

## RBM Partnership Advocacy for Malaria

### **Background**

Advocacy—a strategic process designed to produce positive change in the political, social, economic and/or cultural policies that affect people's lives—has been central to the Roll Back Malaria Partnership (RBM) since its founding by the WHO, the World Bank, UNICEF and the UNDP in the latter part of 1998.

From the outset, RBM was mandated to: “seek greater support for malaria control activities worldwide, raise awareness of the global problem of malaria, and support malaria-affected countries to develop effective programmes”, and has achieved measurable advocacy successes including:

**Greater global political and financial commitment**—e.g. Abuja Summit, Africa Malaria Day, inclusion of malaria in Global Fund, declaration of UN Decade to Roll Back Malaria (2001-2010), increased funds for malaria (about \$400 million in 2004), repealing of taxes and tariffs on malaria commodities;

**More effective country action**—RBM “branding” has driven better cooperation at country level leading to successful Global Fund proposals and solid adoption of RBM strategies;

**Greater global attention**—through focus on malaria in print and broadcast media (scientific journals, mainstream press, radio, TV films).

However, in light of competing global health issues and increasing demands on global resources, the RBM Partnership must continue to engage purposefully in global advocacy to ensure that malaria remains high on the international agenda.

Partnership messages must continually be reinforced and refreshed to ensure increased, sustainable political commitment and financial support as well as an enabling environment for malaria control and research, and partners must coordinate their advocacy efforts for maximum credibility and impact.

To this end, RBM partners met in Washington, DC from September 1-3 2004 to begin to frame a comprehensive strategy to guide their actions as they intensify their global advocacy efforts. This document is a short summary of agreements reached; meeting minutes are being compiled and a sub-committee is currently drafting a detailed strategy and workplan for consultation with a broad range of partners and, ultimately, approval by the RBM Partnership Board.

## Goals

### Overarching goal and challenges

The overarching goal of the RBM global advocacy strategy is to support the vision of the RBM Partnership, i.e. that by 2015:

- Malaria is no longer a leading cause of mortality in Africa, and ceases to be a major public health problem in Asia and Latin America. Gains are maintained by continued investment and strong surveillance. Millennium Goals are achieved.
- Effective malaria control interventions reach the poor, and are fully incorporated into health and development policies, strategies and programmes.
- Communities' awareness and demand for appropriate malaria control is high, and drives access to high quality goods and services to all vulnerable populations.
- Public, private and civil society partners have learnt to work together to achieve and maintain high coverage of effective prevention and treatment.
- Research ensures effective tools and delivery systems are always available.

In order to achieve this goal, it is essential that RBM partners speak in unison on key malaria issues for maximum impact, supporting Partnership objectives as well as their own individual agendas and promoting the RBM brand. Only a strong and unified RBM Partnership benefiting from buy-in and support from all partners will be able to overcome the considerable challenges facing the malaria advocacy effort, including:

- **Fragmented messages on malaria:** Currently, divergent messaging is confusing for multiple audiences and splinters the impact of individual efforts.
- **Malaria doesn't directly "touch" the north,** making malaria less immediately compelling to northern audiences already being reached by strong messages on HIV/AIDS and other diseases such as TB and cancer
- **Weak RBM Partnership identity:** There is an apparent lack of enthusiasm among partners for the current RBM branding, resulting in a reduced profile for the Partnership as a whole.
- **Limited advocacy and communication capacity at country level** hampers ability to promote country-level successes globally
- **Insufficient financial and human resources**

### Advocacy goals

Specific Partnership advocacy goals fall into two broad areas:

**Resource mobilization**, i.e. securing sufficient ongoing resources for scaling up effective, evidence-based malaria prevention and treatment, for research & development of new drugs & vaccines and other new tools, and for malaria advocacy, and

**Policy Environment**, i.e. promoting a positive policy environment for increasing access to essential malaria prevention and treatment commodities.

