PARTNERSHIPS TO STEP UP INVESTMENT IN MALARIA:
A THREE-PART DIALOGUE SERIES
Historic gains have been made against malaria globally, yet long-term success in reaching a malaria-free world within a generation is far from assured. Malaria continues to exert a large human and economic toll, which disproportionately impacts Sub-Saharan Africa. In recent years, the high-burden countries in Africa have struggled with malaria and with achieving the milestones needed to get back on track to accomplish the 2030 malaria goals. A more coordinated, intentional, and focused effort is urgently required, and COVID-19 has tested those efforts severely.

COVID-19 continues to spread in Africa, threatening the continent’s already fragile health systems. The pandemic is shifting attention and resources from control programs of other infections, such as malaria, and patients with these other life-threatening diseases are being affected. Access to many health facilities has been limited, due to closed or overburdened facilities, disruption to public transportation and other reasons. In addition, patients are often reluctant to go to health facilities due to their fear of catching COVID-19, and stigma surrounding those seeking treatment for the disease. Thus, the burden of the pandemic creates a further, crushing burden on the lives of people across the continent who are impacted by malaria and other diseases.

In order to catalyze new ways of thinking, develop cross-sector partnerships and leverage both existing and new resources to respond to these challenges, GBCHealth and the Corporate Alliance on Malaria in Africa (CAMA) convened a series of virtual dialogues between March-May 2021, under the theme Partnerships to Step Up Investments in Malaria.

The three events series, Optimizing vector control interventions towards malaria elimination in Nigeria, Combat Malaria in Africa: Lessons and Opportunities, and Sustaining progress in the fight to end malaria, brought together thought-leaders, policymakers, and philanthropy and private sector executives to take a hard look at what’s needed to change the malaria narrative. The aim was to mobilize actors in the global health community towards even greater commitment and increased investment in malaria elimination. The series culminated in the launch of the End Malaria Project, a 3-year initiative led by CAMA. Working closely with partners in Nigeria, and more widely across Africa, the End Malaria Project will catalyze private sector resources and capabilities to increase awareness and support malaria control efforts, saving at least 50,000 lives by 2023.

This report provides a list of the key event themes and recommendations that speakers and participants shared across the three events. A more detailed account of event discussions follows, ending with a section on private sector commitments to the End Malaria Project.

“The End Malaria Project offers an opportunity for businesses not only to make the world a healthier place but to directly support the health of their employees and the communities in which they operate.”

Dr. Francis Aminu
Director, Health and Nutrition, Alika Dangote Foundation
Key Themes

Key themes that emerged from the **Partnerships to Step Up Investment in Malaria** series included:

- **High-burden countries need a multifaceted response:** Achieving vector control and elimination in high-burden countries requires a multi-pronged approach which includes mass distribution of long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs), indoor residual spraying (IRS) and more.

- **There remains a strong business case for malaria control and elimination:** In addition to its human toll, malaria causes absenteeism and lost productivity for businesses. Investment in malaria control leads to increased profitability and lower workforce healthcare costs, benefitting businesses, national development and poverty eradication.

  “We need to... see malaria as a socioeconomic & development problem that needs an all-society response.”

  *Dr. Akpaka Kalu*
  
  Team Leader, Tropical and Vector-Borne Diseases, WHO

- **A widespread problem requires targeted, diversified solutions:** To maximize impact we need to identify the most suitable tool(s) for each area and group of people. Stratified interventions are required to make optimum use of resources and maximize impact.

- **The regulatory environment needs to adapt to facilitate ongoing innovation:** Regulations are crucial to ensure quality products. We also need to work with government regulators to safely reduce the time it takes new innovations to reach those who need them.

- **Eliminating malaria requires a variety of innovative tools:** New vector control tools are constantly being developed to bolster the fight against malaria, including those related to IRS, LLINs, vaccines, treatments, diagnosis, data, telemedicine and more. Investments are needed to improve on innovation.

