



MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ
RÉPUBLIQUE DU BÉNIN



INCREASING DOMESTIC RESOURCES FOR MALARIA CONTROL IN BENIN

SYNOPSIS

Like many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, malaria is a real public health problem in Benin. It is the leading cause of hospitalization in the country and the leading cause of death among children under 5 years of age. In 2021, the incidence of malaria was 21.2% for the general population, with an increase among children under 5 years of age to 42.6% (19.5% of boys and 22.8% of girls). In the same year, 2,656,855 people contracted malaria in Benin, resulting in 1,914 deaths¹.

With a funding gap of 33,392,648,627 F CFA in three years of implementation of the Integrated National Strategic Plan for Elimination (PSNIE) of the National Council for the Fight against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria, Hepatitis, STIs and Epidemics (CNLS-TP) 2020-2024, there was a real need to advocate for the mobilization of domestic resources to fill these gaps. Thus, in August 2022, the national budget counterpart for malaria control in Benin for the year 2023 was increased. In fact, this amount went from an average of 1,039,901,000 CFA francs (2020 to 2022) to 2,500,000,000 CFA francs for the 2023 budget year, which is an increase of 140, 4%². What role did advocacy play in this budget increase?

¹ *Health Statistics Yearbook 2021*

² *Financial performance of the PSNIE, Malaria section, NMCP Review, Cotonou, April 202*

An opportune time for budget advocacy

The socio-political context and environment in Benin in 2022 was conducive to an increase in domestic resources for malaria control. Indeed, it has seen sectoral reforms in all areas including the health sector. These reforms have favored the adoption of new policies such as the national policy on community health, which is positioned as a catalyst for the continuous reduction of the incidence of major diseases and is in the process of being operationalized with the «one health» approach. Similarly, the establishment of public-private dialogue and public-private partnerships (PPP) has also strengthened the involvement of the private sector in the fight against malaria.

Through well-defined steps, budget advocacy for malaria control was then integrated into budget programming according to the following chronology:

1. Receipt of the budget framework letter for the year 2023 from the Ministry of Finance;
2. Development of the 2023 budget by each department of the Ministry of Health in the second quarter of 2022;
3. Transmission of the developed budgets to the Directorate of Planning, Administration and Finance (DPAF);
4. Compilation and transmission of the budgets by the DPAF to the Ministry of Finance before June 30, 2022;
5. Arbitration of the Minister of Finance with the Minister of Health;
6. Budget orientation debate in the National Assembly in June before the budget was transmitted to Parliament;
7. Approval of the draft state budget for the year 2023 by the National Assembly's Finance Committee;
8. Sectoral ministers appeared before parliamentarians during the budget session;
9. Vote on the budget for the year 2023, on December 1, 2022.

Key players to drive budget increase

Advocacy for increased domestic resources for malaria control was the culmination of actions by several stakeholders. The main advocacy interventions were made at different levels targeting different groups involved in malaria control.

Government

- ▶ Ministry of Health (CNLS-TP and NMCP): identification of the budget gap, proposal of actions and advocacy for the increase of the PNLP budget;
- ▶ Ministry of Economy and Finance: support and participation in the budget planning process;
- ▶ Parliament (Committee on Education, Culture, Employment and Social Affairs, Committee on Planning, Equipment and Production and the Finance Committee): Vote on the 2023 Finance Bill;
- ▶ Honorable Aké Natondé: Advocacy through communication to his fellow deputies and a joint plea of the deputies of the 8th legislature to the Minister of Economy and Finance.

Local authorities

Local and communal elected officials, crowned heads, opinion leaders and religious leaders are facilitators and spokespersons for society. They brought up the needs of the population in terms of malaria prevention, a disease that affects them all.

Civil society

The national coalition of «Zero Malaria» CSOs launched by Speak Up Africa, the Private Health Sector Platform, and the media ensured the communication, sensitization, and mobilization of private health actors, and advocacy towards technical and financial partners and companies.

Private Sector

The Ecobank Group has driven corporate engagement, while companies such as HECM, Polyclinique St VINCENT DE PAUL, Pharmacie Cristal Santé, Pharmaquick By ABT S. A, African Cashew Industry & Seeds (ACIS SAS), MTN Benin Mobile Network, Palutech, Go Africa Online, Sèzo Medical Imaging Center, Clinique Santé Sud, Berec, Pharmacie Camp Guézo, Mutuelle pour le Développement à la Base (MDB), Mindos Consultants, Fédération des Jeunes Chefs d'entreprise du Bénin (FEJEC) and many others have contributed to the mobilization of financial resources.

