



It is time to act now and make concrete investments to accelerate malaria efforts in Cameroon and save children's lives

Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to humans through infected female Anopheles mosquitoes. **Cameroon is among the highest malaria burden countries in the world** with an estimated **seven million cases** and **11 500 deaths** annually.¹ **Pregnant women and children under five** represent around 70 % of malaria deaths globally due to consequences such as severe anemia. **This is not acceptable because malaria is preventable and treatable.**

In addition to the large human toll, malaria has a negative effect on many others sectors, from economic and sustainable development to education and gender equality. Malaria keeps children out of school more than any other disease. It also constitutes a loss of revenue for the private sector where, on average, one episode of malaria results in seven lost working days. It is therefore important to invest in changing this situation and build on progress already made.

Indeed, positive results have been observed in Cameroon, such as the 50 % reduction of child mortality due to malaria between 2000–2015. This is in part due to global funding and the development of new technologies (Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT), long lasting insecticidal treated nets (LLINs) and SMC campaigns, etc.). However, this progress is currently at risk, mainly because around 50 % of the National Malaria Strategic Plan interventions for 2019–2023 are unfunded; for example, only 40 % of health districts in Cameroon are covered by community health workers and 30 % of malaria prevention, testing and treatments tools still need to be acquired. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacts malaria programs, which jeopardizes the achievement of the national malaria strategic objectives. Therefore, **it is crucial that all relevant actors mobilize immediately to step up the effort to fight and eliminate malaria.**

We have to act quickly! Below are 4 priorities areas we must address:

- 1. Ensure that the allocation to public health as part of the national budget for 2022 is increased to at least 7 %**

Increasing funding for health and malaria will provide a significant return on investment. Investing in a healthy population today creates a productive workforce with strong human capital and avoids costly interventions at a later stage. Importantly, investing in child and maternal health is key to eliminating malaria once and for all. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us that health is essential to countries' economies and development. It is important that Cameroon has a resilient and community-based health system to fight emerging and endemic diseases. In the upcoming years, the annual allocation to health should be gradually increased from the current 4 % to 15 %. **For 2022, the health budget allocation should be increased by at least 3 %.**

- 2. Meet the Global Fund co-financing requirement for malaria interventions in Cameroon**

For the cycle 2021–2023, **the Global Fund has allocated 101 245 790 EUR** for malaria programs in Cameroon. **The government of Cameroon must contribute 46 million EUR as co-financing requirement** in order to have full access to this grant, **therefore 46 million EUR from the**

¹ "World Malaria Report 2020: 20 years of global progress and challenges", WHO 2020



government will unlock 101 million EUR. This funding is necessary to fill the existing financing gap for interventions such as mosquito nets, testing and treatment for malaria, programs for pregnant women etc. which are essential for communities. It is crucial for Cameroon to mobilize domestic funding to meet this goal.

3. Increase local civil society and community engagement in malaria programs

Malaria is a disease happening at the community level. Therefore, it is important to ensure that local Civil Society Organizations (CSO) engage meaningfully in malaria activities. Communities and civil society sharing their experiences from the field will elevate the needs of communities, draw attention to barriers to access to services for the most vulnerable communities and highlight potential opportunities and solutions to reduce those barriers. This can help identify targeted high-impact interventions for diverse communities. Importantly, no one is left behind. Community monitoring programs strengthen the health system through the collection of community data on malaria, providing national malaria programs at the Ministry of Health with more data for effective decision making. Finally, civil society engagement is necessary to help increase local ownership of the malaria issue, advocacy for the malaria programs and set up an accountability mechanism for malaria programs.

4. Give Community Health Workers (CHWs) an official status and remuneration from the national budget

CHWs are people from the community, trained by the Ministry of Public Health and NGOs, who sometimes travel long distances by foot in urban and rural areas, far from health centers, to provide basic and essential health services. They are often the first contact with communities and can therefore identify and communicate local needs, opportunities and barriers to health. The services provided include, but are not limited to:

- Household visits for testing and treatment of simple malaria cases;
- Awareness-raising for HIV/AIDS prevention;
- Identification of tuberculosis cases;
- Treatment of children with diarrhea and malnutrition;
- Prenatal consultations and sensitization of pregnant women on the importance of attending such consultations;
- Since 2020, the search for active COVID-19 cases in the community.

These CHWs literally save lives and are, in some areas, the only link between the community and the health system. A CHW covers 2,500 inhabitants in rural areas for a monthly state compensation of only 40,000 CFA francs. This action is therefore a high impact investment that will directly affect Cameroonians.

About Impact Santé Afrique (ISA): ISA is an African non-governmental organization based in Cameroon that specializes in advocacy and strategic communications and is dedicated to contributing to improving the health of populations and reducing the malaria burden. Website: www.impactsante.org