regional coordination to end malaria in Africa



Country Malaria Scorecards, a key tool to ending malaria in Africa



National malaria scorecards strengthen evidence-based action, accountability, and advocacy - key ingredients to ending malaria by 2030.

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Since 2012, the African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA) has supported the roll out and implementation of 40 national malaria scorecards, 29 scorecards for Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH), six for neglected and tropical diseases (NTDs), two nutrition scorecards, and five scorecards for community health. In addition to supporting the strengthening of scorecards, ALMA helps countries to document and disseminate best practices in scorecard use through the recently launched ALMA Scorecard Hub.

The scorecard is a simple, yet powerful, management tool. The main objective of the scorecard is to optimize the use of data for action, accountability and advocacy. Country-owned and led scorecards are produced by Ministries of Health every quarter, using existing data to track the performance of key health indicators from national strategic plans.

The scorecards are colour-coded making them very simple to use for all stakeholders. The web-based tool assigns a red colour to data values that are underperforming, yellow when there is moderate performance, and green when they are achieving the national target. The scorecards allow political leaders, health workers, partners, and citizens to see how the country is progressing towards malaria elimination and other health targets. The data

show the performance not only at national level but also at regional, district, and even health facility level in some countries, allowing for a targeted identification of problems. Quality of care scorecards are also being used at community level.

After it is produced each quarter, national and subnational health teams analyse the scorecard data, prioritise the areas requiring attention, and develop action plans to address emerging issues. This ensures timely action that can save people's lives.

The scorecard can be accessed from a computer or through mobile phones and tablets on an app, making them available to all stakeholders that have an account to the system. Some countries have also published their scorecards on the public ALMA scorecard hub which can be accessed at www.scorecardhub.org.

Through the scorecard approach, countries across Africa have been able to improve data quality, mobilise resources for key malaria interventions, address malaria commodity gaps, and ensure that vulnerable populations like children and pregnant women have regular access to mosquito nets, malaria diagnostics and treatment.

In Zambia, for example, a review of the malaria scorecard indicated low coverage of Intermittent Preventive Treatment, a medicine taken by pregnant women to protect the woman and baby from malaria. The underlying cause was a national stockout of the malaria medicine, because of discontinued donor support. The Minister of Health immediately committed to

allocating the necessary resources for the malaria programme to procure the commodities and issued a directive to the Ministry of Health to act urgently. This resulted in a letter being sent to the Minister of Finance to release funding for the procurement as well as partner support: CHAI procured 230,000 doses for Northern Province.

In Kenya, the National Malaria programme conducted an analysis of the malaria scorecard to evaluate the impact of COVID-19. For key indicators, the malaria programme proactively began developing mitigation strategies in preparation for a performance decline. In quarter 2 of 2020, the analysis showed that there was a decline in malaria patients accessing health facilities. The Director General for Health sent a letter to all county health executives to ensure continuity of malaria health services at all levels and initiated a county engagement forum to discuss how to ensure that patients visit health facilities despite the pandemic. The Cabinet Secretary for Health communicated the need to seek malaria diagnosis and treatment at health facilities during a National COVID-19 brief.

In Tanzania, one region saw a decline in long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) distribution through Ante Natal Care and immunization. One development partner had been responsible for LLINs until Q4 2019, but in Q1 2020 this responsibility transitioned to another partner. This led to a delay in procure-

ALMA has launched a scorecard hub to promote public sharing of data, share country best practices, and offer online support to strengthening scorecard implementation and impact.



Launched by His Excellency President Kenyatta, Chair of ALMA, the ALMA Scorecard Hub (www.scorecardhub.org) is an innovative new platform to accelerate digitisation of health data across Africa.

ment and distribution of LLINs during the transition. To address the issue the regional health manager urgently communicated with the new partner to ensure adequate stock of LLINs to the health facilities. As a result, the coverage of pregnant women and children receiving mosquito nets increased significantly the next quarter.

Within the context of Africa's blooming data revolution, governments increasingly have access to massive amounts of data. The data represents a tremendous opportunity for all stakeholders to gain insight into where the problems are and the actions necessary to address issues in a timely fashion. Scorecards embody a simple mechanism for optimising the use of that data so that it is accessible and interpretable to a wide range of stakeholders. ALMA will continue to play a prominent role supporting countries to strengthen the use of data through scorecards and scale up continental best practices as we approach the goal of zero malaria.

