



JOB DESCRIPTION

Job title:	Operational Research & Surveillance Specialist	Location:	Abuja
Department:	Technical	Length of contract:	2 years
Role type:	National	Grade:	9
Travel involved:	In-country	Child safeguarding level:	
Reporting to:	Senior Project Manager	Direct reports:	Consultants (Data collectors and supervisors)
Dotted Line Manager	Country Technical Coordinator		

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

The Nigeria Country Office with office in Abuja, started operations in 2008, through the DFID/UKaid funded Support to National Malaria Programme, SuNMaP (2008 – 2016). The office had presence in 23 states of the country and has managed at various times, about 15 programmes and projects. It follows the mandate of the parent organization in Nigeria and has been working specifically in the following areas:

- Malaria control/elimination;
- Integrated community case management (iCCM) for malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoea;
- Nutrition; and
- Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

Malaria Consortium has recently received grant from the Good Ventures to implement SMC in three West African countries including Nigeria. In Nigeria, malaria consortium has decided to use the fund to continue SMC implementation in the 4 states it has been supporting since 2013 with UNITAID (Sokoto and Zamfara), DFID (Katsina and Jigawa) and BMGF (Katsina) funds.

Under this new funding and any anticipated additional funding, all malaria consortium SMC activities in county will be consolidated into a single project and managed by senior project manager who will report to the country programme manager. A Zonal Project Manager will head each of the states.

Job purpose

The Operational Research Specialist will provide technical inputs into OR designs for SMC. H/she will lead in implementation, data management, reporting and dissemination of project key outcomes relating to OR, ensuring standards and quality in project activities. S/he will contribute to the development of SMC learning agenda, particularly in operational research, working closely with the other technical experts in the project to maintain scientific soundness of activities and protection of research participants. The position holder will contribute to evidence base and support peer-reviewed publications, technical reports, conferences and presentations.

Scope of work

The Operational Research Specialist will report to the Senior Project Manager and will be responsible for providing direct support and technical assistance in operational research to the project and its partners. The post holder will be a member of Malaria Consortium's Research Group (one of the communities of practice). The post holder will work with the Senior M&E Officers, Data Analysis Specialist, M&E Specialist, Regional Epidemiologist and Country Technical Coordinator to share responsibility in ensuring that high quality operational research approaches are implemented in SMC Project.

Key working relationships

The Operational Research Specialist will work closely with the Senior Project Manager, an OR consultant as well as other M&E team members under the leadership of the Country Technical Coordinator. In the implementation of data collection activities, he/she will need to liaise with stakeholders such as the Federal Ministry of Health, State Ministry of Health, partner organisations and subcontractors. The position holder will support recruitment and maintenance of a network of data collectors and supervisors in SMC supported states. H/she will also work closely with a research advisor from the academia.

Key accountabilities (percent of time spent on each area)

1. Operational Research contributions (75%)

- In conjunction with other project team members develop OR protocols and lead in pre-implementation activities such as securing ethical clearance and waivers where necessary, particularly where proposed procedures are not approved in national implementation guidelines
- Coordinate day-to-day technical preparations, implementation and supervision of research activities in SMC states
- Support the Data Analysis Specialist in statistical analysis of operational research data, and contribute to reports and publications to disseminate among partners
- Write periodic research-related reports for project 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 SMC state teams in managing activity plans, 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 drafting 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 (10%)

- Ensure adherence to OR protocols during implementation. Flag any necessary changes to protocol and seek approvals as appropriate either from the CTC or the research ethics committees. Supervise SMC operational research project implementation and outputs, quality control of data collection and carry out regular project performance assessments as planned and other reports as required
- Working with the SPM, contribute to the adherence of research guidelines and embedding into research studies, standards of operational research quality

3. Capacity building and institutional strengthening (10%)

- Participate in building project capacity in operational research, mainly in the NMEP and SMEPs but also where appropriate within SMC team
- In liaison with the SPM and CTC, support capacity building initiatives of the project's M&E team and contribute to the organisation's strategic objectives

4. External Representation (5%)

- Participate in national or regional technical working groups as relevant

Person specification

Qualifications and experience:

Essential

- Postgraduate degree in epidemiology, statistics or public health
- 10-12 years post qualification and 8 years working in a research role with an excellent understanding of operational research approaches
- Demonstrable knowledge and ability to design and implement research studies, including design of qualitative and quantitative data collection tools.
- Good qualitative and quantitative data analysis skills
- Demonstrated experience of working in a team of experts delivering specialized TA services
- Previous public health sector experience in sub-Saharan Africa countries
- Familiarity with Health Management Information Systems (HMIS) in Low and Middle Income countries e.g. DHIS2
- Experience in setting up standards of quality as well as internal quality assurance mechanisms
- Strong writing skills with publications in peer-reviewed journals

Desirable

- Significant knowledge in communicable disease control, particularly malaria
- 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
- Proven ability in transferring skills, particularly working with government and nongovernment colleagues
- Demonstrated verbal and written communication and presentation skills
- Excellent statistical analysis skills including familiarity with software such as STATA, R or Statgraphics, CSPro, Atlas ti, NVIVO

- Results-oriented attitude to work
- Expert competency level in reviewing, understanding and synthesizing data for sharing with wider audiences
- Practical organizational skills with the ability to manage a fluctuating workload, prioritize and re-prioritize when necessary and meet tight deadlines
- Able to travel to SMC supported states to oversee OR or other data collection activities
- Excellent command of English 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

Core competencies:

Delivering results

LEVEL C - Supports others to achieve results:

- ✓ 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

LEVEL C- Works confidently with complex data to support work:

- ✓ 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

LEVEL C - Adapts communications effectively

- ✓ 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

LEVEL C - Builds strong networks internally and participates actively in external networks and think tanks

- ✓ 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

LEVEL B - Manages own development and seeks opportunities

- ✓ Actively manages own development and performance positively
- ✓ Learns lessons from successes and failures
- ✓ Seeks and explores opportunities within Malaria Consortium which develop skills and expertise

Flexibility/ adaptability

LEVEL C - Supports others to cope with pressure

- ✓ 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

Strategic planning and thinking and sector awareness

LEVEL B - Is aware of others' activities and vice versa in planning activities

- ✓ Takes account of team members and others' workloads when planning.
- ✓ Maintains awareness of impact on other parts of the organisation, keeping abreast of other's activities, objectives, commitments and needs
- ✓ Has a good understanding of the sector in which Malaria Consortium works