

COVID-19 Information Note: Considerations for Global Fund Support for Malaria

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic will have both direct and indirect impact on health as it tests the resilience of health systems around the world. The Global Fund's response to COVID-19 is guided by its mission to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria – as well as strengthen health systems – and its responsibility as a major actor in the broader health and development environment.

As COVID-19 begins to spread to countries with malaria, there are significant issues to consider. Malaria control and elimination activities must continue, with modifications where appropriate. This is vital to avoid an upsurge in malaria morbidity and mortality, as well as to avoid rising malaria cases being an additional stressor on health systems.

This document provides guidance on issues related to malaria grants in the context of COVID-19. We include an overview of partner-wide work to develop detailed technical and programmatic guidance in a timely manner. This document will be updated as additional guidance is developed and as the context of the COVID-19 pandemic evolves.

2. General guidance on COVID-19

- [WHO Country and Technical Guidance - Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Global Fund updates on COVID-19 response](#)

Development of guidance on the COVID-19/malaria response

The Global Fund Malaria Team has been working closely with partners to develop technical and programmatic guidance in a timely manner. WHO is leading coordination in the following areas:

- WHO Emergency Team has been supporting countries with preparation and early response
- WHO Global Malaria Program (GMP) has established 6 workstreams with international partners including country representatives:
 1. Product development
 2. Surveillance and clinical epidemiology
 3. Supply
 4. The malaria response
 5. Communication
 6. Coordination

Partner organizations are developing specific guidance documents with the intent that these will be applicable across partners. Once available, the Malaria Team will ensure swift dissemination and support the country teams and malaria programs to operationalize.

- Guidance for LLIN campaign operations
- Guidance on case management, IRS, ITN and SMC delivery
- Guidance on community mobilizers
- Guidance on iCCM

3. Guidance for Country Teams on COVID-19 and malaria

Case management

- As a critical priority, work to ensure that malaria diagnostic and treatment services continue to be provided, with adaptations to modality of delivery (community, public or private sector) as appropriate to the changing capacity of the health system and local recommendations for social distancing. There may be associated cost implications.
- Verify stocks of ACTs, RDTs and drugs for severe malaria. There may be a need for additional RDTs (and potentially ACTs) due to increases in febrile patients seeking care or if malaria specific interventions are recommended (such as MDA to reduce the burden of malaria transmission).
- Consider whether support for quality improvement of service delivery (e.g. training, supervision) will be impacted by social distancing requirements. Modifications or postponement may be appropriate.
- Note: As yet, there is no indication that malaria patients have increased risk of COVID-19 complications.

Prevention

LLIN, IRS and SMC campaigns

- Operational guidance released for either LLIN, IRS or SMC campaigns may have aspects that are relevant across the three types (given similarities in some upstream or macro/micro level activity types). Country teams should consider drawing on these documents as they emerge.
- For countries with LLIN campaigns in Q4 2020 or Q1 2021, review timelines provided by the Supply Operations Team to plan for timely delivery as far as possible (see below [Cross-cutting considerations](#)).
- For countries with LLIN campaigns in Q1-Q3 2020, collate information on timelines—from ‘upstream’ planning to registration and distribution. This will allow for timely discussions as the context evolves.
- Keep up-to-date with local restrictions and consider how they could impact campaigns.
- Discuss contingency plans with country partners—for delivery modification or in case of supply delay.
- If a country government decides to postpone, suspend or cancel a campaign, please contact the Malaria Team to discuss. There is no established threshold on whether or not to move forward with campaigns. Currently we strongly advise that modifications be made so that campaigns can continue, if at all possible.

LLIN continuous distribution

- Review stocks for ANC and EPI distribution and be ready to order a resupply early given supply chain delays (see below [Cross-cutting considerations](#)). Place orders for resupply as soon as possible.
- If local guidance on net distribution through health facilities changes—e.g. using health facilities as a higher volume distribution channel than normal or supplying LLINs to people testing positive for COVID-19 to support self-isolation—then consider the need for additional stocks.

IPTp

- No specific changes recommended. Regardless of whether pregnant women are determined to be at increased risk for complications from COVID-19 infection, malaria in pregnancy services remain critical.

Communication

- Discuss with PRs whether additional resources are required to adapt messaging on malaria.
- Particular focus will be needed on the balance between social distancing and the importance of seeking care if febrile or with other symptoms.

Surveillance, monitoring and evaluation

- Partner technical guidance on this issue will be circulated as it becomes available, but studies and community-based surveys could potentially be deprioritized.
- We recommend supporting capacity for surveillance, epidemics detection and response, particularly at district and service delivery levels, including exploring the use of simple mobile reporting apps.

Cross-cutting practical considerations

- **Commodities:** Supply Operations are leading efforts to coordinate supply with partners. For latest updates on procurement and supply chain use this link: <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/covid-19/health-product-supply/>
- **Financing:** There may be cost implications to changes or delays in distribution plans. The Malaria Team is working with partners to estimate cost burden of additional requirements, building on experience of distribution in Ebola affected areas. The Secretariat has potential additional funding options (for example, portfolio optimization) that could support additional needs.
- **Funding requests:** The RBM-led mock TRP for Window 2 has been cancelled and all international consultants returned home. Distance support is available and RBM is still able to provide \$10,000 per country to support the in-country process, including a local consultant. RBM is working on a system for virtual mock TRPs.