

AMAZON MALARIA INITIATIVE (AMI) COMMUNICATION COMPONENT



FINAL SUMMARY REPORT

Reporting Period: October 1, 2013 – September 30, 2016

Contract No. AID-527-C-13-00004



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



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About Links Media

Links Media, LLC is a management consulting company based in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, specializing in information technology and marketing communications. We provide advanced management consultation services to governments and private sector clients in the areas of health, environment, science and technology, biotechnology, governance, human rights, economic prosperity, conflict resolution, education, public engagement, risk and crisis management, and social entrepreneurship.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|---------|--|
| ACT | Artemisinin-based Combination Therapy |
| AMI | Amazon Malaria Initiative |
| ASTMH | American Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene |
| BCC | Behavior change communication |
| CDC | United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention |
| DIRESA | Regional Health Directorate |
| FAQs | Frequently Asked Questions |
| FY | Fiscal Year |
| INS | National Institute of Health |
| IR | Intermediate Result |
| IRI | Intermittent Rice Irrigation |
| KAP | Knowledge, Attitude and Practices |
| LAC | Latin American and the Caribbean |
| MOH | Ministry of Health |
| MSH | Management Sciences for Health |
| NMCP | National Malaria Control Program |
| PAHO | Pan American Health Organization |
| PQM | Promoting the Quality of Medicines Program |
| QA/QC | Quality Assurance/Quality Control |
| RAVREDA | Amazon Network for the Surveillance of Antimalarial Drug Resistance |
| RDT | Rapid Diagnostic Test |
| SIAPS | USAID-funded Systems for Improved Access to Pharmaceuticals and Services Program |
| SOD | Strategic Orientation Document |
| TA | Technical Assistance |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| UN | United Nations |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| USP | United States Pharmacopeial Convention |
| VCS | Vector Control Services |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

I. Executive Summary

Under the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded Amazon Malaria Initiative (AMI), Links Media implemented the Communication Component through a strategic approach that provided a framework and action plan for communication activities that aimed to sustain malaria prevention, control and elimination efforts. AMI Communication Component's approach focused on integrating and consolidating technical information, as well as on increasing awareness and engagement of internal and external audiences, guiding the development and implementation of communication tools that increased in-country capacity and enhanced decision-making processes. USAID/Peru and Links Media provided technical assistance (TA) in support of AMI countries' ministries of health (MOHs) and national malaria control programs (NMCPs) to enhance their understanding of strategic communication processes and apply them to the development of health communication materials and activities, as well as to create more inclusive and better informed malaria policies. Through targeted TA and strategy development, USAID/Peru and Links Media enhanced collaboration and coordination efforts among AMI partners and stakeholders at regional, national and sub-national levels. Overall, Links Media's implementation of the AMI Communication Component enabled a regional community of practice by creating and sharing comprehensive evidence-based resources and tools for malaria control.

Links Media adhered to a rigorous process of product assessment, strategic implementation, harmonization of technical recommendations, and virtual and in-person meetings with technical partners. The coordinated production and distribution of documents, tools, and collateral materials via traditional, digital, and social media networks allowed for an increase in the amount and quality of technical information shared. In all, under the Communication Component's activities, Links Media developed communication strategies for Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Suriname, a regional strategy for the bloc of Central American countries (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama) with support from country NMCP's and USAID/Peru. In addition, Links Media crafted a communication strategy to support the regional response to the possible emergence of artemisinin resistance. In close coordination with USAID/Peru, Links Media carried out a number of TA activities, strengthened over 11 institutions, led several dissemination activities, produced over 100 documents and tools, and reached a large audience of stakeholders with messages about malaria in the Americas.

This final report highlights the accomplishments and results achieved by AMI's Communication Component across three years of task implementation, and identify the needs and challenges reported during the implementation of this work. The report provides an evaluation of the best practices in communication that should be expanded or replicated in order to continue sustaining malaria control efforts, as well as recommendations for future directions to complement AMI's work.

II. Background

USAID launched AMI in 2001 to improve the prevention and control of malaria in partner nations of the Amazon basin. The initiative's mission is to (i) ensure that NMCPs in the Amazon basin and selected

Central American countries substantially incorporate best practices and (ii) promote evidence-based policy changes in the partner countries. From inception, AMI has maintained a comprehensive view of malaria prevention and control. Its initial focus was to build the evidence base to support the introduction of artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT) for *P. falciparum* malaria in all Amazon basin countries, and to improve access to and quality of malaria diagnosis. As progress was made in introducing ACT, the areas of epidemiological surveillance, vector control and systems strengthening received further attention.

USAID established AMI as a collaborative partnership among organizations (AMI implementing partners) that provide technical and scientific expertise and collaborate with the MOHs and NMCPs grouped in the Amazon Network for the Surveillance of Antimalarial Drug Resistance (RAVREDA) to proactively address malaria prevention and control in a sustainable manner. The partner countries also collaborate with one another and maintain an ongoing exchange of information and expertise promoted and supported by AMI. Countries currently supported by AMI include Belize, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and Suriname.

The initiative's regional approach benefits partner countries through (i) training and TA, (ii) the development of standardized guidelines and protocols, (iii) the comparability of research and monitoring results within and across countries, and (iv) coordinated approaches to addressing shared problems.

III. Highlights of Accomplishments

Communication activities supported by AMI include the development and dissemination of tools on malaria prevention, control and elimination through effective channels targeting decision-makers and other stakeholders. From 2008-2011, AMI partners led the way in creating a foundation of regional malaria knowledge, identified and piloted material on diverse communication channels, and strengthened dissemination approaches to reach partners and other stakeholders. The initiative's communication partner, Links Media documented ten years of achievements, developed a wide range of communication materials, published scientific papers, built communication capacity, and disseminated information through the web, media, conferences, and meetings. In 2012, USAID identified the need for a regional strategic communication plan to help coordinate the dissemination of this information effectively, reaching target audiences with information about the initiatives efforts to help implement and sustain good practices in the region. In 2013, Links Media took on the task of building upon the region's progress to control, prevent, and eliminate malaria incidence by employing a strategic and targeted communication approach that included working with national and regional level actors¹.