- **Increasing the quality of vector control is vital:** An end-to-end quality framework must be established to test the effectiveness of LLINs and other tools throughout their lifetime.
Harnessing momentum from the COVID-19 response to address global inequality: The COVID-19 response demonstrated the need to overcome global inequality in access to medical services, the potential of surveillance-based interventions to monitor transmission, how vaccines can be developed quickly, and the power of multi-sectoral partnerships and political leadership; the malaria response needs to work to harness the same potential for malaria.

Boosting the capacity of health workers at the frontline is critical: Community health workers are the first line of defense against any health threat, and there is need for increased investment in community health to support the fight against malaria, COVID-19 and more.

Reframing the fight against malaria: there should be an emphasis on malaria as a socio-economic and development issue that requires a whole-of-society response, led by high-level political awareness, commitment and coordination.

Overcoming funding challenges: Innovative financing mechanisms and multisectoral partnerships are needed to support small private NGOs and clinics, and to facilitate private sector development of new tools, medicines and diagnostics.

The importance of leadership: The private sector, governments and NGOs need to support and invest in leadership development; typically, funding in leadership and management is limited and/or short-term, and new approaches are needed that recognize the critical importance of effective health systems leadership.

Creating enabling environments for private sector impact: Private sector engagement must be aligned to public health priorities through open communication and active coordination.

“The twin pillars that will allow us to continue on the road to malaria elimination are investment in community health systems as well as leadership and management capabilities.”

Dr. Robert Newman
Director, AMP Health
Event proceedings led to proposals that together could create a framework of action to promote increased multisector commitment to, and investment in, ending malaria. Recommendations included the following:

**Health systems strengthening for malaria**
- Support & finance frontline healthcare workers who are undertrained, undercompensated, understaffed and may be drawn to greater opportunities in other countries
- Integrate malaria programs with health systems strengthening approaches to build health infrastructure and improve sustainability and return on investment
- Stratify interventions to specific areas and populations to maximize impact with constrained resources

**Leverage private sector innovation**
- Develop innovative regulatory and quality control measures to get new tools to those who need them quickly and to ensure these tools are working and being used as intended
- Create platforms for the private sector to come together and pool investment, such as the End Malaria Project and the Transform Health Fund
- Better delineate the multiple different groups within the private sector – e.g. private healthcare providers, financers like health insurance companies, suppliers, and businesses – to ensure a more inclusive approach that will promote more effective exchange of ideas and information

**Foster political will & create a stronger narrative for the story of malaria**
- Facilitate the development of a new public health order for the African continent by ensuring that the private sector is an integral part of government national malaria strategies
- Encourage public sector leadership to buy into the resource-oriented and action-focused mindset of the private sector and enable this through more effective cross-sector dialogue
- Advocate with governments to address tariffs, taxes and regulatory frameworks that may limit the development and introduction of new commodities and services into the marketplace
- Utilize Africa Leaders Malaria Alliance and similar groups to engage with heads of state and keep leaders accountable
- Build on and further develop the business case for malaria investment in relation to improved infrastructure that supports efforts to fight health threats beyond malaria

“We know that the employees... are not truly protected from malaria as long as it continues in the communities. Mosquitoes do not know... borders and... so it was important for us to also look at how to invest in the communities and help address these issues.”

*Dr. Malick Diara  
Public Health Manager, ExxonMobil*
“Our malaria ambitions have not changed, but we need our public-private partnerships to migrate to public-private-community partnerships. [It’s] time to include the community voice. [We] need stimulus and mechanisms to bring people to the table.”

Sherwin Charles
Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder, Goodbye Malaria

“Through the End Malaria Project commitments, we are able to facilitate innovation through knowledge sharing, data gathering and in-kind support to the betterment of communities affected by malaria, and we are privileged to be part of this journey.”

Michael Joos
CEO, Vestergaard

Increase role of the community & address equity

- Develop and support initiatives to more effectively engage with communities and foster community ownership of malaria control
- Address the social factors that impact the fight against malaria
- Address gender equality in malaria management roles
- Incorporate a gender lens in malaria analysis, and engage groups working to support the health of women and children to join the fight against malaria
Malaria is a major cause of morbidity and mortality globally. According to the 2020 World Malaria Report, there were about 409,000 deaths due to malaria in 2019; sub-Saharan Africa was home to 94% of all malaria cases and deaths, with Nigeria accounting for 23% of global malaria deaths.

