



RBM Partnership
Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (MERG)

Updated Terms of Reference
10 May, 2007

I. Background

In accordance with the Operating Framework of the RBM Partnership, the Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group has been established by the Board in May 2003 to advance the work programmes of the partners. The MERG is supported by the Secretariat to fulfill its terms of reference as noted below. The MERG will continue to focus on issues of monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the RBM Partnerships goals and objectives. It will not duplicate the responsibilities of WHO Expert Committees. Recommendations to the board arising from the MERG should be useful and adaptable to local situations (bearing in mind inter-country and within country differences in needs and context, and existing local mechanisms for securing such advice). The MERG is further guided by the overall commitment of the RBM partners to: (i) partnership and capacity building, (ii) harmonization, accountability and transparency in scaling-up actions; and (iii) bridging the gaps between technical and programmatic support needs at country level.

1 II. Purpose/Rationale

Over the past five years, the RBM partners with support from the Secretariat have worked towards developing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system to track progress towards the RBM stated goals. In the course of constructing this system, the Secretariat identified a need for an advisory body that could inform RBM on technical questions related to monitoring and evaluation (M&E). This body brings together a group of individuals who are well versed in the science of M&E as well as the programmatic needs and implications to advise on, and advocate for, improved M&E of the RBM Initiative. In July 2002, representatives of the various RBM Partner organizations met in Washington DC, to discuss M&E issues. This group endorsed the formation of a Monitoring and Evaluation Reference group and laid out the proposed terms of reference below.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (MERG) of the RBM Secretariat will continue to act as an advisory body for the RBM Partnership Board on all matters pertaining to M&E of the Secretariat's initiatives on the international, regional, and national levels. The MERG will provide technical advice on state-of-the-art approaches to M&E of malaria programs.

The technical focus of the MERG is on the global indicators to assure consistency and accuracy in national and regional reporting. The MERG will maintain communications with inter-country teams and WHO and UNICEF regional offices working on process monitoring and country-specific M&E issues but will not address these issues as part of its primary mandate.

III. Functions of the MERG

The MERG is an advisory body for the RBM Partnership Board. It does not have authority to implement M&E activities on behalf of RBM, nor is it accountable for reporting to the Secretariat on national or regional progress in malaria control. Instead, the M&E work will be implemented by National Malaria Control Programmes with support from the RBM inter-country teams and RBM partners.

The activities of the MERG will include, but not be limited to, advising WHO on the following functions:

- Developing and providing technical guidance on selection and definition of indicators for national, inter-country and global reporting
- Advising on prioritization of tasks and recommendations for outputs or products from working groups
- Providing technical guidance on appropriate data collection methods, analytic strategies, and dissemination of recommendations
- Identifying critical technical questions arising from M&E activities and organizing smaller working groups to address the questions and provide technical feedback on issues
- Identifying and prioritizing critical action steps for country, regional and global M&E work to assure that action is taken by the relevant group(s) to achieve quality M&E in a timely fashion
- Identifying and recommending strategies for addressing the needs for capacity building in M&E at all levels
- Developing and maintaining consensus around M&E strategies across partners and institutions
- Keeping RBM informed of developments within other institutions and initiatives, such as the Health Metrics Network, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, the US President's Malaria Initiative, the World Bank Malaria Booster Programme, and similar initiatives that have relevance for RBM
- Monitoring changing needs for M&E as country programs, and the RBM Initiative itself, develop further
- Supporting coordination/harmonization of M&E activities (data collection, analysis, dissemination) among the RBM working groups and partners
- Informally advocating for increased attention to and resources for monitoring and evaluation activities within the RBM Secretariat and the members' home institutions
- Other activities pertinent to M&E as requested by the RBM Secretariat

IV. Membership

The membership of the MERG will be drawn from a variety of institutions and will represent a broad range of disciplines necessary for informing the M&E process. Depending on the objectives of a particular meeting or subject matter to be discussed, an outside consultant or expert may be invited. The RBM Secretariat will invite the members. The following are suggested criteria as guidance for the selection of individuals:

- expertise and experience in M&E
- knowledge of malaria and malaria-related issues
- balance of scientific and programmatic knowledge and experience
- geographic representation (especially Africa)
- commitment to participate actively in the MERG
- balance of relevant disciplines (e.g. evaluation, public health, medicine, epidemiology/biostatistics, social sciences, economics, programme management, etc.)

All members should have a familiarity with M&E frameworks and issues and should be responsible for M&E activities within their organizations. MERG members will include a variety of partner organizations and individuals including but not limited to the following:

- WHO (WHO, AFRO, EIP)
- UNICEF (headquarters and regional offices)
- World Bank

- Global Fund
- National Malaria Control Programs/Ministries of Health/National Statistical Offices (or similar statistical or analytical divisions within national governments)
- Key bilateral donors for M&E (e.g., USAID, DFID)
- RBM inter-country, inter-agency teams
- Research organizations, academic institutions and programme support or implementation organizations with expertise in the area of malaria M&E (e.g., CDC, Measure-DHS, INDEPTH Network of demographic surveillance sites, Universities or Schools of Public Health, Non-Governmental Organizations, etc.)

2 V. Structure/Working Procedures

The MERG will be comprised of 15-20 members. Other experts in specific fields will be invited to participate in general MERG meetings and task forces, depending on the agenda and the focus of activities being conducted on behalf of RBM partners. The Chair and Co-chair will be elected by RBM-MERG members for a two-year renewable period. The MERG will meet approximately 2-3 times per year as organized by RBM. Dates and locations will be determined by the Chair in coordination with members. Occasionally, smaller task forces of the MERG may meet on an ad-hoc basis to address specific issues as assigned by the larger body. RBM partner(s) will fund one of the implementing agencies to serve as Secretariat for the MERG under the guidance of the RBM Secretariat (currently USAID provides this support to ORC-MACRO Measure Evaluation to serve in this role. The MERG Secretariat will take responsibility for keeping minutes of the meetings and preparing a report for distribution to the membership. It will also work with the RBM Secretariat to serve as the coordinators of the MERG, in particular with regards to the arrangements for meetings, invitations, and logistical support. It may also undertake other support functions as necessary, such as coordinating online information or discussions.