¹ This approach has been encouraged in the United States through the Executive Order -- Using Behavioral Science Insights to Better Serve the American People. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/15/executive-order-using-behavioral-science-insights-better-serve-american> .

Links Media conducted an assessment and analysis of the advocacy and communication capacities of 11 NMCPs. The results from this exercise showed that communication interventions were not integrated within the countries' strategic frameworks for malaria control as health communication was typically handled by a different MOH division or decentralized public health entity, with NMCP coordination occurring only sporadically during malaria outbreaks. In addition, most MOH websites in the region lacked a malaria-specific page with malaria prevention and control information for the general public; furthermore, NMCPs did not engage with the full range of audiences that needed to be reached to ensure the institutionalization of evidence-based practices for malaria control. The region also lacked perennial champions of the cause in the public eye that could speak on behalf of or in support of malaria prevention, control and elimination. The dissemination of AMI-supported methods and results, for use by malaria control actors and stakeholders, was also not occurring, making the access and visibility of such information challenging.

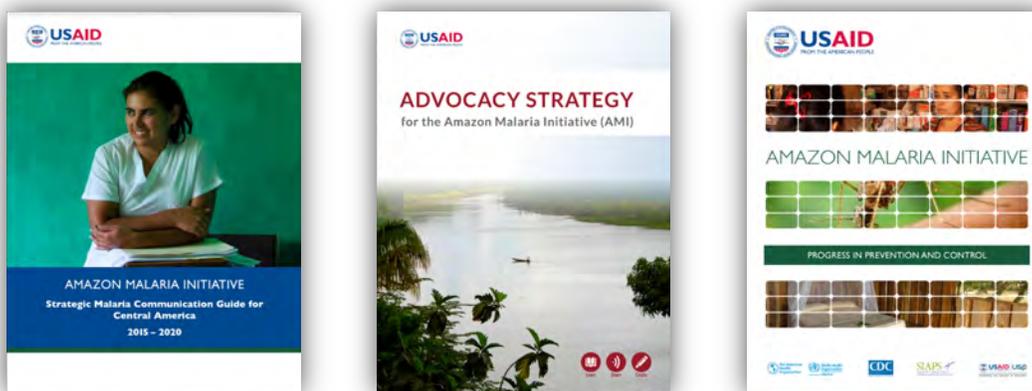
USAID/Peru and Links Media addressed these challenges by supporting NMCPs in the development and revision of strategic communication plans to help adequately implement and sustain the role of communications in integrated malaria control interventions, as well as to ensure that malaria information was accessible to specific at-risk populations and other important target audiences. Links Media also promoted the use of visible and easily accessible information portals, making quality information and visual assets available for all. Engaging and coordinating with new audiences was essential to expand and strengthen alliances and partnerships for malaria control. NMCPs supported this process by identifying spokespersons, public events, and compelling stories about human health impact of malaria control that could help raise awareness among decision-makers and the general public. Lastly, Links Media provided countries with guidance on updating, developing and disseminating reliable and accurate information through products that better informed external audiences on the methods and results that the initiative supported.

Under the initiative's communication component, Links Media designed the AMI Dissemination and Communication Strategy 2013-2016 to provide a framework and action plan for AMI technical and country partners that could serve as reference for their communication activities with the aim of sustaining malaria prevention, control and elimination efforts. The AMI strategy focused on integrating communication interventions within country's strategic frameworks, consolidated the AMI website as a regional information portal, strengthened stakeholder engagement in the region, increased awareness among decision-makers and the general public, and better informed internal and external audiences. In line with the strategy, Links Media guided the development and implementation of numerous communication tools using strategic and targeted TA to equip NMCPs with products needed to increase in-country capacity and enhance decision-making processes. Moreover, the TA provided by Links Media enhanced the collaboration and coordination among partners and stakeholders. Overall, the dissemination of research findings, tools, and approaches helped to establish the knowledge base for improved malaria policy and case management in the region.

Design and Dissemination of Communication Strategies and Work Plans

The AMI communication strategy was designed to guide the implementation of the initiative's communication activities and the development of messages, technical materials, and advocacy interventions. Links Media implemented the AMI communication strategy by researching, conceptualizing, producing and disseminating an array of information and communication products to better inform decision-making processes and establish the knowledge base for improved malaria policy and practice in the region. These products were designed for use by technical partners, countries' NMCPs, cooperation agencies, research institutions, and the general public to systematize knowledge, experiences, and lessons learned. Links Media used a variety of communication channels to disseminate the latest guidance, publications, and materials developed by AMI partners to target audiences at the international, regional, and national levels, increasing regional networking and collaboration.

Figure 1: Strategic Malaria Communication Guide, Advocacy Strategy and Brochure



As part of the implementation process, Links Media designed and disseminated eight communication strategies for AMI technical and country partners in order to secure steadfast commitment for malaria control and mitigate the risk of insufficient investment and subsequent neglect of malaria as a public health issue. Communication strategies were developed for each of the six Amazon countries (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Suriname and Peru) and one for the bloc of Central American countries (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama). The country and sub-regional communication strategies included approaches to help NMCPs transition towards different phases of malaria control and ensure sustainability of malaria prevention and control efforts. The strategies seek to tie malaria elimination to national priorities, enhance the role and engagement of non-traditional partners, and secure country buy-in to focus on special groups such as migrants, indigenous and Afro-descendant populations when communicating about malaria. As part of the implementation of the communication component, Links Media also crafted a communication strategy to support the regional response to the possible emergence of artemisinin resistance. Overall, the communication strategies aim to integrate communication interventions into national strategic frameworks and bring about a more inclusive policy process by fostering the participation of government ministries, the private sector, and affected populations in decision-making around malaria.