Multilateral and bilateral partners

WHO Benin, the Global Fund, USAID, CRS CHAI-Benin, ABMS-PSI, Plan International Benin and many other international NGOs have contributed financially and technically (monitoring and evaluation).

Key events and actions to advocate for increased financial resources

The stakeholders listed above were mobilized at key events that have driven an increase in resources and put forth the fight against malaria. These events included:

Launch of the «Zero Malaria, Starts With Me» campaign and «Zero Malaria, Business Leadership Initiative»

In November 2020, Benin's Minister of Health officially launched the «Zero Malaria! Starts With Me» campaign, an African Union and RBM Partnership initiative to end malaria launched in 2018 and «Zero Malaria! Business Leadership Initiative», an Ecobank Group and Speak Up Africa initiative launched in 2020 to engage the private sector to join the cause and support resource mobilization in the fight against malaria. The ceremony took place in Cotonou in the presence of the Representative of the Head of State to the CNLS-TP, its National Secretary, the Advisor in charge of HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, Tuberculosis and Malaria programs at the WHO-Benin Office, several political and administrative authorities, technical and financial partners, NGOs, representatives of SMEs, as well as a strong mobilization of the press. Thus, these launching ceremonies favored a better appropriation of the initiatives by the state and local authorities, the private sector, and the civil society in order to catalyze their commitment in the mobilization of resources for the fight against malaria.

Photo exhibition and corporate donations

In April 2022, the Ministry of Health, through the NMCP, in collaboration with Speak Up Africa, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and Ecobank Benin, organized a photo exhibition to advocate for the mobilization of domestic resources and the increase of external resources under the patronage of the Vice President of the Republic of Benin, H.E. Mariam Chabi Talata Zimé, on the sidelines of World Malaria Day. Through this event, corporate donors to the Zero Malaria Fund Benin presented checks amounting to 72,260,000 CFA francs to the NMCP, thus demonstrating their strong commitment to the fight against malaria.

Development of a national advocacy plan for the fight against malaria

A workshop to develop the national advocacy plan for the fight against malaria (2022-2024) was organized in November 2021 in order to harmonize the programming of advocacy actions and to ensure the conformity of advocacy interventions with the priorities of the national malaria control program. This plan, which relies on government, private sector, and civil society commitment, was implemented with targeted interventions for investment in malaria control.

Advocacy Green Walk ahead of World Malaria Day 2022

In Covè in the Zou department, the country organized a green walk on April 24, 2022, to raise awareness of the impact of malaria and advocate for better prioritization of the disease at the local government level, followed on April 25 by the official launch of the day, as well as the 15 days of social mobilization with communication focused on television, radio and community programs.

Key factors to consider for domestic resource mobilization

Thanks to an enabling environment, the advocacy of the stakeholders mentioned above, and a series of impetus events that put the fight against malaria at the heart of Benin's health priorities, the NMCP budget was doubled between 2022 and 2023. To achieve such a success, the following strategic elements were taken into account:

- ▶ Prioritization of domestic resource mobilization for malaria control;
- ▶ Political commitment of the State at a time when the government had undertaken multiple reforms in the health sector;
- ▶ Orientation of parliamentarians through a special session;
- ▶ Involvement of the private sector in the mobilization of corporate resources through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR);
- ▶ Engagement of champions, media, and civil society;
- ▶ Commitment of technical and financial partners working in the health sector to support and encourage local partners in their internal resource mobilization efforts;
- ▶ Multi-sectoral approach to malaria control.

Key factors for successful advocacy

This budget augmentation process has been a learning experience for the NMCP, but also for all actors in the fight against malaria. The following lessons learned are noted:

- ▶ The involvement of decision-makers from the beginning of the budget advocacy process is necessary for better ownership and representation in advocacy events and actions;
- ▶ An enabling environment and a stable socio-political climate are conducive to successful budget advocacy;
- ▶ An integrated strategic vision and an aligned budget to address the contextual challenges for all malaria control actors is important to determine what each actor will contribute;
- ▶ A multi-sectoral approach is essential for synergy of stakeholder actions;
- ▶ Strategic communication is key for successful advocacy;
- ▶ Identifying champions based on defined criteria (capacity to influence, knowledge of the issue, mastery of the environment, and level of commitment) is a crucial step in strengthening advocacy;
- ▶ Involving an advocacy partner, in collaboration with the NMCP, to support the engagement of champions can help boost the objectivity of the selection.

