

## Summary report



### Symposium on Malaria prevention and control in mobile and hard to reach populations

**April 6 - 8, 2022, Torarica Resort, Paramaribo - Suriname**

#### **Introduction**

Mobile and hard to reach populations are exceptionally vulnerable to infectious diseases as a result of mobility and poverty related risk behaviors and barriers to, and distance from, health services. In malaria eliminating countries they are often recognized as drivers of residual malaria transmission, or they can be linked to a potential increased risk of emerging malaria drug resistance or to reintroduction of malaria in areas that were cleared of the disease. To be able to effectively progress towards malaria elimination and prevention of reintroduction of malaria it is essential that no one is left behind, and that mobile (migrant) and hard to reach populations are identified and incorporated in malaria elimination strategies and policies. Effective management of malaria in these populations will require programs that include targeted activities adapted to the context of the people at risk, interventions that are timed with seasonal mobility, development and scale-up of migrant-friendly health services; and strengthening of program activities to engage these key populations. Targeted approaches often require innovative solutions. Innovation for malaria control and elimination in mobile and hard to reach populations is happening around the world, but dissemination of information about best practices, the context in which these innovative approaches or new tools may be employed, and their potential applicability in other settings than those in which they were designed is often not done on a similar scale. Suriname is on the road to malaria elimination. The last mile is challenging because of residual malaria in mobile and hard to reach populations. Within this context, the Ministry of Health in Suriname and collaborating partners organized a symposium that would allow participants from different parts of the world to engage in presentations of and discussions about innovative approaches and tools for malaria prevention and control in mobile (migrant) and hard to reach populations.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- 1) share experiences and lessons learned from innovative approaches to malaria control and prevention in mobile and hard to reach populations,
- 2) share (preliminary) results from (ongoing) operational research projects or pilot studies on this topic,
- 3) discuss the applicability of innovative strategies in different contexts, and
- 4) develop a summary report of the meeting with an overview of strategies and the outcome of the discussion. This final document will then be disseminated and may serve as a basis for guidance development for malaria prevention and control in these challenging populations.

## **Audience**

The audience targeted with this symposium included international developers and implementers of innovative methods, tools and strategies, scientist active in this field, health institutions working on Malaria control and elimination, especially those dealing with the key risk populations that are discussed here, and international partners, including donors and technical agencies.

## **Agenda**

For a detailed agenda please see ANNEX 1.

## **Number of participants and of participating countries**

Due to the COVID19 pandemic the number of physical participants needed to be limited. Therefore, the meeting was organized in a bimodal setup and both physical and online participation was arranged. A total of 45 people (from 10 different countries) attended the symposium in person and another 83 participated online. In person and online participants came from virtually all continents.

## Final outcomes

The final meeting outcomes included confirmation of the following framework statements:

- Health is a basic human right, irrespective of individual circumstances.
- Malaria mainly affects disadvantaged people
- Innovation is necessary to reach marginalized populations and to lower barriers to access of Health care.

Participants agreed that tailor-made interventions are necessary to prevent and control malaria because each setting has unique challenges; one size does not fit all! The presentations displayed creative problem solving and innovation beyond our standard malaria control interventions

In order to achieve effective malaria control, permanent presence of diagnosis and treatment as well as access to personal protection/bite prevention and vector control in communities is essential.

Since movements of mobile populations are often across borders, it is proposed to have international platforms for the exchange of data on mobility.

Traditional vector control measures are not applicable in every transmission context. Therefore, innovative approaches that are available need to be evaluated. A dedicated global meeting might be needed to address this topic.

Community engagement is pivotal to the success of malaria control activities. This shall be achieved through participatory approaches.

Malaria control in mobile and hard-to-reach populations is often related to legal and political issues. Therefore, commitment from and collaboration between authorities, researchers and communities is essential.

Malaria control in mobile and hard-to-reach populations is often costly, due to remoteness, poor accessibility and the necessity of tailored interventions. National health budgets may not be capable to cover these expenses, especially not in the “last mile”. International funding remains essential.

The visibility of approaches to malaria control in mobile and hard-to-reach populations needs to be enhanced by empowering national and regional initiatives in this field.

## Next steps.

The symposium was considered very successful by organizers and participants. It was felt that the subject of this first international meeting on malaria prevention and control in mobile and hard to reach populations should remain on the international agenda.

With support from the WHO/TDR and Swiss TPH the initiative was taken to get this topic on the agenda of the next international conference that addresses malaria which is the **20th Conference for Tropical Medicine and Malaria in Bangkok**, from October 24 to 28, 2022. The session proposal was submitted and accepted with the title **Malaria and other vector-borne diseases in mobile and hard to reach populations.**