Targeted Technical Assistance

Sustaining malaria prevention, control, and elimination depends on the institutionalization of best practices. Links Media provided AMI-supported countries with targeted TA to guide and support their malaria control efforts and implementation of country and sub-regional communication strategies. The development and dissemination of technical products designed to strengthen NMCPs knowledge base and guide malaria policy processes in the region contributed to better-informed decision-making processes at decentralized levels. The regional webinar on *Good Practices for Collaborating with Indigenous People on Malaria Prevention and Control* allowed for the exchange of best practices and lessons learned throughout the region. Over 70 participants from Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru, including health professionals, civil society organizations, Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and USAID participated in the virtual event that included presentations and lessons learned by Guatemala’s, Honduras’, and Panama’s NMCPs on the development of more inclusive and better-informed malaria policies and programs. Through this webinar Links Media enabled knowledge-sharing, technical discussions and regional collaboration on how to work effectively with indigenous populations on malaria prevention and control.

Figure 2: Materials from the Regional Webinar



Links Media assisted Brazil’s NMCP in reinstating education and social mobilization as core interventions for malaria at the national and decentralized levels. As a result of a review of the evidence base on education, communication, and social mobilization for malaria control, Links Media delivered the “Communication plan to increase the political sustainability of malaria control efforts” to Brazil’s NMCP. Through virtual and in-person TA, Links Media contributed to the development of Brazil’s national education and social mobilization strategy for malaria. Similarly, Links Media worked closely with Colombia’s NMCP to articulate a comprehensive policy recommendation for decentralized governments to adopt good practices for malaria health communication. Links Media’s TA resulted in a policy paper on behavior change communication (BCC) and the benefits of executing communication activities for malaria prevention and control. Links Media also worked with Suriname’s NMCP on an advocacy tool

targeted to national decision-makers for the promotion of stakeholder engagement in support of a health in all policies approach to malaria elimination.

Figure 3: AMI/RAVREDA Annual Partners Meeting, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



In order to facilitate communication with other malaria stakeholders and support the integrated management of vector-borne diseases in Guyana, Links Media assisted Guyana’s Vector Control Services (VCS, as the NMCP is known locally) with incorporating BCC into the design of messages and materials to be used in the country’s malaria-endemic regions. Collateral materials were created for use in forthcoming training sessions with non-health professionals in order to expand the public network for malaria diagnosis in remote locations.

Figure 4: Training Guides/Manuals



In support of Peru’s emergency response to malaria and the development of various collateral materials for health staff trainings, Links Media provided TA to the NMCP and two decentralized health institutions, Loreto’s Regional Health Directorate (DIRESA by its Spanish acronym) and the National Institute of Health (INS by its Spanish acronym). The technical tools developed by Links Media in collaboration with Loreto’s DIRESA and the INS, helped to establish regional standardized materials for education, communication and social mobilization activities as well as capacity building programs. Links

Media provided Panama’s NMCP with guidance on the design and implementation of the country’s communication activities. Links Media’s technical advice regarding feasible communication activities for malaria prevention and control resulted in various modifications to the NMCP’s annual work plan, such as planned communication for behavior change (COMBI, by its Spanish acronym) activities and a Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) study. In addition, Links Media provided Panama’s NMCP and office of health promotion with communication expertise on the development and delivery of messages on educational manuals for the country’s indigenous schools.

Better Informed Internal and External Audiences

An important component of the AMI communication strategy has been the development and dissemination of technical documents to better inform diverse stakeholders of AMI’s technical areas and the benefits of adopting best management practices for malaria prevention, control and elimination. Links Media contributed significantly to this component not only by disseminating over 50 scientific articles and reports but also by proactively identifying opportunities to develop communication tools and materials in coordination with USAID/Peru, AMI implementing partners, and country partners. The development of communication instruments included translation and design support as well as validation and testing of specific products. Over 40 technical documents were developed and disseminated with support from Links Media, including strategic orientation documents, fact sheets, case studies and success stories. The AMI fact sheets and orientation documents provide guidance on malaria decision-making processes mainly to NMCPs, decentralized health managers, and other technical staff; while the case studies and success stories addressed a multitude of topics, ranging from the benefits of adopting sustainable malaria control technologies, systemic approaches to medicine quality assurance and control, and the impact of engaging the private sector in malaria control. Through this work Links Media effectively communicated the region’s evidence-based findings in a way that decision-makers could understand, and advocate for the adoption and institutionalization of proven interventions.

Figure 5: Case Study, Success Story and Fact Sheet



In coordination with AMI implementing partners, PAHO/WHO, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Management Sciences for Health/Systems for Improved Access to Pharmaceuticals and Services (MSH/SIAPS) Program, and the U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention/Promoting the Quality of Medicines (USP/PQM) Program, and USAID/Peru, Links Media developed an initiative-wide report covering partner’s progress and activities in each of the five technical areas including malaria diagnosis and treatment, pharmaceutical supply chain, antimalarial medicine quality, antimalarial efficacy and resistance monitoring, vector surveillance and control, and communication. Links Media also developed and distributed ten AMI quarterly news bulletins detailing AMI technical and country partner’s activities, achievements, upcoming events, and global malaria news. These bulletins were disseminated on a quarterly basis to AMI internal and external audiences including the international donor community, decision-makers in participating AMI countries, and the general public. Both the initiative wide report and quarterly reports helped to raise awareness, enhance coordination and inform country and technical partners of regional and global malaria news. Overall, these reports are an effective vehicle for disseminating the knowledge base generated through AMI and within the global health and development community.

Figure 6: Annual Report and Quarterly Bulletin



Enhanced Awareness and Increased Stakeholder Engagement

USAID/Peru and Links Media applied an integrated approach to outreach and awareness activities of the AMI communication strategy, coordinating with partners, malaria campaigns and event themes. Links Media produced over 50 messages, materials and instruments related to malaria in the LAC region for in-country and AMI/RAVREDA meetings, awareness days such as World Malaria Day, Malaria Day in the Americas, Indigenous Peoples Day, and events like Malaria Champions of the Americas and the annual release of the World Malaria Report. Links Media also supported country and technical partners through various outreach events, participation in international conferences, workshops and courses.