Specific sub-objectives for each area were identified by partners as:

### **Resource mobilization**

- Increase financial resources for implementation from existing donors
- Secure financial resources for implementation from new donors
- Increase financial resources allocated by endemic countries to malaria-control programmes
- Increase priority given to malaria within RBM partners' programmes, budgets, human resourcing
- Secure financial resources from new and existing for research & development of new drugs, vaccines and other tools
- Increase industry involvement in malaria research & development

### **Policy environment**

- Promote adoption of/support for effective drug policy at national level
- Promote timely approval and registration of new drugs
- Promote crackdown on production/distribution of counterfeit drugs
- Encourage increased accessibility of ITNs (through removal of taxes&tariffs, increased production, targeted subsidies, etc.)
- Promote adoption of policies to prevent malaria in pregnancy (IPT, ITNs)
- Promote integration of malaria control into all health and development policies and strategies
- Increase transparency of malaria spending by stakeholders
- Promote consistent malaria reporting to track spending and outcomes

## **Building the Strategy**

### Targeting

For each sub-objective identified above, participants at the Washington meeting identified primary target audiences for direct advocacy and “change agents” who can be enlisted to amplify the effect of the direct advocacy, as well as key messages and delivery channels for each. These will be translated into a detailed strategy and action plan by the sub-committee.

*Example: Increasing financial resources from traditional donors*

Target: Canada

Strategy:

- Influence key politicians in order to increase funding by direct lobbying and indirect measures such as media campaigns.
- Lobby staff in key departments (e.g. finance ministry, foreign office, development agency) to prioritise malaria as a key global health issue and poverty alleviation method.

| <b>Key actions: Increasing financial resources from Canada</b>                                      |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Target Audience</b>  | <b>Action</b>  |
| Backbenchers: Creating champions in Parliament  | Meetings   |
|   | Tours to endemic countries                                   |
| Opposition Members: Creating champions in Parliament  | Meetings   |
|   | Tours to endemic countries                                   |
| Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs and International Trade: to recommend malaria be prioritized | Have witnesses appear before Committee in support of malaria |
| Minister of International Cooperation   | Meeting  |
|   | Media:<br>Letters to the Editor, Editorials                  |
|   | Letter-writing campaign                                      |
| Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)  | Letter-writing campaign                                      |
|   | Meet with President of CIDA                                  |
|   | Meet with VPs and Directors                                  |
|   | Form alliances with Program Officers                         |
|   | Media:<br>Letters to the Editor, Editorials                  |
| Prime Minister's office   | Letter-writing campaign                                      |
|   | Media:<br>Letters to the Editor, Editorials                  |
|   | Meet with PMO Staff  |

### Messaging

Audience-specific messaging will be crucial for successful advocacy. Partners suggested the following goals for messaging:

- Define common, overarching messages for use by all
- Avoid divisive messages
- Develop stronger messages for country-level policy makers to counter complacency
- Develop messaging to help people *believe* that they can do something about malaria, both in endemic countries (self-protection, treatment) and donor countries
- Use numbers, facts, and success stories

Existing messaging for refinement/adoption by all partners includes:

- Malaria is alive and well and killing 3 000 African children every day
- Malaria kills a child every 30 seconds
- Malaria kills x million people per year
- No one needs to die from malaria: it is preventable, curable and controllable
- Malaria costs Africa US\$12 billion per year in lost GDP
- US\$1 invested in malaria control can yield a return of about US\$10-11 in economic gains
- Controlling malaria is essential for reaching the Millennium Development Goals
- Malaria keeps poor people poor
- Tackle malaria, tackle poverty
- Malaria kills Africa's hopes for the future
- Malaria deters development
- Together we can have a malaria-free world
- Roll Back Malaria — Roll in Development
- One child, one net, one life saved
- Control malaria and keep kids in the classroom

## Global Events/Opportunities

A detailed list of opportunities for malaria advocacy is being compiled, and includes:

Africa Malaria Day

G8 summits

Meetings of regional bodies (e.g. SADC, ECOWAS) and other blocs (e.g. Francophonie)

World Economic Forum meetings

World Bank IMF Annual and Spring Meetings

RBM Partnership Board Meetings

Millennium Development Goals meetings/summits

Major programme rollouts (e.g. Togo measles/ITNs, Dec. 2004)

Major report releases (e.g. World Malaria Report, Millennium Project report)

## **Next Steps**

- Finish drafting RBM Partnership advocacy strategy and workplan
- Circulate strategy and workplan to advocacy partners for feedback
- Submit strategy and workplan to RBM Partnership Board for endorsement
- Develop and submit proposals for funding to potential donors.