

Job title:	Research Specialist	Location:	Nigeria
Donor title:	Research Specialist		
Department:	Technical	Length of contract:	4 years
Role type:	National	Grade:	9
Travel involved:	Up to 40%	Child safeguarding level:	2, moderate risk
Reporting to:	Senior Project Manager	Direct 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

Project background

Malaria affects most Nigerians and remains a public health problem despite progress in the last two decades. Between 2008 and 2018, even though the overall under-five mortality rate (U5MR) reduced by 15.9 percent, from 157 to 132 per 1000 live births, the reduction in infant mortality rate (IMR) during the same period was less marked: 10.7 percent (from 75 to 67 per 1000 live births), with no noticeable change in the neonatal mortality rate over the same period (NDHS 2019).

Intermittent Preventive Treatment in infants (IPTi) is the administration of preventive antimalarial drugs to infants to provide personal protection against malaria transmission. Under current WHO guidelines, the drug sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine (SP) is delivered to infants at approximately 10 weeks, 14 weeks, and 9 months of age during routine immunization services. IPTi is safe, cost-

effective, well accepted by health workers and communities, and has been found to reduce clinical malaria by 30%, and episodes of anaemia by 21%.

Despite the WHO recommendation to administer IPTi in areas of moderate-to-high transmission since 2010, there has been limited uptake to date. The intervention is not yet recommended as one of the interventions in the Nigerian Malaria Control Policy. A rapid assessment of stakeholders' perspective on barriers to IPTi policy uptake in Nigeria revealed that providing evidence on feasibility, acceptability and effectiveness of the intervention at field level will be key for policy uptake.

Malaria Consortium is anticipating funding to carry out an effectiveness-implementation hybrid project on feasibility and effectiveness of on IPTi in Nigeria. It is aimed at generating the required evidence to inform policy and possible scale up of IPTi in Nigeria, and ultimately contribute towards a reduction in under 5 mortalities in the country.

Job purpose

The Research Specialist will provide technical inputs (research design, statistical and analytical support) to an effectiveness-implementation hybrid project on the operational feasibility and effectiveness of SP-IPTi in Nigeria. The position holder will lead performance monitoring against the project logframe, provide technical support to research planning, implementation and dissemination, and support the development and implementation of a research uptake plan linked to evidence and learning from the hybrid IPTi project.

Scope of work

The post holder will work with the project team to deliver scientifically robust research outputs, design of study protocols, data collection methods and data analysis plans and ensure that high quality surveillance and research approaches are implemented in the hybrid IPTi project. The role will involve technical assistance/consultancy management, knowledge management, and working with the Senior Project Manager to ensure collaboration and coordination between the project and key stakeholders. The position holder will provide technical support to the National IPTi Research and Policy uptake subcommittee (NIRPUS) and Data safety and Monitoring Board (DSMB) in conjunction with the Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-Principal Investigator (CoPI) and ensure tracking and proper documentation of performance against logframe. The post holder will be a member of Malaria Consortium's Research Group.

Key working relationships

This position will report to the State Project Manager and have working relationships with the following:

- Country Director, country programme manager and other members of the country office Senior Management Team (SMT)
- Technical Director, also the PI
- Senior Country Technical Coordinator, also the Co-PI, and other co-investigators
- Statistician
- State project team
- National and state stakeholders, NMEP, NAFDAC, NPHCDA, SPHCDA and SMEP
- Project sub-grantee/contractors - National Institute of Medical Research (NIMR), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), Cost-effectiveness analysis consultants.
- National IPTi Research and Policy uptake subcommittee (NIRPUS)
- Data safety and Monitoring Board (DSMB)

- Key donors
- Other key partners as identified in the project stakeholders' matrix.

Key accountabilities

1. Research contributions (70%)

- Coordinate day-to-day technical preparations, implementation and evaluation of research activities for the hybrid IPTi project
- Initiate the implementation of research activities as articulated in the project work plan
- Lead preparation and planning of formative research at project initiation;
- Provide technical inputs in development of all research protocol for the hybrid IPTi project and lead submission of protocol for ethical approval;
- Coordinate the identification, set-up and maintenance of surveillance sentinel sites for the project
- Support the recruitment, training, deployment and monitoring of sentinel site data collectors throughout the project life;
- Facilitate the initiation and regular coordination meeting of the NIRPUS and DSMB;
- Support statistical analysis of research data including surveys, and contribute to technical report writing;
- Support Senior Project Manager to write quarterly and annual progress reports for the project for donors and other audiences as required;
- Support the state implementation officer to ensure project is rolled out in strict adherence to agreed standards and protocols;