Figure 7: Infographics



News releases and media advisories proved to be valuable tools to disseminate information to influential voices on a variety of topics such as malaria in pregnancy, the need to sustain mechanisms for regional collaboration, and the importance of applying intercultural communication for working with indigenous peoples. Media pitching resulted in the successful placement of articles in specialized journals such as *The Pharma Letter* and *SciDev.net*. Likewise, in-person presentations enabled the dissemination of unique findings and valuable information on malaria communication and advocacy activities within the region. Lastly, AMI virtual channels were used for targeted outreach during strategic intervals, increasing social media engagement around the dissemination of information and communication products and awareness events.

Figure 8: Media Pitching and Poster Presentation



Virtual Community of Practice

Links Media increased information sharing among partners and expanded AMI’s external audiences by using virtual channels to apply good knowledge management practices and maintain a robust repository of updated manuscripts, data, reports and other relevant materials. Links Media coordinated with reputable virtual sources to increase awareness of the AMI website and social media channels. The AMI website increased access to malaria related information and resources in English, Spanish, and Portuguese via computers, mobile phones and tablets. Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn proved to be valuable tools for sharing information on malaria in the region.

The Facebook group page proved to be the most active social media platform, where users from across the region engaged in dialogue by sharing articles, news, and other resources through an organic process, serving as an online community of practice. As a result, the AMI website serves as a regional collaborative platform for the exchange and dissemination of knowledge, experiences, and information.

Table 1: Social Media Metrics FY 14 vs. FY 16

| Social Media Platform | Q1 FY 2014 | Q4 FY 2016 | % Change |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|----------|
| AMI Listserve | 180 | 667 | 270% |
| AMI Facebook Page | 339 | 712 | 110% |
| AMI Facebook Group | 357 | 451 | 26% |
| AMI Twitter | 307 | 965 | 214% |
| AMI LinkedIn Group | 6 | 90 | 1,400% |
| AMI Instagram | 192 | 237 | 23% |

Figure 9: Weekly usage of AMI project website FY 16 vs. FY 14

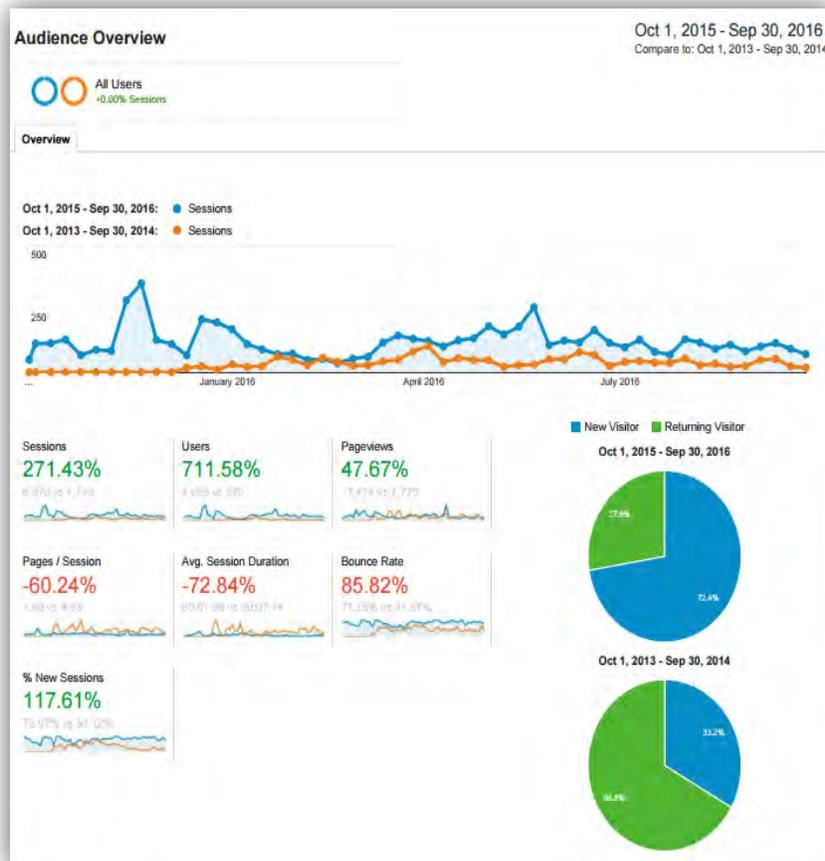


Figure 10: Demographic data of AMI Facebook page



Digital engagement across the AMI virtual platforms increased significantly as a result of Links Media’s work. Google analytics (user numbers) showed that Links Media managed to attract new visitors (new users increased from 569 or 33.2% of all FY 14 users to 4,611 or 72.3% of all FY 16 users) and sustain or increase the website traffic of returning visitors (returning visitors increased from 1,146 or 66.8% of all FY 14 users to 1,763 or 27.7% of all FY 16 users). Moreover, website and social media metrics showed that the geographic coverage of AMI expanded beyond the LAC region as a direct result of Links Media’s strategic management². For example, among the 1,000 people that accessed the AMI Facebook page and were exposed to malaria news and information in Spanish and Portuguese during the last month of FY 16, 60% were women from the LAC region (Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Mexico, and Guatemala). Overall, the use of information technologies and virtual channels has not only increased information sharing among partners, but also served as a platform for reaching external audiences.

² Review AMI virtual platforms analysis in the AMI Annual Progress Reports for FY 2014, FY 2015, and FY 2016.

IV. Final Status of Results

During the performance years of the contract, Links Media completed the tasks and activities outlined in the AMI communication and information dissemination work plan through the provision of strategic-level advising and targeted operational support in communications to AMI partners and countries.