Diseases like malaria impact development severely; it is impossible to reach global health and development goals without a strong health agenda that addresses endemic diseases including malaria. What got us to this point will not take us where we want to go. Recent progress on malaria elimination has plateaued, and we were not on track to meet 2030 targets even before COVID-19. And while endemic malaria has been somewhat normalized, current levels are unacceptable given the treatable nature of the disease.

Malaria vector control is critical in limiting the spread of disease. Implementation of strategies such as mass and routine distribution of LLINs as well as IRS, in combination with malaria case management, has significantly changed the malaria prevalence status in a number of malaria endemic regions. This desired outcome has remained unattained across Nigeria however, largely due to low coverage of required interventions, limited funding, poor data and other factors. The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted attention and resources from control...
programs of other infections, such as malaria, and as reported by the Global Fund, this poses a significant threat to progress in ending malaria in Africa and Asia.

- Investment is needed in the areas of improved diagnostics, vaccines and treatment, as well as in new tools, community health workers and strong coordinated partnerships. There is also an urgent need to strengthen infrastructure and ensure equal access to care so that we prepare to face future health challenges as we fight malaria.

"The fight against malaria is something that CAMA has done an excellent job in, but as we look ahead we believe that there’s so much more that is possible."

Roosevelt Ogbonna
Group Deputy Managing Director, Access Bank

- It is clear that the public sector alone cannot tackle the complex and daunting challenge of ending malaria while the world continues to be focused on the devastation caused by the current pandemic and ensuring more effective preparedness for the next one. While the private sector has long demonstrated a commitment to ending malaria, through investments in workplace and community programs, as well as through products and services that focus on malaria control, diagnostics and treatment, more is needed. New approaches, new partnerships, and innovative financing models, anchored by coordinated effort, are vital to change the narrative of malaria.

- The purpose of GBCHealth’s and CAMA’s Partnerships to step up investment in malaria dialogue series was to rise to this challenge by emphasizing the urgent need for change, and the imperative for greater innovation, new investments, and stronger, more effective partnerships. Held over two months, the series brought together recognized global health and
malaria leaders and influencers for frank and open conversation about the importance of scaling up existing activities and adopting new measures in order to prevent a spike in malaria deaths during the pandemic and support the longer-term goal of eliminating malaria globally.

- The launch of the End Malaria Project during the series marked an important step in this respect, providing an example of public private partnerships for change, with four leading private sector organizations coming together to support action to tackle malaria in the high-burden country of Nigeria and across Africa. Speakers and participants in each event shared other examples of innovative approaches to foster partnerships and increase funding for tackling malaria, including taking a gendered-based approach and bringing new funding partners to the table around catalytic capital and loan-based programs.

“*I would really encourage private sector players to get behind CAMA and to bring their skills and capabilities to this fight [against malaria].”*

*Peter Sands*

*Executive Director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria.*

**Leveraging the impact of the private sector**

- Participants recognized that calls for greater private sector engagement from governments and other public sector bodies need to resist the temptation to focus only on financial investment, although this continues to be vital. Beyond funding, the private sector brings a breadth and depth of technical and strategic expertise, and provides services, data and tools used by community healthcare workers and national governments. It may also be well placed to help design innovative financing mechanisms and partnerships to make the most of limited resources and unlock new funding opportunities. Furthermore, multinational businesses have significant leverage in many countries and can use their collective voice to advocate for greater government investment in ending malaria.

- During the dialogue series, new approaches to increase private and foundation support for malaria elimination were proposed, including applying a gendered lens to malaria investments (building on an earlier Wilton Park event). This approach highlights the hidden gendered cost of malaria and makes the business case for supporting more active engagement of girls and women in malaria awareness, prevention and control programs. An initiative led by Malaria No More is focusing on private healthcare facilities as another approach to tackling malaria; these facilities are often key for diagnosis and treatment, and they need the best tools to support their health workforce.

