# Scaling up the Boma Health Initiative in South Sudan

## Expanding and improving community health services in Northern Bahr El Ghazal state

## Background

South Sudan's health indicators are heavily affected by inadequate access to health services and a lack of health workers.[1] The maternal mortality rate is 1,150 deaths per 100,000 live births,[2] while neonatal and under-five mortality rates are at 40 and 99 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively.[3] Moreover, approximately 75 percent of child deaths occur due to common, preventable childhood diseases such as malaria and pneumonia, as well as diarrhoea.[1]

In 2017, the Ministry of Health (MoH) adopted the *Boma* Health Initiative (BHI) — the government's flagship strategy for community-based primary healthcare — to improve the country's health indicators. The BHI aims to standardise community health services and to improve access to essential primary healthcare services in areas where these are limited.

The BHI also seeks to formalise the role of boma health workers (BHWs), who provide healthcare within their boma (an administrative division) through a range of services. These include family/household information registration, health education, and curative services for childhood illnesses. BHWs also raise awareness of antenatal services and promote family planning.

**Country**
South Sudan

**Donor**
The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund), via UNICEF

**Length of project**
October 2022 – December 2023

**Partners**
Crown Agents

**Strategic objective**
Accelerating burden reduction to elimination

## Project outline and objectives

Since 2019, together with Crown Agents, Malaria Consortium has been implementing Health Pooled Fund III (HPF3): Provision of Essential Healthcare Services in South Sudan.[4] This five-year multi-donor project is led by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.[5]

With support from the Global Fund, via UNICEF, the current 2022–2023 BHI scale-up project complements Malaria Consortium's implementation of HPF3 in Lot 16. We are working towards expanding community health services across Aweil Centre and Aweil South counties in Northern Bahr El Ghazal state — where we currently lead implementation — to prevent and treat common health conditions under the BHI policy.

To support the MoH to scale up and implement the BHI, the project aims to improve service delivery and engagement through:

- capacity development of BHWs and supervisors to deliver integrated community case management (iCCM) and other essential health services
- enhanced management of the BHI supply chain for essential medicines and commodities
- engagement with communities
- stronger linkages between communities and health facilities.

## Activities

To increase support and understanding of the BHI, we will:

- recruit and train 286 BHWs and 14 BHW supervisors for the iCCM curriculum to conduct health promotion, vital statistics (e.g. information for family/household registration) and community referral

- treat children for diarrhoea, malaria and respiratory tract infections
- develop BHI supervisors' skills to use supportive supervision guidelines and tools
- establish monthly supervision meetings for BHWs, their supervisors and health facility clinical and management teams to:
  - discuss case referral management, strategies to identify and follow up on patients who have missed immunisations, care for pregnant and lactating women, and malnutrition screening for children
  - review monthly progress, addressing challenges around supervisors' knowledge and skills
- engage stakeholders, implementing partners and the local community — including marginalised groups and those lacking access to healthcare — both at state and county levels to:
  - increase community awareness of the targeted diseases
  - reach households, churches, schools, and people at markets and other public places through campaigns that use routine behaviour change communications (BCC), health education and counselling sessions
- hold quarterly BCC meetings and stakeholder awareness meetings, using World Malaria Day as an opportunity to promote the BHI
- host a multi-day event with participation from community stakeholders to create awareness around treatment and prevention of common childhood illnesses
- support the coordination and distribution of medical commodities and assist health facilities to reduce stockouts through monitoring stock levels.

## References

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