According to Links Media’s scope of work, activities were carried out under the following task areas:

- a) **Communication and Dissemination of Information** – implementation or support for the implementation of activities to influence policy changes and implementation of malaria prevention and control in Latin America and the Caribbean; to mobilize support for malaria prevention and control in the AMI geographic areas of interest; and to convey critical information about AMI to various audiences, including but not limited to the host country, governments, cooperation agencies, donors, key decision-makers, media, researchers, academic institutions, healthcare professionals, and the general public.
- b) **Technical Assistance** – provision of TA to USAID, USAID implementing partners, and selected country-level partners to strengthen capacity for communication and outreach planning; as well as to support the design and/or implementation of selected strategies and/or activities and materials to inform and change behaviors among health professionals, care providers, policy makers, communities at risk for malaria infection, and other stakeholders in malaria prevention and control.
- c) **Product Development** – writing and editorial services to develop publications and other communication materials needed by the partners in achieving AMI objectives.
- d) **Graphic Design** – provision of services including but not limited to graphic design and layout, production planning, desktop publishing, and printing and/or production of materials in electronic formats.

Activities were oriented towards achieving AMI Intermediate Results (IR), as depicted in Figure 3 (below).

Figure 11: Communication of the Evidence Base to Achieve USAID’s Strategic Objective for Malaria Control



IR 1: Evidence Base Increased

Links Media used a structured interview guide to conduct communication needs assessments with NMCP staff in eleven AMI-supported countries. These country-specific communication assessments were an essential component of the formative research that was conducted to develop country and sub-regional communication strategies for malaria control.

In addition to strategy design and development, the assessment results were featured in an abstract titled “The Role of Health Systems Communication in the Implementation of Real-Time Diseases Surveillance using ICTs,” at the 2014 Amazonian Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases (ACEID). That same year, Links Media worked with MSH/SIAPS to develop a late-breaker poster abstract that was accepted for the 2014 Annual American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) entitled “How Low Can We Go? Lessons from an Integrated Partnership for Malaria Control in the Americas.”

Links Media also crafted a poster on malaria elimination for the 2015 Annual ASTMH Meeting entitled “So you say you want elimination? Using communication and advocacy to advance malaria elimination in the Americas.” Links Media’s presentation at ASTMH enabled the dissemination of unique findings on malaria in the Americas to approximately 4,500 attendees from 98 countries, including public health officials, researchers, physicians, and military personnel who work with malaria and other infectious diseases.

In collaboration with Brazil’s NMCP, Links Media developed a case study detailing how the Brazilian MOH effectively implemented a regulatory framework to engage the private sector in malaria control in the country’s malaria-endemic regions. The case study showed how the implementation of a national regulation requiring large infrastructure projects in the Amazon to contribute to malaria control efforts served as an important asset in helping the MOH strive towards malaria elimination. Moreover, it exemplifies how effectively implemented regulatory frameworks can engage the private sector in successfully interrupting malaria transmission.

To further increase the evidence base, Links Media worked in coordination with Peru’s NMCP to develop a fact sheet highlighting the economic, environmental, and health benefits of expanding intermittent rice irrigation (IRI) in agricultural areas. The fact sheet provided evidence for the implementation of this intervention to the multi-sectoral commission in charge of the program. The document presented an evidence-based approach that had a significant impact on vector control efforts and the farmers that practice it in Peru.

Lastly, Links Media held a regional webinar showcasing successful interventions with indigenous communities in order to improve health manager’s knowledge of indigenous health and intercultural communication as they pertain to malaria. An event like the regional webinar on *Good Practices for Collaborating with Indigenous People on Malaria Prevention and Control* is the perfect example of the use of information technology for enabling knowledge-sharing, technical discussions and regional collaboration.

IR 2: Evidence Base Communicated and Used

Links Media promoted the evidence base through a variety of communication channels designed to target decision-makers in AMI-supported countries. These included traditional and digital media, virtual meetings, in-person events, and policy papers. Links Media curated and distributed relevant third-party content from key partners such as the United States President's Malaria Initiative, Roll Back Malaria, and the World Health Organization. We also conceptualized numerous information products in collaboration with other AMI partners, which we subsequently produced and disseminated to stakeholders via the same array of communication channels.

Links Media conducted outreach to the media to disseminate the scientific findings of AMI partners' operational research, which targeted audiences such as donors and cooperation agencies, ministry of health decision-makers, researchers, and health professionals. For example, we pitched to journalists with the specialized science and development website, SciDev.net about the molecular epidemiology of a malaria outbreak in the Tumbes Region of Peru, and about regional patterns of HRP2/HRP3 gene deletion in *P. falciparum* parasites. This resulted in Spanish-language news coverage of evidence that was originally published in English, increasing the likelihood that decision-makers in the LAC region would become aware of and use the study's recommendations.

The project website served as the main hub for relevant information and materials, keeping multiple stakeholders abreast of the developments related to malaria in the Americas. Links Media applied good knowledge management practices to maintain a robust central repository of updated materials, manuscripts, data, reports, and other important materials on the project website. Existing information, education and communication (IEC) materials were acquired from the field to enhance the repository of regional knowledge about malaria prevention and control. To complement this digital repository, Links Media successfully broadened AMI's constituent base through social media and electronic clearinghouses in order to reach new audiences with fact-based messages about malaria, as evidenced by the growing numbers of social media followers and improved digital engagement statistics.

Links Media developed and disseminated technical documents to enhance and sustain NMCP staff and regional public health professionals, as well as to inform decision-makers, public health officials, researchers, and international donors through a variety of communication channels. Evidence base products included strategic orientation documents, fact sheets on medicine resistance, elimination, malaria in low-incidence settings and vector control technologies, success stories on antimalarial supply management and quality control, a case study on the private sector involvement for malaria control, a comprehensive project brochure highlighting the contributions USAID and AMI partners have made to malaria prevention and control, reading lists, presentations, video-recordings, quarterly bulletins detailing updates on the partners' work throughout the region, and an AMI initiative-wide annual report covering partner's activities during fiscal year 2015. These are important vehicles for disseminating the knowledge base generated through AMI to the global health and development community.