- Participants across all three events highlighted the importance of effective and strategic communication. Businesses can connect experts from their networks with local governments to improve knowledge sharing, as well as use their networks to provide tools and resources to help communities prevent disease spread, build trust and fight misinformation. Alliances such as CAMA empower businesses to get involved in and contribute to collaborative efforts and to achieve greater impact (e.g. by coordinating or pooling resources for specific programs), and convenings such as the CAMA dialogue series and other high-level events with a focus on action can help bring together hitherto disparate organizations to identify shared goals, opportunities for partnership and financing mechanisms to unlock new types of funding.

- Political leadership is a powerful tool to facilitate a multisectoral response for malaria. We need to invest in the malaria response through communities, the health sector and the non-health sector, and coordinate these efforts to deliver on their mandates. Government should have an agency that acts as custodian of the national private sector response. Government must define what support is needed, and give guidance to the private sector. In resource-stricken countries,
philanthropists and other private sector actors should be encouraged to ‘adopt’ a geographic area and take the lead on malaria interventions in that area.

- There are many ways to better align cross-sector investment. Private investment should be linked to public health priorities and an economic return. Governments need to better understand private sector constraints and opportunity costs. Approaches such as a capital stack approach, and facilitating health finance coalitions, can mobilize meaningful resources and deliver innovative solutions. A pathway to implementation needs to be developed that recognizes risk sharing between sectors. Emphasizing the business case for malaria investment can help engender engagement from multinational corporations, who decide on health investments based on ROI and their own areas of operations.

**Optimizing vector control interventions**

- Continually optimizing the use of current and new vector control tools is the best way to maximize impact in high-burden countries. Two main interventions – IRS and LLINs – are consistently used in Africa. It’s necessary to determine which interventions are suitable for a specific community based on a wide array of geographic (e.g. disease burden, rainfall, and ecological patterns) and social factors, as well as policy and funding considerations. Vector control tools must be selected based evidence and cost-effectiveness in every different local terrain and circumstance; a one-size-fits-all approach is not optimal. For instance, IRS might not make a big difference in areas where

“There is an urgent need to invest and improve on malaria prevention and control and the private sector plays a critical role.”

_Omobolanle Victor-Laniyan_

*Unit Head, Sustainability Corporate Communications, Access Bank*
LLINs are properly used, and insecticide is working. Finally, working strategically across the malaria community to strengthen efforts in telemedicine, surveillance and more can help to unlock the massive potential of digital innovations.

- Event participants highlighted the need to increase urgently needed funding for expanding IRS programs to areas that are high burden and not currently well-served; despite some recent public-private partnerships, IRS is still not widely used, as it is costly to get universal coverage. IRS use should be prioritized in selected high burden areas, especially when resources are scarce, and as a complement to other interventions in certain circumstances. IRS has the benefit of not relying on compliance to the degree that LLINs do. Developing & maintaining streamlined, innovative supply chains is needed to support fragmented distribution which may be problematic in resource poor areas.

- Similarly, the malaria community needs to take advantage of new innovations in LLIN development that provide opportunities for more integrated vector control management. Also, by considering environmentally friendly options such as recyclable materials for LLIN, it’s possible to reduce the amount of polymer plastics to Sub-Saharan Africa annually as part of net distribution.

- Addressing the major problem of resistance resulting from long-term pyrethroid use is a top priority. Constant resistance monitoring, quality control and safety management is a prerequisite for successful malaria control. Alternative products are developed easier for IRS tools, but new LLIN products are also being formulated, with more companies moving to new dual ingredient products. Overcoming resistance requires testing, tracking and surveillance of vectors to support evidence-based decision-making, for example continued screening of newly introduced LLINs. Also, new alternatives to ACTs with a higher barrier of resistance are needed, as these drugs need to stand the test of time.

