

Essential tools for achieving malaria elimination in Myanmar

A comprehensive malaria surveillance system and strengthened national capacity to use data for elimination

Background

Myanmar has set itself the ambitious target of eliminating malaria in the country by 2030. To achieve this, an effective malaria surveillance system needs to be in place to capture data that can be used for planning interventions and responding to outbreaks. Since 2015, Malaria Consortium and the National Malaria Control Programme (NMCP) have been developing and rolling out a new surveillance system to improve access to and use of essential data, as surveillance is central to malaria elimination.

The new system is formed of three components – a comprehensive relational database, a cloud-based data sharing platform and an interactive dashboard – that, together, support cross-country data analysis. It also includes essential features of data management, reporting and utilisation, and allows NMCP staff to input data into the district health information system (DHIS2) – an electronic platform.

Attention has also been given to developing the capacity of NMCP staff at township, state and regional offices, and the central office, to use the surveillance system.

The initial development and roll-out of the surveillance system has been supported by the President's Malaria Initiative and USAID (through an IMMERSE grant). Implementation has been made possible with financial support from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the United States Agency for International Development, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

This brief discusses the effectiveness of Myanmar's malaria surveillance system in enhancing the management and use of data, and considers the NMCP's efforts to develop capacity around surveillance, monitoring and evaluation, and data.



Training NMCP staff in surveillance, monitoring and evaluation, and use of data

Achievements

Between January 2016 and July 2018, the malaria surveillance system was launched in 281 of the 291 malaria-endemic township offices in Myanmar, and a total of 368 staff were trained.

The new system has become a fundamental mechanism used by the NMCP for malaria surveillance, monitoring and evaluation, providing a foundation for developing a better understanding of the malaria landscape in each and every area of Myanmar. It also: contributes to measuring programme outputs, outcomes and impact, ensures data quality and feedback mechanisms are in place, and generates learning for programme management and decision making.

Challenges

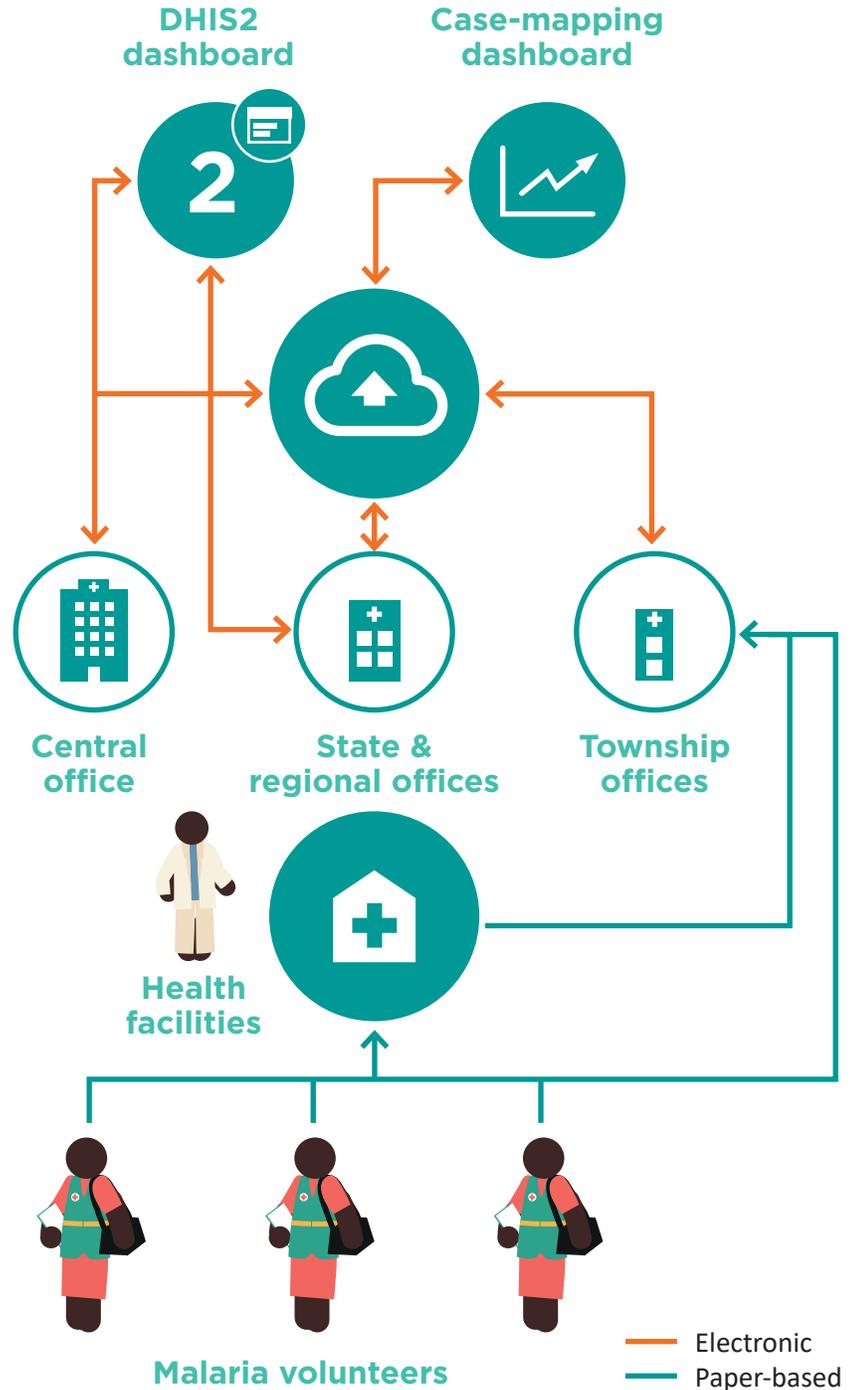
- There is a shortage of human resources across the country and limited MNCP funding. As such, the functionality of the surveillance system is currently dependent on a single trained member of staff in each office, with no backup.
- Despite the surveillance system having the capacity to support this, use of data for programme management and decision making is limited due to the lack of human resource capacity. At present, staff only use the system to report data from their townships.
- There are inadequate resources (in terms of computer equipment and financial incentives) for office staff to support a functioning malaria surveillance and response system.

Recommendations

- Malaria surveillance should be prioritised to enable rapid, real-time reporting of cases and to support timely investigations and responses.
- Capacity development activities for malaria staff should focus on maximising the effective use of the surveillance system, as well improving data visualisation and use at township offices.
- It is important to provide sufficient resources – including human resources, computer equipment and incentive schemes for staff – and to support staff's personal and professional development to sustain malaria surveillance system functionality at all township, state and regional, and central NMCP offices.

Conclusion

The new surveillance system is capable of fully meeting the needs of a malaria control setting and reducing malaria morbidity and mortality in Myanmar. However, in order for it to be used effectively and contribute to reaching pre-elimination and elimination targets, it must be upgraded progressively to support online and offline reporting platforms and should include other malaria disciplines such as entomology and micro-stratification. Continued capacity development and the establishment of a proper compensation scheme for NMCP officers is also essential in order to maintain their motivation to work with the system and ensure sustainability.



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