

Job title:	Operational Research Specialist	Location:	Buea, Cameroon
Donor title:	Research Specialist		
Department:	Technical	Length of contract:	Two years
Role type:	National	Grade:	9
Travel involved:	Up to 40%	Child safeguarding level:	3, slight risk
Reporting to:	REO project manager	Direct reports:	Knowledge Management Officer
Dotted line manager:	Head of Technical West & Central Africa	Indirect reports:	None

Organisational background

Established in 2003, Malaria Consortium is one of the world’s leading non-profit organisations specialising in the comprehensive prevention, control and treatment of malaria and other communicable diseases among vulnerable and under privileged populations. We increasingly find our work on malaria can be effectively integrated with other similar public health interventions for greater impact and therefore expanded our remit to include child health and neglected tropical disease interventions.

We work in Africa and Asia with communities, governments, academic institutions, and local and international organisations, to ensure effective delivery of services, which are supported by strong evidence.

Our areas of expertise include:

- disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment
- disease control and elimination
- systems strengthening
- research, monitoring and evaluation leading to best practice
- behaviour change communication
- national and international advocacy and policy development

Country and project background

Cameroon is one of the 10 African countries with the highest burden of malaria. Despite the scale-up of malaria interventions across the country, the disease remains a major cause of morbidity and

mortality, with vulnerable populations, particularly conflict-affected communities, particularly at risk. (World Health Organisation, 2019). As a result of recent conflict, a significant proportion of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) now reside in remote forests and farmlands where they have no access to basic healthcare, including malaria prevention and treatment services, which is likely to contribute to the high malaria-related morbidity in these regions (Health Cluster, 2019).

Cameroon is deeply committed to making progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and it recognises the fact that, without firm efforts to control malaria, achievement of the targets related to child mortality, maternal mortality, and reducing the burden of communicable disease will not be possible. Malaria therefore constitutes a significant development challenge for Cameroon. The country's strategy to reduce the malaria burden is documented in the national strategic plan, including objectives to reduce both malaria mortality and malaria incidence from 2015 levels by 60% by 2023.

'Breaking barriers in access to effective malaria treatment amongst conflict-affected communities of the South West and Littoral regions of Cameroon' is a research project implemented by Reach Out Cameroon in partnership with Malaria Consortium and Konmofamba Action Sans Frontière. The overall objective is to develop, implement and evaluate scalable, replicable, and innovative approaches to improve access to effective malaria case management through community-based services in conflict affected and host communities in the South-West and Littoral regions of Cameroon by 2023. The specific objectives are: a) to understand barriers to access to appropriate case management of malaria for IPD communities in the two regions; b) to identify at least two innovative solutions, appropriate to the context with the potential to increase coverage and quality of community-based management of malaria in conflict-affected communities; c) to evaluate the feasibility of the interventions and their acceptability among target populations, CHWs, health facility workers, and health district and regional health authorities; and d) to evaluate the impact of the interventions on coverage of appropriate treatment of malaria by CHWs, including severe malaria. Malaria Consortium's role in the project is to provide technical assistance and guidance on the operational research design and implementation, and this position will be the in-country representation of this support.

Job purpose

The Operational Research Specialist will provide technical inputs (research design, statistical and analytical support), in all project research output areas.

Scope of work

The Operational Research Specialist will be responsible for providing direct technical assistance and implementation oversight for operational research to the project and its partners. The post holder will be a member of Malaria Consortium's Research Group. The post holder will work with the project team to share responsibility in ensuring that high quality surveillance and operational research approaches are implemented in the Improving Malaria Response project.

Key working relationships

The Operational Research Specialist will work closely with the project team led by our partner, in particular the Project Supervisor, Project Manager and the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. The post-holder will also work with the Malaria Consortium Head of Technical West & Central Africa as dotted line manager as well as the core members of the Research Group as needed. In the implementation of surveys and other data collection activities, he/she will need to liaise with

stakeholders such as the Ministry of Health, GFATM Cameroon, partner organisations, academic institutions and subcontractors.

Key accountabilities

1. Operational Research contributions (70%)

- Coordinate day-to-day technical preparations, implementation and evaluation of research activities in South West and Littoral regions;
- Supervise the 'Improving access to effective malaria case management, Cameroon' operational research project implementation and outputs, quality control data and carry out quarterly project performance assessments and other reports as required;
- Lead in the development of field testing of innovative tools and approaches in surveys, rapid assessments, routine data collection and surveillance;
- Provide technical guidance on results measurement designs and sample size calculations;
- Support statistical analysis of operational research data including surveys, and contribute to reports and publications to disseminate among partners;
- Write quarterly and annual reports for projects for donors and other audiences as required;
- Coordinate the implementation of in-country dissemination and research uptake activity plans, such as stakeholder consultations, media engagements, and country specific project learning outputs;
- Advise and support the project team in managing activity plans, contractors/consultants and budgets for specific operational research activities;
- Support, and as appropriate lead, the documentation of operational research and lessons learnt from the project including production of manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed journals, learning briefs, learning papers and general documentation (e.g. narrative reports, infographics);
- Support the dissemination of lessons learned to national and global audiences through conference presentations, peer-reviewed publications, and technical reports.