IR 3: More Inclusive and Better Informed Policy Process Promoted

Embedded within the country malaria communication strategies that Links Media developed together with the NMCPs were approaches to promote a more inclusive and better informed policy process in AMI-supported countries. Links Media provided TA to AMI technical and country partners on how to create an enabling environment for the sustainability of proven malaria prevention and control policies and practices. Links Media provided TA to the NMCP on the development of an education and social mobilization strategy for malaria by participating in a workshop attended by decentralized malaria actors and diverse government agencies representing a variety of sectors such as the Indigenous Health Secretariat, the National Land Reform Institute, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of the Environment, and the Ministry of Cities of Brazil, considering a whole-of-society approach to improve and sustain malaria prevention, diagnosis, and treatment among priority populations.

In Guyana, Links Media helped the VCS to reach out to the US Peace Corps, NGOs, and the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs to collaborate on the implementation of its malaria communication strategy. Links Media also worked with VCS to develop messages and materials about malaria for non-health professionals in the country’s endemic regions in order to support the public network for diagnosis in remote locations. Likewise, in Peru, Links Media worked with the NMCP, DIRESA Loreto, and the INS to draft terms of reference and manuals for health professionals in order to implement and sustain local malaria control and diagnosis efforts.

Links Media also facilitated and promoted regional collaboration between AMI partners, PAHO/WHO, and NMCPs as a means for exploring strategies to improve working relationships between AMI collaborators and share experiences and technical expertise on developing more inclusive and better informed policies and programs. Moreover, Links Media developed frameworks and tools that could be adapted to different country contexts. Lastly, virtual engagement was a key method used to raise awareness and mobilize diverse LAC constituencies to support the prioritization of malaria control.

The status of all Links Media deliverables is presented below, whether deliverables consisted of products, essential activities, and TA provided.

Table 2: Status of Links Media Work Plan Deliverables

| Task | Deliverable | Status |
|--|---|-----------|
| Task 1. Design an AMI strategy and prepare annual work plans | 1.1 AMI communication and information dissemination strategy and work plan | Completed |
| | 1.2 Annual AMI communication and information dissemination strategy and work plan | Completed |
| | 1.3 Communication/Dissemination for the future of AMI | Completed |
| Task 2. Design communication strategies | 2.1 Six communication strategies, one for each of the Amazon countries | |
| | Brazil | Completed |
| | Colombia | Completed |

| | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| | Ecuador | Completed |
| | Guyana | Completed |
| | Peru | Completed |
| | Suriname | Completed |
| | 2.2 One communication strategy for Central American countries (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama) | Completed |
| | 2.3 One communication strategy to support the response to artemisinin resistance in the Americas | Completed |
| Task 3. Develop and disseminate messages and communication materials. | 3.1 - Messages and materials for special events or activities | Completed |
| | 3.1.a. Promotion of Malaria Day in the Americas via traditional and social media | Completed |
| | 3.1.b. Malaria Champions | Completed |
| | 3.1.c. World Malaria Day | Completed |
| | 3.1.d. World Health Day | Completed |
| | 3.1.e World Malaria Report release | Completed |
| | 3.2 - AMI website updates | Completed |
| | 3.3 - Electronic and printed alerts for promotion of AMI and its materials | Completed |
| | 3.4 - At least 4 technical documents disseminated through the AMI Website, electronic alerts, AMI e-newsletter, media, etc. | Completed |
| | 3.5 - 3 quarterly bulletins distributed on website and electronic mailing list | |
| | Q1 - FY 14 | Completed |
| | Q2 - FY 14 | Completed |
| | Q3 - FY 14 | Completed |
| | Q4 - FY 14 | Completed |
| | Q1 - FY 15 | Completed |
| | Q2 - FY 15 | Completed |
| | Q3 - FY 15 | Completed |
| | Q4 - FY 15 | Completed |
| | Q1 - FY 16 | Completed |
| | Q2 - FY 16 | Completed |
| | 3.6 – Up to 4 press releases in three languages for media placement and coverage of published technical documents related to AMI’s activities and achievements targeted to partners, stakeholders, and policymakers | |
| | 3.6.a AMI/RAVREDA Meeting | Completed |
| | 3.6.b Malaria Challenge Debate | Completed |
| | 3.6.c Press release Indigenous People Day 2014 | Completed |
| | 3.6.d New release up-coming AMI/RAVREDA Meeting | Completed |

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| | 3.6.e Malaria Day in the Americas 2014 | Completed |
| | 3.6.f USP/PQM Regional Workshop in Lima, Peru | Completed |
| | 3.6.g World Malaria Day 2015 | Completed |
| | 3.6.h Results molecular analysis of Tumbes, Peru outbreak | Completed |
| | 3.6.i Results of Histidine-Rich Protein 2 (HRP2) study | Completed |
| | 3.6.j Malaria Day in the Americas 2015 | Completed |
| | 3.6.k Pitching on the attainment of MDG #6 for Malaria Day in the Americas | Completed |
| | 3.6.l News release on Indigenous People Day 2016 | Completed |
| | 3.6.m World Malaria Day 2016 | Completed |
| | 3.6.n Release of World Malaria Report 2015 | Completed |
| | 3.6.o Malaria Champions of the Americas 2016 | Completed |
| | 3.7 - Success Story: Peru CNCC 3 Level Approach | Completed |
| | 3.8 - Case Study: Brazil Private Sector Involvement for Malaria Control | Completed |
| | 3.9 Updated AMI Brochure | Completed |
| | 3.10 Reading List on Elimination | Completed |
| | 3.11 – New fact sheet: | |
| | 3.11.a - Malaria Elimination FAQs | Completed |
| | 3.11.b – Six (6) technical fact sheets on malaria in low-incidence settings | Completed |
| | 3.12 – Updated fact sheet: | |
| | 3.12.a - Overview of the Initiative | Completed |
| | 3.12.b - Antimalarial Medicine Resistance | Completed |
| | 3.12.c – Peru's Intermittent Rice Irrigation Story | Completed |
| | 3.13 - Portfolio of AMI products | Completed |
| | 3.14 – Participation in and/or assistance with planning of: | Completed |
| | 3.14.a. – Scientific conferences & lectures | Completed |
| | 3.14.b. – International partners' meeting | Completed |
| | 3.15 – Initiative-wide annual report | Completed |
| Task 4. Provide technical Assistance (TA) for partners in the design and implementation of dissemination/communication strategies. | 4.1 - TA activities conducted with partners | Completed |
| | 4.2 - TA activities conducted with countries | Completed |
| | 4.2.a Assessment of communication and advocacy needs - AMI countries | Completed |
| | 4.2.b Assist the development of research protocol for indigenous population in Panama | Completed |
| | 4.2.c Support Brazil MOH with content for their website | Completed |
| | 4.2.d Provide assistance for drafting Colombia Policy Paper | Completed |

