

# Assessing adherence to infection prevention and control measures for seasonal malaria chemoprevention during COVID-19

## Background

The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has the potential to dramatically weaken health systems in malaria-endemic countries and disrupt routine malaria control programmes that deliver life-saving preventive and curative interventions.

In response, the World Health Organization (WHO) has released operational guidance to help countries reorganise and safely maintain access to high-quality, essential health services in the context of the pandemic,<sup>[1]</sup> as well as specific guidance on tailoring malaria interventions.<sup>[2]</sup> This includes seasonal malaria chemoprevention (SMC) — a safe, feasible, effective and cost-effective intervention for the prevention of malaria among children under five.

In 2020, Malaria Consortium led the publication of global operational guidance on adapting SMC<sup>[3]</sup> and developed enhanced safety protocols for SMC implementation.<sup>[4]</sup>

We additionally trained community distributors (CDs) to safely deliver SMC with improved infection prevention and control (IPC) measures to more than 12 million under-fives in Burkina Faso, Chad and Nigeria.

## Objectives

This mixed-methods, cross-sectional study aims to explore CDs' adherence to IPC practices for SMC during the COVID-19 pandemic in Burkina Faso, Chad and Nigeria. It will:

- assess adherence of CDs delivering SMC during two cycles — September and October 2020
- measure whether CDs receive equipment, such as face masks and hand sanitiser, for preventing COVID-19 transmission
- measure caregivers' satisfaction with the adapted SMC delivery during COVID-19
- explore CDs' views on the IPC measures and their perception of the factors hindering or facilitating adherence.

## Methods

Malaria Consortium is the technical lead on this study, collaborating with the National Malaria Control Programmes (NMCPs) in Burkina Faso and Chad and the National Malaria Elimination Programme (NMEP) in Nigeria, as well as three national co-implementers: Institut de Recherche en Sciences de la Santé in Burkina Faso, Université de N'Djamena in Chad and Oxford Policy Management in Nigeria.

The study is taking place in urban and rural areas of the three countries. CDs are implementing SMC with enhanced safety measures for IPC relating to hand hygiene, waste management, safe distancing, disinfection of reusable equipment and use of personal protective equipment.<sup>[4]</sup>

To assess CDs' adherence to IPC practices and the availability of equipment for COVID-19 prevention, Malaria Consortium is training data collectors to observe CDs receiving equipment in health facilities and delivering SMC in communities. Results will be captured in approximately 1,000 observation questionnaires.

To gather evidence on CDs' views on the enhanced safety measures, we will conduct 32 focus group discussions (FGDs) in which we explore key factors relating to the quality of safe delivery: training; challenges of adhering

to safe delivery of SMC; equipment availability; acceptability of IPC practices; and knowledge and awareness of COVID-19.

Finally, we will conduct a structured household questionnaire with 132 caregivers to understand their satisfaction with the enhanced safety measures, and their knowledge and attitudes relating to COVID-19.

## Results

Given that COVID-19 is likely to still be a reality for implementers for the foreseeable future, Malaria Consortium will publish a research brief in early 2021 to offer insights to the NMCPs and NMEP in respective countries, as well as SMC implementers, regarding how the approach to IPC could be adapted in 2021.

Our results will also be published in peer-review journals to inform key public health stakeholders and programmers of how to deliver SMC and other mass health campaigns during a pandemic.

## References

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2. WHO. Tailoring malaria interventions in the COVID-19 response. Geneva: WHO; 2020. Available from: <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/publications/gmp/tailoring-malaria-interventions-covid-19.pdf>.
3. Roll Back Malaria Partnership to End Malaria. Adapting seasonal malaria chemoprevention in the context of COVID-19: Operational guidance April 2020. RBM; 2020. Available from: [https://endmalaria.org/sites/default/files/Adapting%20seasonal%20malaria%20chemoprevention%20in%20the%20context%20of%20COVID-19\\_0.pdf](https://endmalaria.org/sites/default/files/Adapting%20seasonal%20malaria%20chemoprevention%20in%20the%20context%20of%20COVID-19_0.pdf).
4. Malaria Consortium. Steps for using infection prevention and control to deliver SMC during COVID-19 pandemic. London: Malaria Consortium; 2020. Available from: [https://www.malariaconsortium.org/gallery-file/06170924-10-smc\\_covid19jobaid.pdf](https://www.malariaconsortium.org/gallery-file/06170924-10-smc_covid19jobaid.pdf).