

Taking Accountability Seriously

How does Malaria Consortium mitigate the risk of corruption and misappropriation of commodities?

Malaria Consortium aims to ensure best practice in all areas and projects we are involved with. This means being accountable not only to our donors but also to those who are at the receiving end of our activities – some of the poorest and most marginalised people in the world. For this reason, we embed control measures into all our activities to help prevent corruption and misappropriation of the commodities we supply.

How do you manage theft and mismanagement within the government/formal health system?

In order to develop long-term sustainable solutions to the control of malaria and other childhood diseases, we prioritise support to Ministries of Health, and focus on strengthening formal health system structures in all our projects.

If health systems are to be strengthened effectively and permanently, it is crucial that corruption is minimised. Our work on drug supply chain management within existing systems improves record keeping, which helps to reduce theft. Records of medicine distribution are kept and systems for ensuring stock is moving regularly and appropriately through the chain are maintained, both manually and through information management systems software.

When medicines are donated to government facilities in the country, an official Memorandum of Understanding is signed by the Ministry of Health, outlining the conditions under which the drugs are given and how they are to be distributed.

How can you be sure the nets and drugs reach those who they were intended for?

Systematic and long-term monitoring and supervision of front line drug distributors, such as village or community health workers (CHWs), means we are able to ensure medicines and insecticide-treated nets reach their intended recipients and reduce the chances of misappropriation for private trading. Medicines supplied through our projects are specially packaged indicating they are free and distributed as part of an official programme, while nets are removed from packaging before being handed out so that they can't be sold on.

Village or community health workers (CHWs) are key in Malaria Consortium's work and are often the only source of health care available for some communities. Those trained by Malaria Consortium are required to fill out consumption forms in order to measure the amount of medicines being administered; they are also subject to supervisory visits. The quantity of drugs distributed are cross-checked at regular periods to help identify diagnosis and distribution patterns and shortfalls, and at the same time, highlight any anomalies in the quantities used (which might indicate that they are being passed on to private sellers).

Supervisors are always alert to higher than normal usage. If, for example, they see that one CHW or distribution facility is using up a disproportionately high number of drugs, they will investigate. Such a difference in drug administration usually means something is wrong, whether the cause is misdiagnosis or theft.

What can be done to ensure that there are drugs available when they are most needed?

Commodity scarcity contributes to corruption and that is caused by multiple factors beyond just accountability. Governments and their development partners have a responsibility to ensure that sufficient quantities of essential medicines are ordered and distributed in a fair and appropriate manner. This coupled with better malaria diagnosis - so that drugs are not over used when they are not needed - and better accountability will ensure that life-saving antimalarials will be available at service delivery points without interruption. Malaria Consortium tries to ensure that stock-outs do not occur by training health workers and technicians throughout the supply chain in stock control and accurate estimations of future requirements.

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Malaria Consortium's aim is the relief of sickness among poor people suffering from communicable diseases, particularly malaria, and the protection of people at risk from such diseases.

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