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| | 4.2.e Provide TA at Guatemala workshop on the National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination | Completed |
| | 4.2.f Contribute to communication component of technical meeting in Loreto, Peru | Completed |
| | 4.2.g Provide documentation of success stories and lessons learned to Brazil NMCP to inform development of social mobilization strategy | Completed |
| | 4.2.h Participate in technical meeting on artemisinin resistance in South America help in Suriname, advise on SBCC and policy-level approaches | Completed |
| | 4.2.i Explore US Peace Corps collaboration on Guyana communication strategy implementation | Completed |
| | 4.2.j - Communication TA to Brazil NMCP regarding the itinerant mining population, including participation in a Workshop on Education and Social Participation for Malaria Surveillance and Control in Brasilia | Completed |
| | 4.2.k Guyana MOH assistance for billboard | Completed |
| | 4.2.l - Develop Pocket Guide on RDT Use and Storage for non-health professional in Guyana | Completed |
| | 4.2.m - Develop Learning Verification Tool for the field validation of the Pocket Guide in Guyana | Completed |
| | 4.2.n – Terms of reference for a malaria communication specialist in Peru in charge of developing a communication channel to support stakeholders coordination for malaria control in Loreto | Completed |
| | 4.2.o – RDT, Thick Blood and Smear Manual for health professionals in Peru | Completed |
| | 4.2.p - Thick Blood and Smear Manual for health professionals in Peru | Completed |
| | 4.2.q – Provide TA for national-level malaria advocacy in Suriname | Completed |
| | 4.2.r – Webinar on best practices for working with indigenous populations (for NMCPs in 11 AMI countries) | Completed |
| | 4.3 – Reports on TA provided to AMI partners | Completed |
| Task 5. Support the development, revision, and copyediting of partner publications and provide graphics services. | 5.1 - Translation of at least 2 new technical publications into 2 additional languages | |
| | 5.1.a Antimalarial Medicine Resistance Fact Sheet | |
| | 5.1.b Update AMI Brochure | |
| | 5.1.c Translation of 6 Fact Sheets on Malaria in Low-Incidence Settings | Completed |
| | 5.1.d Translation of success story: Peru CNCC 3 Level Approach | Completed |
| | 5.1.e Translation of Brazil success story on private sector involvement in malaria control | Completed |
| | 5.2 - Editorial support and graphic design for translations of 6 Strategic Orientation Documents (3 in English, 3 in Portuguese, plus minor changes to 1 Spanish document) | Completed |

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| | 5.3. - Graphic design for Pocket Guide on RDT Use and Storage for non-health professional in Guyana | Completed |
| | 5.4. - Graphic design for BCC Billboard in Guyana | Completed |
| | 5.5. – Graphic design for RDT, Thick Blood and Smear Manual for health professionals in Peru | Completed |
| | 5.6. - Graphic design for Thick Blood and Smear Manual for health professionals in Peru | Completed |
| | 5.7. - Design support for 5 Guatemala MOH materials on malaria diagnosis and pharmaceutical management | Completed |

V. Challenges, Needs and Opportunities

Links Media encountered external challenges, impacting the level of host country commitment to develop and implement communication and information dissemination activities for malaria. Low prioritization of malaria as a result of competing priorities due to emerging diseases (Chikungunya and Zika) and epidemics of well-established diseases like Dengue shifted the attention and resources away from malaria. Moreover, limited resources dedicated to communication as a line of work of its own, threaten the progress made. Political transitions faced by many of these countries have resulted in constant turnover of health staff and a loss of capacity to carry out work plan activities and deliverables. For example, NMCPs lacking a specific liaison for communication presented a challenge for the strategy development process and the time needed to share the recommendations of the strategy with key stakeholders. Despite these circumstances, Links Media was able to successfully coordinate communication activities with AMI-supported countries focusing on the scope of work and remaining consistent in communicating the purpose and goals of AMI’s communication component.

Enhanced communication and work plan monitoring allowed Links Media to ensure the delivery of materials. Nowadays, NMCPs in AMI-supported countries recognize the value of communication for malaria control. As a consequence, Links Media received requests from AMI-supported countries to implement more TA than the USAID contract allowed, such as by guiding BCC interventions with affected populations. Links Media’s solution was to communicate clearly and consistently about the limitations of the scope of work in order to manage countries’ expectations of communication TA. Nonetheless, malaria-endemic countries require additional support to understand how to use the communication strategies that were developed with USAID/Peru assistance. This support should include components such as health communication capacity building to design, implement, and evaluate BCC and other health promotion interventions. Communication, information dissemination, and advocacy have in recent years been treated as cross-cutting themes in malaria work. However, having a specific line item for communication in the AMI intervention framework would benefit countries by underscoring its importance and allowing communication interventions to play a greater in malaria efforts at the country level.

VI. Best Practices to be Expanded or Replicated

Links Media approached the dissemination of information as a formal, planned process with the intent of spreading AMI-generated knowledge and its associated proven interventions to further the adoption and integration of the evidence, information, interventions, or combinations of these into routine practice. For Links Media, the purpose of disseminating information about AMI is to establish the presence of the initiative to a wide variety of audiences across many settings, increase awareness of AMI's activities, and enhance recognition of AMI's messages. The key goal was to make AMI a point of reference, and a credible source of information about malaria control in the region. Decision makers and other key stakeholders should view AMI as a reference for reliable data, and proven and effective approaches that can be translated into sound legislative and budgetary policy actions.