2. Quality assurance of operational research quality (15%)

- Working with the project team, contribute to the development and embedding of standards of operational research quality.

3. Capacity building in operational research (10%)

- Participate in building project capacity in operational research, mainly in the NMCP but also where appropriate within project partner organisations;
- Support the project team in capacity building efforts to strengthen both individual and institutional capacities within district health teams, communities, the NMCP and GFATM Cameroon;

4. External Representation (5%)

- Participate in national or regional technical working groups as relevant;
- Represent 'Improving access to effective malaria case management, Cameroon' at regional, national and international meetings as required, and participate in technical discussions and strategic planning meetings of the project technical team.

Person specification

Qualifications and experience:

Essential

- PhD or equivalent experience in epidemiology, statistics or public health;
- Substantial experience working in a research role with an excellent understanding of surveillance and operational research approaches;
- Good qualitative and quantitative data analysis skills;
- Demonstrated experience in survey design, implementation, analysis, and report-writing;
- Previous public health sector experience in sub-Saharan Africa countries, in particular Cameroon;
- Significant experience in evaluation design and implementation of large-scale project M&E systems;
- Experience in setting up standards of quality as well as internal quality assurance mechanisms.

Desirable

- Experience of working with Ministries of Health;
- Experience in working effectively with government and non-government partners.

Work-based skills:

Essential

- Demonstrated ability to work independently as well as collaboratively on a team, particularly with Ministries of Health and/or other government sectors and partners and the GFATM;
- Proven ability in transferring skills, particularly working with government and non-government colleagues;
- Demonstrated verbal and written communication and presentation skills;
- Excellent statistical analysis skills including familiarity with software such as STATA, R or Statgraphics;
- Results-oriented attitude to work;
- Expert competency level in reviewing, understanding and synthesising data for sharing with wider audiences;
- Practical organisational skills with the ability to manage a fluctuating workload, prioritise and re-prioritise when necessary and meet tight deadlines;
- Able to travel to project regions for up to one week at a time to oversee surveys or other data collection activities;
- Excellent command of English and French with exceptional writing and communication skills and the ability to present information in clear, concise, and compelling ways;
- Computer literacy, including high degree of skills in MS Office and Stata.

Desirable

- Significant knowledge in communicable disease control and particularly malaria;
- Strong writing skills with publications in peer-reviewed journals;

- Data-driven decision making mentality.

Core competencies:
Delivering results
<p>LEVEL C - Supports others to achieve results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Displays a positive and enthusiastic approach and is not deterred by setbacks, finding alternative ways to reach goals or targets ✓ Supports others to plan and deliver results ✓ Supports others to manage and cope with setbacks
Analysis and use of information
<p>LEVEL C - Works confidently with complex data to support work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interprets complex written information ✓ Works confidently with data before making decisions: for example, interpreting trends, issues and risks ✓ Acquainted with the validity, relevance and limitations of different sources of evidence
Interpersonal and communications
<p>LEVEL C - Adapts communications effectively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Tailors communication (content, style and medium) to diverse audiences ✓ Communicates equally effectively at all organisational levels ✓ Understands others' underlying needs, concerns and motivations and communicates effectively in sensitive situations ✓ Resolves intra-team and inter-team conflicts effectively
Collaboration and partnering
<p>LEVEL C - Builds strong networks internally and participates actively in external networks and think tanks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Builds strong networks internally ✓ Participates actively in external networks and/or think tanks ✓ Engages with relevant experts to gather and evaluate evidence ✓ Shares and implements good practice with internal and external peers
Leading and motivating people
<p>LEVEL C - Effectively leads and motivates others or direct reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Gives regular, timely and appropriate feedback ✓ Acknowledges good performance and deals with issues concerning poor performance ✓ Carries out staff assessment and development activities conscientiously and effectively ✓ Develop the skills and competence of others through the development and application of skills ✓ Coaches and supports team members when they have difficulties
Flexibility/ adaptability
<p>LEVEL C - Supports others to cope with pressure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Responds positively to change, embracing and using new practices or values to accomplish goals and solve problems and supports others to do the same ✓ Adapts team approach, goals, and methods to achieve solutions and results in dynamic situations ✓ Sets realistic deadlines and goals for self or team

Living the values

LEVEL C - Supports others to live Malaria Consortium's values

- ✓ Demonstrates personal integrity by using position responsibly and fairly
- ✓ Cultivates an open culture within the wider team, promoting accountability, responsibility and respect for individual differences

Strategic planning and thinking and sector awareness

LEVEL C - Keeps up to date with the internal and external environment

- ✓ Takes into account economic, political and other business factors when drawing up medium and long-term plans, covering both public and private sectors
- ✓ Looks beyond the immediate operations to prospects for new business
- ✓ Engages with appropriate internal and external sources to establish major influences on future plans