



# AMAZON MALARIA INITIATIVE

## Malaria in Low-Incidence Settings

### COMMUNICATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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As malaria incidence decreases and countries move towards elimination, the health system tends to shift its focus and resources to other health issues, threatening the progress achieved. In low-incidence settings, a lack of sufficient resources may significantly undermine the system’s responsiveness to maintaining laboratory capacity, sustaining vector control or epidemiological surveillance, ensuring access to quality medicines and the monitoring of resistance to antimalarials. In order to maintain malaria as a key priority under the national health agenda and sustain malaria prevention and control efforts, communication and advocacy must continue to play a vital role in building political and community will within the general public, affected and underserved communities, stakeholders and decision makers.



Photo: PAHO/WHO

Communication and advocacy efforts are crucial to identify and mobilize resources in order to sustain these technical interventions and avoid an increase in malaria incidence. Integrating effective communication and dissemination strategies within national malaria program’s (NMPs) annual work plans enhances NMPs capacity to communicate with their constituents and advocate for better malaria control with stakeholders. Communities affected by malaria, multi-sector partners, and stakeholders must be considered throughout the planning and design of communication, information dissemination, and advocacy activities.

In low-incidence settings, uniting with the private sector and civil society through a multi-sectoral approach can be an effective way to strengthen malaria programming and communication. Communication strategies may be designed for several different types of communication: social and behavior change communication (SBCC) and advocacy communication. While SBCC informs and helps protect the public in the areas of transmission, prevention, control, and treatment, emphasizing the public’s ability to protect itself and its communities, advocacy efforts encourage and enable political commitment and stakeholder engagement in support of malaria programs and interventions.<sup>2</sup>

The design and planning of communication efforts, whether for SBCC or advocacy, should follow a systemic and evidence-based process to effectively target audiences and adapt messages based on evolving contexts. Theories are key to effective communication because they help public health campaigns understand the factors and pathways that may affect the behavior and actions of individuals, communities and stakeholders. The communication plan should contain clear objectives, identify key audiences and culturally relevant messages, communication channels and key outreach events, and establish a monitoring and evaluation plan in order to measure processes, make adjustments to activities, and check outcomes.

Regarding outreach events, the Amazon Malaria Initiative (AMI) recommends that countries in the region develop campaigns on awareness dates such as World Malaria Day, Malaria Day in the Americas, International Migrants Day, and International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples in order to leverage mass media opportunities. AMI also recommends for countries to practice knowledge management by creating and maintaining a repository of malaria information, education, and communication products by the different health systems levels in order to avoid the duplication of efforts and share lessons learned and best practices.

1 Amazon Malaria Initiative. 2016. Fact Sheet “Malaria in low-incidence settings,” series 02-06.  
2 Amazon Malaria Initiative. 2015. *Strategic Malaria Communication Guide for Central America 2015 – 2020*.

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