The impact of COVID-19 on malaria control

- The impact of COVID-19 on health systems and service interruptions was huge and will most likely continue through 2021 and beyond. Throughout the event series, participants emphasized the need to act urgently to ensure that the progress made in the fight to end malaria is not stalled further by the pandemic. Health services were diverted towards COVID-19 and stock levels were reduced because of supply chain interruptions. Working to overcome service and supply disruptions can help institutions struggling with access to lifesaving malaria medication. Many malaria patients were redirected because services were reduced, and patients had to travel further to receive treatment. COVID-19 also highlighted the inequality in access within our current health systems, reinforcing the need to prioritize access to medical services for the most vulnerable.

- The malaria community – and the broader global health community – needs to consider the context of malaria data during COVID-19; the significant reduction in malaria diagnosis and treatment during the pandemic likely does not reflect a decrease in cases, but rather the inability of health systems to manage both diseases, and hesitancy for people to seek health care during the pandemic. People were scared to get treatment, and lockdowns prohibited travel to treatment facilities, often delaying treatment.

- COVID-19 endangered community health workers (CHWs), many of whom did not have adequate PPE. Health workers getting sick had immense effects on local facilities. In much of rural Africa, community healthcare workers are the cornerstone of the healthcare system.

“We know that government alone cannot win the fight against malaria. Government also has the added burden of the COVID-19 pandemic... Why must government alone bear this burden?”

Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede  
Co-Founder,  
The Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation
that is the only defense against COVID-19, malaria and other threats. CHWs are extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 infection and need protection. It will also be critical to ensure that diverting health care workers to assist with COVID-19 vaccination campaigns does not lead to increases in malaria deaths.

- Speakers emphasized that it’s necessary to tell the malaria story in a way that will garner the same strong support from private and public sectors that has been achieved in the response to COVID-19. COVID-19 showed that data can be used more efficiently and effectively, vaccines can be developed in a shorter time, and there is immense power in multi-sectoral responses and political leadership.

“We need pragmatism in dealing with drug resistance to accelerate the process of getting new interventions to market.”

Dr. Caroline Boulton
Global Head for Malaria, Novartis

**Accelerating access & ensuring quality**

- Bed nets form the foundation of any malaria prevention effort and are especially important given the strain that COVID-19 put on diagnosis and treatment of malaria. The changing nature of insecticide resistance means we need to get new tools on the ground as soon as possible before resistance develops further. Furthermore, new chemicals need proper randomized control studies, which can result in not distributing lifesaving interventions over that period.

- Technical development of products is not enough. It’s necessary to develop faster-moving evaluation tools and nimbler evaluation methodologies to safely get tools where they need to be quickly. A full review of the regulatory pathway is required for faster evaluation of efficacy in the field of what works and what does not. This information must be more readily and speedily available to everyone.
• Identify solutions to barriers to private sector engagement in innovation and R&D, such as the “dead-zone” period where a product has been approved but not scaled up. This often prevents companies from developing new tools or entering the malaria space. There is work to be done to overcome barriers within strategic supplier alliances; sometimes despite agreements being made years in advance, industry is not given enough time to deploy capital at risk to build scale and capacity and to drive operational efficiencies. There is a need to elevate relationships beyond the transactional-based purchasing realm and find a platform for strategic alliances.

• Quality of vector control tools is intrinsically linked to effectiveness and the ability to combat insecticide resistance. Therefore, checking physical, chemical and bio-efficacy of LLINs and other tools is needed to guarantee quality. For LLINs, supporting more comprehensive testing and establishing an end-to-end quality testing framework to analyze nets throughout their lifetime will allow for better data to inform decision-making.

• Quality control considerations can help improve communication regarding the performance of new tools between private sector, government health Ministries and regulatory authorities. Recent actions to establish & maintain higher and consistent quality standards are encouraging. Post-market surveillance can help close knowledge gaps where long-term studies are not yet available; longer-term surveillance by donors and governments will be required to understand the performance of LLINs and other new tools over time.

“The importance of collaboration, community & partnerships

• Throughout the dialogue series, participants stressed how platforms such as the CAMA dialogue series and the End Malaria Project should prioritized in order to foster multi-stakeholder collaboration and investment for malaria control. The dialogue needs to continue to discuss current opportunities, how to take advantage of them, who needs to be engaged and how to think outside the box. Creating mechanisms to bring multisectoral partnerships together can lead to the innovative programs, tools and financing models that are needed.