Collaboration among AMI partners and stakeholders at regional, national and sub-national levels was enhanced through Links Media's systematic approach. The design and implementation of communication strategies were based on a comprehensive need assessment conducted in close coordination with NMCP staff in six Amazon countries and the bloc of Central American countries. The results of the assessments were analyzed and used to develop seven regional and country-level communication strategies. Moreover, the iterative and systematic approach used to develop communication strategies resulted in the identification of key focus areas and recommended communication tactics that NMCPs could use to further their goals. Outlining country and region specific malaria control priorities and advocacy needs highlighted the need for communication and advocacy tools that could be used to implement the strategy.

The design of communication materials such as fact sheets, success stories, guides and manuals required significant coordination and collaboration with NMCP staff. In order to align instructional materials with audience information needs, Links Media developed learner verification tools to be used by NMCPs in the validation of guides/manuals. These tools assess the effectiveness and cultural appropriateness of technical documents targeting health professionals and non-health professionals, allowing technical parties to validate the effectiveness of materials prior to widespread deployment. Moreover, Links Media used well-established social media networks to distribute news and information to precise audiences in a systematic fashion. In this way, Links Media used the constant stream of news and information flows associated to social media to shape the public's perception about important issues.

Links Media is confident that countries are gradually improving their communication abilities to promote good malaria prevention, control, and elimination practices based on the scientific evidence. In addition, scientists in the region have improved the accessibility of new research findings for use by program managers and other decision-makers. Links Media has contributed to bridging the gap between scientists and program managers, as well as contributed to bringing countries closer to meeting their control and elimination objectives through the TA provided.

VII. Future Directions

Despite significant reductions in malaria morbidity and mortality in the region of the Americas, malaria continues to pose a serious public health challenge to the region. As collaborative regional efforts to prevent, control and eliminate malaria in the Amazon basin and Central America advance, the inclusion of communication activities in NMCP's annual work plans will be paramount. Given the advancements in information and communication technologies, messages are constantly competing for attention and audiences; thus, communication and advocacy efforts are required to become increasingly strategic in managing and promoting information. The implementation of evidence-based approaches to communication work in the region will help to address this and other emerging challenges.

In order to avoid reversing the gains of the last ten years, the region will need to design and implement a regional advocacy strategy for promoting regional collaboration and sustainable public health and policy actions for malaria. Country partners and allies will need to continue supporting efforts by building critical mass to influence policy-makers and other stakeholders to ensure that laws, policies, budgets, and health services for malaria meet the populations' needs. In the last ten years, AMI has managed to strengthen a regional community of practice by creating and sharing evidence-based information and interventions. For the future, the region will need to sustain such efforts through increasing awareness, knowledge, and comprehensive approaches of malaria control, including advocacy support to interested partners for their further engagement. Furthermore, capacity building will need to be incorporated to the technical interventions in order to sustain the progress made and carry out malaria prevention and control efforts for years to come.

Fact-Based Advocacy Strategies

Advocacy is a communication activity used to champion or promote public support for a particular cause or policy. Advocacy aims to create the social or political pressure required to attract resources to an issue and shape the policy agenda. This approach can be used to target norms and attitudes at every level of society in both malaria-endemic and donor countries; thus, future directions should consider key decision makers who possess the power to sustain or curtail regional malaria efforts as the primary audience for advocacy activities. Fact-based advocacy focuses on education to increase the knowledge and awareness of decision makers to support malaria control activities. Incorporating the relevant data and proven approaches that NMCPs, country, and technical partners have generated enhances the region's ability to strengthen their global base of support not only in participating countries, but also with foreign cooperation agencies and the international private sector. Consider the following to ensure effective advocacy efforts:

- A. Increase collaboration between the private sector, country and technical partners as well as raise awareness of the region's success and efforts thus far by sponsoring an international competition for best practices in malaria control, open to for-profit companies and NGOs.

- B. Improve name recognition of regional malaria efforts, initiatives, and organizations by increasing regional and international media coverage of achievements, and increasing the amount of useful and engaging multi-media content shared via virtual platforms and social media sites.
- C. Raise awareness of regional collaborative efforts among elected officials by inviting legislative health committee chairs and their staff to attend international activities held to commemorate Malaria Day in the Americas.
- D. Nominate an individual living in, or working with, communities affected by malaria in the Americas to the Communities Delegation of the Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM). The selected individual should participate in resource mobilization, act as a champion to ensure that funds disbursed meet the needs and demands of the region, and pressure non-endemic countries to increase their commitments to fighting malaria.
- E. Build a broader base of support for regional efforts by presenting achievements and distributing briefs at high level regional ministerial meetings focused on South-South cooperation.
- F. Draw decision maker's attention to the evidence base generated by the region for malaria control through the dissemination of scientific articles and technical reports produced by the region.
- G. Support international, regional and national-level groups involved in public health and relevant social activities, meetings and conferences to increase their awareness and knowledge of the region's efforts.
- H. Support evaluations of NGOs, cooperation agencies and other donors, and researchers and academic institutions. Such evaluations can provide useful information on how regional initiatives such as AMI, are contributing to the implementation of policy and legislation, the improvement of services and other advocacy issues. Best practices can be identified and used as examples to be adapted.
- I. Enhance alliances and coalitions of cooperation agencies and other donors, key decision-makers and public opinion leaders, and researchers and academic institutions. The power for advocacy increases when individuals and organizations engage with large alliances or coalitions. The benefit from alliances with other advocacy groups can be of great importance but they also involve some degrees of risks. It is pivotal to collaboratively identify shared goals, agreeing on joint strategies and implementing actions of mutual benefit.

VIII. Financials

Report on accrued expenditure will be submitted separately.

IX. Environmental Compliance

All activities under the contract fall within those covered by the categorical exclusion as per ETD LAC-IEE-11-60.