

Executive Summary: Yumi Wok Bung, End Malaria Now

Background and Problem: With approximately 1.5 million cases annually affecting 164 per 1,000 people, malaria remains a significant public health issue in Papua New Guinea. PNG accounts for 90% of malaria cases in the WHO Western Pacific Region. Barriers such as historical decentralization, unstable funding, geographical heterogeneity, and climate change present challenges to achieving the country's vision of being malaria-free by 2030. The National Malaria Control Program has made commendable progress in distributing long-lasting insecticide-treated nets (LLINs) and conducting indoor residual spraying (IRS). However, effectiveness was limited by inconsistent training of community health workers, low community and leadership engagement, and inadequate detection and treatment strategies.

Strategic Objectives: Our NGO proposes a community-driven approach that leverages local knowledge and leadership to support and enhance existing surveillance, service delivery, and emergency response systems. The strategy is built on three key pillars.

1. **Prevention:** Address mosquito breeding sites through a participatory approach.
 - Engage community members in workshops on identifying and reporting breeding sites, incorporating local knowledge about climate change.
 - Mobilise select community members in routine monitoring of high-risk areas and data reporting to local health centers, through weekly red flag walks.
 - Coordinate with and expand existing Rapid Response Teams on updated integrated vector control management to eliminate breeding sites, especially after emergencies.
2. **Detection:** Increase symptom reporting through participatory health promotion.
 - Collaborate with farming cooperatives, teachers and community and religious leaders to co-create health promotion campaigns within these specific communities
3. **Treatment:** Ensure culturally responsive and tailored medical pluralism.
 - Consult traditional healers to facilitate collaboration of ideas and incorporate culturally sensitive and local practices in treatment initiatives.
 - Improve supportive supervision of CHWs by experienced health workers through recruitment and training programs to ensure service quality and continuous learning.

Site Implementation: West Sepik and East Sepik were selected for malaria control initiatives due to their high malaria burden evidenced by the highest realised rates of malaria, as well as for predicted prevalence of *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax*. The region additionally faces challenges such as a low distribution of health facilities while ranking among the lowest in socio-economic development. Finally, differences in landslide risk between the two offer an opportunity for policy research and comparison.

Key Initiatives:

- **Community Empowerment:** Focus on building community-driven systems of malaria control, leveraging local experiences and international best practices.
- **Partnerships:** Engage with government bodies, NGOs like Rotarians Against Malaria, Christian Health Services, academic institutes, and cooperatives to expand outreach and sustainability.
- **Capacity-Building:** Strengthen the skills of community health workers and foster a new generation of local leaders capable of sustaining malaria elimination efforts.

Projected Impact:

- **Sustainable Malaria Control:** Local communities are empowered to take control of malaria prevention and treatment.
- **Reduction in Malaria Burden:** This solution aims to reduce malaria burden in PNG with a particular focus on high-risk provinces.
- **Stronger Health Systems:** Community engagement and partnerships will create a resilient health system capable of addressing malaria and other public health challenges as well.

Conclusion:

By adopting a citizen-led approach and engaging local leaders, traditional healers, and community health workers, our strategy aims to create long-term, sustainable change in malaria elimination efforts in PNG.