Research uptake

- Develop, implement, monitor and evaluate an overarching research uptake (RU) strategy for the hybrid IPTi project, which will support uptake of evidence and learning from the IPTi research. This should be done in consultation with the PI and CoPI for the project.
- Systematically identify opportunities to co-design or co-implement research activities with policy makers and key stakeholders (NMEP, NPHCDA, WHO), where appropriate;
- Keep potential users those interested in the research outputs engaged with progress updates throughout the project lifespan at the sub-national, national and international level;
- Coordinate the implementation of in-country dissemination of research findings and research uptake activities such as stakeholder consultations, media engagements etc

Research quality

- Lead the development and implementation of a quality assurance and quality improvement framework for the research project.
- Identify technical assistance needs for specific pieces of work in the project work plan, develop terms of reference for engaging consultants and monitor such contractors/consultants to ensure resultant high-quality deliverables.
- Ensure MC's internal quality assurance processes for activities and technical assistance management are followed within the context of the hybrid IPTi project;
- Provide technical support to research activity implementation and outputs as well as quality assure research data collection and management processes;

2. Monitoring, Evaluation Accountability and Learning (25%)

- Contribute to the development and implementation of organizational approaches and tools for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL)
- Lead the development of a monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning plan for the project which will include:

- A project performance monitoring and evaluation framework with clear indicators and targets.
- A framework showing project accountability to donor, stakeholders as well as beneficiaries;
- A learning agenda articulating specific learning questions, learning activities and a master plan for developing learning dissemination products e.g. learning briefs, learning papers, research briefs and other peer-reviewed publications.
- Support, and as appropriate lead, the documentation of research findings 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;
- Carry out quarterly project performance assessments and prepare progress reports as required;
- Participate in MC technical team's cross learning forums.

3. External Representation (5%)

- Participate in national technical working groups and NMEP's sub-committee meetings as relevant;
- Participate in technical discussions and strategic planning meetings of the project technical team;
- Represent the project in external meetings as agreed with Senior Project Manager or SCTC.

Person specification

Qualifications and experience:

Essential

- PhD or equivalent experience in Public/Global Health, Epidemiology, statistics or a related research discipline.
- Extensive experience in a research role with an excellent understanding of quantitative research approaches
- Experience in research management
- Experience in design of operational and/or implementation research
- Demonstrable first-hand experience publishing scientific work in peer-reviewed journals
- Demonstrated experience in survey design, survey implementation, analysis, and report-writing;

Desirable

- Experience in working effectively with government and non-government partners.
- Experience of working on immunization programmes, familiarity with NPHCDA, Ministries of Health; NMEP
- Experience in addressing inequities in research such as gender or disability

Work-based skills:

Essential

- Demonstrated ability to work independently as well as collaboratively on a team, particularly with Ministries of Health, NMEP, NPHCDA and/or other government sectors and partners;
- Knowledge of malaria prevention and control in endemic settings

- Demonstrable understanding of research uptake in relation to overcoming the barriers to uptake experienced by decision-makers as well as approaches of effectively communicating research to broad stakeholders such as decision-makers, beneficiaries and media.
- Excellent statistical analysis skills including familiarity with software such as STATA, R or Statgraphics;
- Excellent understanding of good research practice
- Excellent command of English with exceptional writing and communication skills and the ability to present information in clear, concise, and compelling ways;
- Results-oriented attitude to work;
- Able to travel to project location for up to one week at a time to oversee surveys or other data collection activities;
- Excellent skills in in MS Office software package.

Desirable

- Demonstrable skills in qualitative research methods and data analysis software such as Nvivo;
- Excellent skills in developing a range of outputs for communicating research – in print, electronic and face-to-face formats;
- Data-driven decision-making mentality
- Excellent understanding of practices in relation to research integrity
- Good knowledge of gender intentional research

Core competencies:
Delivering results
LEVEL C - Supports others to achieve results
<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
LEVEL C - Works confidently with complex data to support work
<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
LEVEL C - Adapts communications effectively
<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
LEVEL C - Builds strong networks internally and participates actively in external networks and think tanks
<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

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 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