ALMA Scorecard Hub

In February 2021, President Uhuru

Kenyatta, Chair of ALMA, launched the ALMA Scorecard Hub as part of his data digitalisation agenda (www.scorecardhub.org). The Scorecard Hub is an important resource for enhancing the use of real-time, national and subnational, data for greater transparency, accountability and evidence-based decision making. The Scorecard Hub is used by countries to publicly publish their scorecards, allowing citizens in all spheres of life and at all levels to be more aware of how the health system is performing in their area and empowering them to act. The platform not only provides a place for countries to share their scorecards, but it also provides an opportunity for countries to share their best practices.

The Scorecard Hub includes guides and toolkits for countries and partners to learn more about using scorecards, and even includes online courses for people to learn about scorecards through a structured curriculum. There are also regular webinars which convene a global community of practice for stakeholders that aim to strengthen accountability and action through the utilisation of data.

End Malaria Councils and Funds are posting gains

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Countries across the region are launching country-led and country-owned End Malaria Councils and Funds (EMC). In 2020, H.E. President Uhuru Kenyatta, Chair of ALMA, called for the establishment of fifteen EMCs by the end of 2021. This call to action built on the experience of the first EMCs launched in 2019 in the Kingdom of Eswatini and Republic of Zambia.

EMCs convene senior leaders from across all sectors to advocate for malaria to remain high on the national development agenda, take action to help implement the national malaria strategic plan, mobilise financial and in-kind resources to close gaps in the national strategy, and promote mutual accountability for achieving national targets for malaria control and elimination. These initiatives are country-led and country-owned and reflect the strong political will to defeat ma-

laria once and for all.

In addition to Eswatini and Zambia, EMCs have been launched in The Republics of Mozambique, Uganda, and Kenya. Several other countries—including Burkina Faso, the Republics of South Africa, Gabon, and Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo—are in an advanced planning stage for their own EMCs with several planning to announce them as part of this year's World Malaria Day celebrations.

These multisectoral councils and funds are already having a significant impact in the fight against malaria. For example, Zambia's EMC is chaired by the Minister of Health and composed of other senior government ministers, private sector executives, and religious and traditional leaders. Since launching in March 2019, the EMC has donated trucks and other vehicles to the National Malaria Elimination Centre, organised national television and radio campaigns to promote malaria messaging (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic), provided in-kind transportation and logistics for the distribution of malaria commod-

ities, and mobilised hundreds of thousands of dollars to fund the Mass Drug Administration campaign during the most recent malaria season.

Eswatini's End Malaria Fund, which was inaugurated by H.M. King Mswati III in May 2019, has mobilised \$700,000 USD to close gaps in the national malaria elimination strategy. During the first quarter of this year, the Fund helped procure critical antimalarials and provided emergency funding to ensure Indoor Residual Spraying could be completed.

In Uganda, the Rotarian Malaria Partners and Ministry of Health launched "Malaria Free Uganda," a public-private partnership to drive advocacy, action, resources, and accountability to support the fight against malaria. This non-profit foundation will soon launch a national communications campaign and is organising other community and fundraising events, such as a national bike ride on World Malaria Day.

Mozambique's Fundo da Malária is a non-profit foundation established to mobilise financial and in-kind resources to close gaps in the national

malaria strategy. The fund is managed by an independent Board of Directors with strong representation from the private sector and religious leaders. On 26 April 2021, the fund will host its first donor conference to recognise and announce significant commitments from private sector donors for the fight against malaria. Through their resource mobilisation activities, the Board has also become critical malaria champions and have been involved in a number of nationwide advocacy activities, including a recent campaign by religious leaders to distribute malaria messaging to at-risk communities.

In February of this year, the Republic of Kenya became the fifth country across the region to launch an EMC. The EMC is chaired by an industrialist and is composed of leaders from government, the private sector, and civil society. The EMC is actively working on priority issues to end malaria, including increasing the local manufacturing of commodities. As more and more countries launch their own EMCs, it is clear that they are quickly becoming a best practice for mobilising multi-sectoral support for the fight against malaria.