



# Module 5: Community Engagement

## Introduction

The support and participation of the people most affected by malaria is the key to a successful programme. Whether the disease is common or rare in an area, these communities have the most to gain from elimination, through better health for themselves and their families, reduced household income losses due to health conditions, and better-performing schools, clinics, and hospitals. When prevention tools are available and treatment services are accessible, the final step to ensuring their effectiveness is empowering people with adequate information about their use.

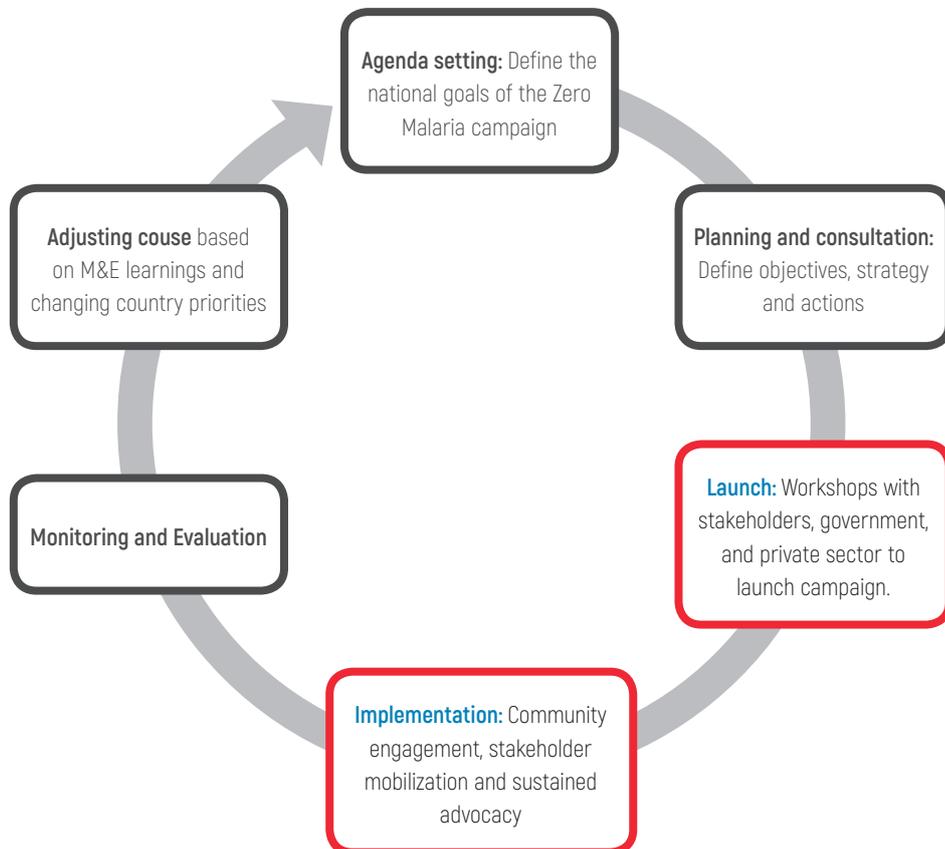
This module, along with [Module 3: Political engagement](#) and [Module 4: Private sector engagement](#) will help you navigate the "launch" and "implementation" stages of your campaign in the figure below. These stages will vary the most among

countries depending on what you hope to achieve, who you need to engage with, and what approach is best for your specific context. There is no one-size-fits all solution for eliminating malaria, so feel free to use these tools as they suit you and adapt them however you see fit.

Section 1 will describe why community engagement matters for malaria programmes and how it can improve their effectiveness through increasing the uptake of interventions and creating grassroot champions, advocating within local political structures for the services they need.

Section 2 provides links to tools and guides for community engagement that cover its theoretical backing, planning specifics, monitoring and evaluation criteria, and a description of models used in other countries that may be appropriate for your campaign.

**Figure 9: Launch and implementation of engagement approaches in the Zero Malaria project cycle.**



If you haven't done so already, consider taking a look at the tools for Agenda Setting and Planning in previous modules before getting started. These tools can help you choose the right strategy for your campaign, saving you time and effort in the long run.

- [Module 1: Agenda Setting](#)
- [Module 2: Planning and Consultation](#)

### Learning objectives

By the end of this module, you will:

- Understand why community support is essential for success against malaria
- Understand common community engagement approaches
- Know how to plan an appropriate community engagement project

## Section 1: Community engagement for Zero Malaria

Malaria elimination programmes are highly affected by social and behavioural factors, based on traditional beliefs and social norms, that may impact certain community groups' access to prevention and treatment services. Many of the tools used to fight malaria today depend on community acceptance, active participation, and ownership of interventions to achieve lasting results. In addition to making programmes more effective, communities that are aware and concerned about malaria can help political and private sector actors make more equitable decisions and gain visibility of local issues affecting the disease. Despite a growing body of evidence for the power of community engagement (see table below), these strategies remain underused in many countries.

### Evidence for community engagement

#### Malaria SBCC Evidence Database<sup>6</sup>

Available at: <https://healthcommcapacity.org/malaria-evidence-database/>

This website features an evidence database with literature reviews and studies that describe the impact of various social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) programmes.

A national campaign advocating for zero malaria can make a substantial difference through promoting community engagement strategies that are well-suited for your country's unique context. Political leaders and interested members of the private sector may need evidence and programme design support to launch engagement programmes. The communities affected by malaria may need better policies and more funding. By working with each group, the campaign can act as a bridge between communities, political decision-makers, and the private sector, building relationships and solving information gaps to achieve national elimination goals.

Community participation can vary along a gradient, from passive compliance to local ownership of interventions.<sup>7</sup> The success of individual interventions requires at least some measure of community engagement, with some types of activities requiring more involvement than others. For instance, while indoor residual spraying requires residents to accept that their house be sprayed once a year, asking a community to sleep under bed nets requires them to change daily behaviours and sleeping habits. Some interventions simply perform better when the community is involved. Environmental management, or the elimination of mosquito breeding sites, is often managed from a top-down perspective. Experts arrive in an area they do not know well, identify the breeding sites they can find, treat them, and leave. When the community participates and owns the

LOW ←		Community support		→ HIGH
Community rejection	Passive acceptance	Community participation	Community ownership	
Communities do not allow interventions to take place in their area, making elimination impossible.	Communities accept interventions that require little or no effort (allowing environmental management, allowing a health post to be established, etc.)	Communities make an effort to support interventions (participate in test and treat campaigns, use long-lasting insecticidal nets [LLINs] etc.)	Communities engage in finding solutions, becoming partners for elimination (community-driven vector control, local advocacy for services, identification of barriers for accessing services).	

Adapted from Whittaker and Smith (2015).

<sup>6</sup> Malaria SBCC Evidence Database. Retrieved May 15, 2018, from <https://healthcommcapacity.org/malaria-evidence-database/>

<sup>7</sup> Whittaker and Smith. *Reimagining malaria: five reasons to strengthen community engagement in the lead up to malaria elimination*. Malar J (2015) 14:410 DOI 10.1186/s12936-015-0931-9



effort, they are better suited to find where the mosquitos that bite them regularly come from and ensure that the site is managed sustainably, so that the problem does not simply re-emerge the next time rain water collects in a location.

Certain situations specific to malaria elimination programmes require a strong investment in community engagement. If malaria becomes scarce, it becomes less of a perceived risk to many individuals, who may abandon preventive measures. This is a crucial moment for an elimination programme—as the finish is near but progress can still be reversed. Community approaches are especially critical to ensuring uptake and treatment access for marginalized groups who, due to their gender, religion, income, ethnicity, age, or location of their households may be less likely to access and adhere to quality malaria services.

Issues of stigma, language, gender, age, legal status and physical barriers can exacerbate the way that some populations access services to prevent or treat malaria. Migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and forest workers, for example, are populations with increased exposure to malaria that are frequently excluded from health services. Pregnant women, particularly adolescent girls, are often at particular risk of harmful consequences from the disease. However, gender norms, reduced decision-making ability within the household, and discrimination can make it more difficult for these women to receive the care they require. Identifying and addressing these barriers requires comprehensive community consultation and participation in the malaria fight

The community engagement strategy you choose will depend on the problems you need to address and the mechanisms you are able to use to address them. Common approaches to community engagement include:

**Social and behaviour change communication (SBCC):** SBCC approaches seek to share knowledge and help communities change certain practices to achieve better health outcomes. These approaches can use a variety of communication channels, from inter-personal to mass media, to reach their target audience, and can help increase awareness about malaria and improve participation.

**Community health workers:** In rural areas where access is difficult, many countries have found it useful to train community members to perform basic health tasks, such as diagnosing malaria, diarrhoea, and other conditions.

**Community surveillance and information-sharing:** The people who know the most about community health issues are often the people living in the communities

themselves. Volunteer networks have been mobilized to manage integrated vector control programmes on the ground to identify mosquito breeding sites and ensure that the local population has access to preventive tools.

**Grassroots advocacy:** Top-down decision-making can unintentionally create inequities. Sometimes, decision-makers cannot be sure that their investments are serving the target populations needs. Through empowering community-based organizations and local associations with tools to strengthen their voice in local politics, they can provide balance and let political leaders know when they are not getting what they need.

A successful community engagement strategy can ensure decreases in malaria transmission are sustainable, reduce health inequities, and improve the performance of many interventions. Depending on what strategy is used, these approaches can have benefits that extend beyond health as well. Participants often gain skills and knowledge that can help them gain employment, grassroots advocacy approaches can make local government more responsive to community needs, and partnerships between community-based organizations, businesses, and the public institutions can increase intersectoral collaboration.

## Section 2: Community engagement tools

In this section, you will find guides and tools to launch and implement effective and appropriate community engagement activities. Many of these materials are based on the work of the RBM Partnership to End Malaria SBCC working group and the Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign in Senegal. These tools can complement existing community engagement work or help your campaign design new approaches and should always be adapted to the unique cultural and social characteristics of the populations you intend to serve.

In general, try to develop activities that are both fun and educational. Communities want to be the actors of their own development, rather than spectators. Actions that they enjoy and that make them feel valued are more likely to succeed than top-down instructions.

**Planning for effective community engagement**  
[Module 1: Agenda Setting](#) and [Module 2: Planning and consultation](#) contain an assortment of advocacy project planning tools that are a useful starting point for gathering essential information about your country's malaria situation, identifying key stakeholders, and building a plan of action.

Designing a community engagement approach requires a few additional steps. These approaches seek to work with and mobilize groups of people who may have distinct beliefs, behaviours, and preferences that are not always obvious. Before beginning a new programme, it is essential to understand how your approach will be received by your target audience.

To support the achievement global malaria goals for 2030, the RBM Partnership to End Malaria SBCC working group developed the *Strategic Framework for Malaria Social and Behaviour Change Communication 2018–2030*, available at <https://www.rollbackmalaria.org/organizational-structure/working-groups/sbccwg/>

The Strategic Framework describes the potential roles of SBCC approaches for malaria and contains tools to carry out situation analyses and audience analyses, build communication and implementation plans, and design a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure success.

### Integrating community engagement into all interventions

Most malaria interventions can be made more effective by integrating community engagement or SBCC approaches. This can be a cost-effective way to begin community engagement, as it supports existing projects. Real community engagement requires community consultation to understand their needs. When beginning community engagement, it is essential to build in a consultative process with the population you hope to serve, discussing with

community leaders and groups representing different constituencies (e.g., women, forest workers, marginalized groups, etc.) how malaria interventions can be made more effective and better able to reach and positively impact everyone, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, religion, etc.

Here are a few examples of how your campaign can support other interventions:

### The Community Champions model

In Senegal, the National Malaria Control Programme and partners used the “Community Champions” programme to create community ownership of the malaria fight through education and local capacity building.

Senegal recognized in its plan to eliminate malaria that communities had an essential role to play. Malaria prevention tools had become widely available in affected areas, but people continued to get sick. It became clear that many people lacked the knowledge and skills needed to protect their families from the disease.

The Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign in Senegal found the answer in the village of Thiénaba. Thiénaba has not had a malaria-related death since 2009. Prior to this, malaria was wreaking havoc in the community.

In 1999, Ami Diop, a 12-year-old girl, passed away after a two-day sickness with fever. Ami’s father, El Hadj Diop,

Intervention	Community engagement opportunities
LLIN distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hire local musicians to turn the LLIN distribution into a public celebration.</li> <li>○ Use a local theatre group to demonstrate the purpose of LLINs and how to use them in a brief skit.</li> <li>○ Distribute visual aids and flyers with key messages about fighting malaria along with the LLINs so that people know how to use them.</li> </ul>
IRS campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Train the IRS operators on awareness raising techniques so that they can explain what IRS is for and why it is important.</li> <li>○ Broadcast a radio advertisement the week before the campaign to explain why they should agree to IRS.</li> <li>○ Have the IRS operators distribute flyers about other prevention techniques, malaria symptoms, and where to seek treatment.</li> </ul>
Drug-based strategies (Seasonal malaria chemoprevention (SMC), mass drug administration (MDA), etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Host a community event with religious leaders and local authorities to explain what the drug-based strategy is for and how to participate.</li> <li>○ Broadcast an interview with a health expert in the local language to answer questions about the approach.</li> <li>○ Train local champions to explain the campaign to neighbours</li> </ul>
Integrated Vector Management (IVM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Train a community-based organization on malaria prevention skills</li> <li>○ Recruit volunteers to eliminate mosquito breeding sites</li> <li>○ Provide awards (trophies, certificates), to communities that fight malaria effectively.</li> </ul>



was devastated by the loss of his daughter and decided to prevent other families from experiencing a loss from this preventable disease. El Hadj formed the *Association Islamique Sopey Mohamed* (AISM), which became the town's main source of education on stopping malaria. Twenty years later, persistence and communal responsibility have become a simple, yet innovative solution to Thiénaba's malaria challenges.<sup>8</sup>

Inspired by Thiénaba's example, the campaign brought together motivated individuals from communities with malaria, technical experts from the health system, and a private sector partner eager to support its customers in accessing lifesaving tools to create the Community Champions model.

The programme raises awareness about malaria symptoms, treatment, and prevention that would be led by locally recruited and trained "Community Champions." The Champions shared essential malaria information with their communities through neighbourhood events, household visits, and presentations at schools, making themselves available to answer questions and provide advice. The Champions also worked closely with local health structures, serving as a bridge between public services and the community, and organized "clean-up days" to destroy mosquito breeding sites.

If you are interested in more information about the approach used in Senegal, the following resources provide an in-depth look into how it was designed and managed and can be easily adapted to deploy a similar programme in your country.

### Special events for community engagement

An easy way for anti-malaria efforts to stay visible among political partners, private sector partners, and the community is to organize celebrations around key dates (see table below). Rather than host an event, an office or conference room, consider organizing it in a community to show your support for the population. A World Malaria Day celebration in a region that is leading the malaria fight can recognize success and remaining challenges, increase community motivation to participate in campaign projects, and share key messages with those in attendance.

### Community engagement through mass media

Mass communication, such as radio, television, billboards, and online campaigns, can be used to share malaria messages and increase the visibility of your campaign. Though these approaches have the potential to reach thousands, or even millions of people, the depth of engagement is relatively shallow and are unlikely to result in behaviour change unless complemented with other approaches.

Often, private sector companies are willing to support and co-brand mass media approaches, as they are highly visible and help them develop a positive brand image. Many large companies also have marketing departments and relationships with radio, TV, and online marketing producers. See [Module 4: Private sector engagement](#) for more details.

You will want your communication to be short, fun, memorable, and educational. Many styles are available depending on your budget and available production partners, including:

Resource title available at <a href="http://zeromalaria.africa/community-engagement">zeromalaria.africa/community-engagement</a>	Description
<b>Community champions brief</b>	Describes the programme, how it was developed, its objectives, and approach.
<b>Community champion training guide</b>	Manual used to train Community Champions
<b>Malaria picture book</b>	Pedagogical tool used by Community Champions to describe malaria symptoms, treatment, and prevention.
<b>Monitoring tools</b>	Templates used by Community Champions to report on their activities
<b>Zero Malaria certificate</b>	Certificate used by Community Champions to recognize households with exemplary malaria prevention practices in place as a motivational tool.

<sup>8</sup> Speak Up Africa. [2018, March 29]. How a Little Innovation and Determination Helped One Community in Senegal Reach Zero Malaria-related Deaths. Retrieved May 15, 2018, from <http://www.speakupafrika.org/blog/>

## Key dates for community malaria events

**International Women's Day (8 March):** Pregnant women are especially at risk from malaria, malaria interventions contribute to gender equality in health.

**World Health Day (7 April):** World Health Day is an occasion to show how your country is working to improve the health of all. Anti-malaria efforts are a major contributor to improvements among health, especially among children and pregnant women, so should be represented at any events to mark the day.

**World Malaria Day (25 April):** Every year, World Malaria Day is an opportunity to reaffirm country commitments to shared malaria goals. Many countries organize celebrations featuring speeches by political leaders and performances by musicians or theatre groups. This may also be an occasion to recognize local community champions.

**World Health Assembly (May, dates vary):** The annual World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva brings together leaders from around the world to discuss health issues and vote on World Health Organization business. The WHA is an opportunity for your country to share its work with donors, other countries, and governance institutions.

**International Children's Day (1 June):** Malaria accounts for one out of every four childhood deaths in Africa.

**International Poverty Eradication Day (17 October):** Malaria creates a cycle of poverty, elimination and eradication can create lasting economic gains.

**United Nations Human Rights Day:** Access to malaria prevention and treatment is a human right.

**National Malaria Control Programme (NMCP) anniversary:** If your country's NMCP has a major anniversary coming up, take the opportunity to organize a gathering of partners and participants.

**Jingle:** A short (30 second) song with a key malaria message

**Commercial / Public Service Announcement (PSA):** A short (15–30 second) video or radio segment with a key malaria message. See the [Nightwatch Programme](#), by Malaria No More in collaboration with Yossou N'Dour and others for an example.

**Drama:** Actors can portray common malaria-related situations in a short (30 seconds–5 minutes) or long (multi-episode series). For example: a character says that they have a fever and their friend advises them to get tested. See *The Champion of Bonaba* description below for an example.

**Interview and questions:** A malaria expert could be interviewed by a radio or TV host. Listeners or viewers could have the opportunity to call-in live and ask questions about malaria.

**Music video:** Local musicians or artists participating in the campaign could produce a song and music video about malaria to share over the radio, TV, and online. See the *Zero Malaria Anthem* description below for an example.

**Billboards:** Remind passing motorists to sleep under an LLIN or get tested for malaria using billboards.

**Mobile movie screenings:** Bring your message to the community by hosting a mobile movie screening in their area. By setting up a projector and playing a malaria-related movie, you can create an opportunity for dialogue with the community and answer their questions about the campaign.

### The Zero Malaria Anthem



The Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign in Senegal wanted to complement its community education efforts with a broader

messaging strategy to ensure that everyone had access to information about how to prevent, diagnose, and treat malaria. Working with musicians, rappers, video producers, and the Heartbeat Project, they launched the Zero Malaria Anthem online in 2015. The catchy, upbeat, and fun song uses local languages and features many recognizable and upcoming Senegalese artists



View the Zero Malaria Anthem on YouTube (French subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkHEFy6uNpY>

### The Champion of Bonaba



The Zero Malaria Campaign also worked with local television stations to produce The Champion of Bonaba, a soap opera about

a man seeking to end malaria in his village after tragically losing his wife to the disease. The episodes are recorded in Wolof, the most common language spoken in Senegal, and were distributed over the main television networks as well as online.

View The Champion of Bonaba on YouTube (in Wolof):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6MzrAiZrcc&t=101s>

### Community engagement resources

**Community Champion training guide:** Download training materials for community champions through the online toolkit: [zeromalaria.africa/community-engagement](http://zeromalaria.africa/community-engagement)

### Malaria Behaviour Change Communication (BCC)

**Indicator Reference Guide:** A support for evaluating the effectiveness of malaria BCC interventions and to measure

levels of behaviour change for malaria prevention and case management at the country level. Available through the online toolkit: <https://www.rollbackmalaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Malaria-BCC-Indicators-Reference-Guide.pdf>

**Malaria Picture Book:** Contains a visual guide for sharing malaria prevention and treatment messages with communities. Available from [www.zeromalaria.africa](http://www.zeromalaria.africa)

**Strategic Framework for Malaria Social and Behaviour Change Communication 2018–2030:** An RBM Partnership to End Malaria resource to support the design and implementation of SBCC activities. Available through the online toolkit: [www.zeromalaria.africa](http://www.zeromalaria.africa): <https://rollbackmalaria.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/RBM-SBCC-Framework-2018-2030-English.pdf> ].

**Supervision resources for community champions:** Tools for supervising and monitoring the work of community champions. Available from [www.zeromalaria.africa](http://www.zeromalaria.africa)

**Zero Malaria Certificate:** A certificate that Community Champions can present to households or local leaders demonstrating exemplary malaria prevention knowledge and use. Available from [www.zeromalaria.africa](http://www.zeromalaria.africa)