



COR-NTD 2020

Virtual Meeting, November 12 – 14

Integrating for Impact

Integrating NTDs with other public health programs: Malaria case study

Session Date: 11/13/20

Session Time: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM EST

Session Description: To achieve the sustainable development goals, WHO developed the 2030 NTD roadmap which heralds an era of greater NTD integration into the wider landscape, with increased emphasis on cross-sectoral collaboration. Malaria and NTDs are one area highlighted in the roadmap as able to benefit from more collaboration and integration.

This session explores options for integrating those programs, looking to identify the win-win opportunities. Designed with national program managers and implementing partners in mind, the session will open with a presentation on NTDs and malaria programs from the AFRO perspective, illustrated with country examples. The group will then be introduced to the two different break-out session topics.

The first topic is on developing a framework to guide integration. It maps out the different program interventions and delivery methods including drug distribution, vector control, surveillance, and WASH interventions delivered through community, PHC and laboratory platforms. Breakout groups will review the framework and discuss the potential to test its use.

The second topic is more programmatic, comparing tools available to program managers – from surveillance tools (e.g. to measure prevalence or identify hotspots) to tools designed to improve quality of drug delivery (e.g. to measure coverage or guide on how to treat the harder-to-reach such as urban dwellers). The group will review tools and propose malaria tools that could be adapted for use by NTD programs.

The session will end by coming back together and hearing from each group and their recommendations for next steps. The group will discuss how these two approaches overlap, where there may be synergies and opportunities, and how this approach could be more widely applied to other public health programs.

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Session Rapporteur: Emily Toubali



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KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

What key findings and data did the group identify via presentations? What issues were raised in discussions?

In global public health, different diseases or disease areas are unnaturally divided for the purposes of advocacy, funding, and ease of meeting well-defined, disease-specific targets. However, this disease-specific approach is counter to the health system approach to comprehensive patient care. Hence current efforts to try to weave them back together – where it makes sense. Policies like Universal Health Coverage, the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, and the 2030 NTD Roadmap, can provide opportunities for government leadership to push for greater integration, within and outside of the health sector.

This session had two related objectives: 1) to further shape a framework and process intended to guide integration between malaria and NTDs at the country level, and 2) to examine and identify available malaria tools that could be used to address NTD programmatic gaps. The session presented an approach used to facilitate discussion between malaria and NTD programs, which was piloted in the Tanzania and Liberia context during two pre-COR-NTD sessions. Further opportunity was given during the breakout session for participants to provide feedback on the framework and approach. The session also presented current NTD programmatic tool gaps as related to treatment, surveillance, and integration, and existing malaria tools that could potentially fill those gaps were explored with malaria colleagues.

There was an acknowledgement that while there have been conversations about integration opportunities for many years, operationalization is still in the very early stages. Some would use the word “resistance” to describe challenges faced in trying to integrate. However, in practice, the aspect of integration has been more a question of timing, coordination, and the need for the right stakeholders to sit at the same table and discuss the opportunities, challenges, and gaps.

There appeared to be consensus among session participants that integration is of interest to both malaria and NTDs – with win-win opportunities where both parties benefit – and that **now** is a good time to move this agenda forward. The tools and approaches further refined in this session provide a starting point towards implementation.

It is also important to reinforce that integration is not ‘one size fits all’ but can happen along a broad spectrum, and at different levels, adapted to each country and sub-country context. The importance of the development of country specific plans led by endemic countries was highlighted.



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Finally, acknowledging that we are in the midst of a COVID-19 global pandemic, it was noted that this situation may also foster integration opportunities within the health sector as access to different populations becomes more limited and drives the integration of community-based public health service delivery.

KNOWLEDGE GAPS IDENTIFIED

What data and tools need to be generated to address the issues raised by the group?

- For advocacy purposes, more examples are needed to show the gains of integration, particularly related to cost efficiencies and programmatic advantages.
 - There are examples and case studies of where integration has improved service delivery and coverage. Dissemination of these is needed to increase political will for integration and capacity on “how to integrate.” These should highlight programmatic gains and/or where more was done with less resources.
- Gaps in the NTD implementation tool kit were identified. For several of these, the malaria community has tools that could be adapted to suit NTD program needs.
 - How to best approach this “matchmaking” in a way that is useful and moves the needle forward is still not fully understood.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

What operational research and other actions need to be taken to address the knowledge gaps identified by the group?

- Modify the framework, presented (and further developed) during this session, designed to facilitate discussion between NTD and malaria programs:
 - Include approaches to foster deeper conversations by analysing areas of overlap and considering varying levels of endemicity, how approaches or interventions differ based on endemicity, etc.
 - Make the community perspective central to the conversation from the start.
 - Identify win-win opportunities for the donors.
 - Include ideas on how to instigate this process or incentivize countries to integrate.
- Identify countries, leaders, and champions that provide an opportunity to use the modified framework. These may include:
 - Countries in Africa that have adopted the [WHO 3rd edition of the Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response Technical Guidelines](#).
 - Countries have adopted the WHO Global Vector Control Response.
 - Where there is overlap with the President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI) and LF endemicity.



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- Modify the framework presented (and further developed) during this session, to further focus on additional NTD integration opportunities:
 - Lab capacity
 - Female genital schistosomiasis and HIV/AIDS/reproductive health
 - Universal healthcare essential packages
 - COVID-19
 - One Health
 - Vector Borne Diseases

- Further explore, adapt and pilot the following malaria tools that were recognized as high value for NTDs based on identified needs:
 - Treatment:
 - Supervision and social mobilization tools (including microplanning), especially those with a special focus on challenging issues, such as accurate population census, migrant populations, cross-border populations, conflict zones, and other populations who are systematically missed.
 - Supply chain monitoring of stocks and forecasting.
 - Surveillance:
 - Case-based surveillance in low burden settings (e.g., China, Thailand) to support post-validation surveillance.
 - Risk-based surveillance based on foci identification.
 - Integration:
 - Integration into HMIS and use of DHIS2 platforms.
 - NTD data collection through standing population-based epidemiological surveys (e.g., Demographic and Health Survey, Malaria Indicator Survey).
 - Successful cross-program/cross-government integration of malaria with other interventions (e.g., nutrition, deworming, treatment of sick children, and use of vouchers for insecticide treated nets).
 - Digital:
 - Geo-spatial data with risk variable overlays (e.g., elevation, enhanced vegetation index, annual rainfall, etc).
 - Software platforms such as the Reveal Platform (piloted by Akros) for more accurate/targeted application of indoor residual spraying / long lasting insect net distribution / MDAs.

- The opportunity to share malaria program entomological data on species density, insecticide resistance, and vector control intervention coverage and quality.



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Session references:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1OfOWeLlyoZRpwkMxyeeroO_zjy9HsEGS2CpQUervP8/viewer

<https://easyretro.io/publicboard/9ZNce1uMrcW5jELvsKZyxPmNrBa2/899e6352-a1dd-4ba9-b875-b31aa773e1d1>