• Prioritize action over rhetoric by fully leveraging public-private partnerships for malaria eradication. Engagement between the private and public sector requires alignment on shared priorities, and partnerships should be designed to take advantage of each partner’s unique strengths. The creation of institutional and structural mechanisms to bring disparate sectors together can help simplify complex issues and ensure impactful partnerships.

• When the private sector is aligned with national malaria elimination and health system strengthening strategies, and when the government creates an enabling market environment to promote innovation and bring new products and services to communities, it sets the stage for a new public health order across Africa. Including organizations like the Global Fund in public private partnerships will also facilitate better coordination in delivering healthcare tools and services. These partnerships have the potential to help strengthen local healthcare infrastructure and capacity to support the goals of both national governments and the private sector.

• Malaria is not defeated until it is defeated globally, so it needs to be addressed globally. Malaria is beyond medicine; it is a socio-economic problem that requires a whole-of-society response. Communities are a vital part of the malaria ecosystem that cannot be overlooked; it’s necessary to strengthen interventions to be able to respond to the needs of the community and to integrate

“We need to take stock of where we are, what has to change, ... the new set of challenges that lie ahead with COVID-19, and how we can turn it around to our advantage.”

Peter Sands
Executive Director, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
community training and empowerment. The malaria community must consistently emphasize the communities who malaria interventions serve, and focus efforts to address issues at the community level.

The End Malaria Project

- The End Malaria Project launched by CAMA during the dialogue series is a 3-year initiative to catalyze private sector resources and capabilities for sustained support towards malaria control. Starting in Nigeria, the goal is to save 50,000 lives by 2023, and to scale the approach to impact other countries across Africa. The program has been designed in line with guidelines from the World Health Organization and the Nigerian National Malaria Elimination Programme, with activities based on four strategic objectives: awareness, bite prevention, chemoprophylaxis, and diagnosis/treatment. CAMA member companies serve as the project’s advisory committee, contributing their expertise and guidance to the initiative.

- Access Bank, Chevron, Aliko Dangote Foundation and Vestergaard all announced their support and financial commitments for the End Malaria Project during the dialogue series. In addition to financial commitments, some organizations will also support a range of activities as part of the initiative, including:
  
  - Risk reduction initiatives
  - Building capacity of local health systems, including increasing vector surveillance sites
  - Establishing a systematic post-market surveillance framework for malaria tools
  - Strengthening knowledge transfer on insecticide resistance protocols
  - Improving awareness and reduction of malaria transmission through distribution of LLINs and IRS to their workforce and in the communities where their workforce resides
  - Supporting government to optimize vector control interventions, building out the business case for malaria
  - Leveraging the voice and influence of private sector leaders to garner further support for the initiative

“We must... launch new generations of bed nets much faster than what we’ve done before. This requires a full review of the regulatory pathway to market, so that we have faster adoption in the field, and have a faster evaluation of efficacy of bed nets in the field.”

Michael Joos
CEO, Vestergaard
Ending malaria is an ambitious vision, and in the context of COVID-19 the challenge is stark. To make progress requires bold thinking, determined coordination and collaborative action, with investment in intellectual capital, technological capabilities and innovative and creative ways to scale up the fight against malaria. This requires a more results-driven approach than is currently the case.

The goal of this dialogue series was to consider how to build on existing efforts, bring new voices to the table, explore innovative financing models and better understand how to take efforts to scale. GBCHealth and CAMA are committed to leveraging the power of the private sector in this effort and to work collaboratively with partners more broadly to fight malaria and build a healthier world.

Find out more about how to join this effort.

You can reach us at cama@gbchealth.org.

“"I think it is possible to eliminate malaria. I think it is a goal that we must pursue. And we should look at that... in the spirit of... a new public health order for the continent, which means that we have to make sure that the private sector is part and parcel of what we are doing.”"

Dr. John Ngkengasong
Director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention