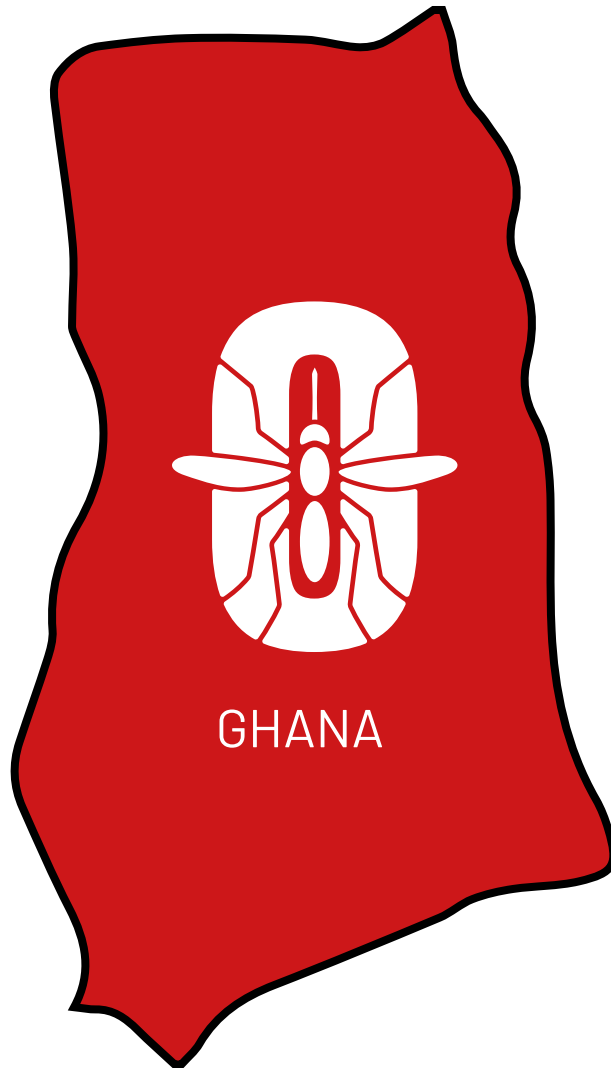




**BUSINESS  
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# **UNITING FORCES: GHANA'S MULTISTAKEHOLDER APPROACH TO ELIMINATING MALARIA**

Case study





**07** Millions Lives  
saved

**01** ■

Sustained global efforts have been made to reduce malaria cases and deaths over the past two decades. These efforts have contributed to saving more than **7 million lives** and averting more than **1.7 billion cases**. Yet, despite incredible progress, malaria remains a threat for populations around the world, causing about **619,000 deaths in 2021** - more than **96%** of which occurred in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>1</sup>

Since 2012, Ghana has seen a significant decline with a **90% decrease** in the number of confirmed malaria deaths. Despite this reduction, the disease remains a public health priority, with an estimated **5.3 million people** affected in 2021. This ongoing epidemic severely affects the economy due to reduced productivity, high absenteeism rates both in schools and in workplaces, lower purchasing power and increased health expenditure. Indeed, the GDP of malaria-endemic countries can be impacted by up to **5-6%**<sup>2</sup> and it is estimated that global GDP could increase by **\$2 trillion USD** if malaria is eliminated by 2030.<sup>3</sup>

In mid-2019, Ghana, with support from the World Health Organization, the RBM Partnership to End Malaria and partners, adopted the High Burden to High Impact Initiative (HBHI) that relies on four pillars:

- (1) Political will building to reduce malaria deaths;**
- (2) Strategic information to drive impact;**

- (3) Better guidance, policies, and strategies ; and**
- (4) A coordinated national malaria response.**

According to the WHO, the global financing of malaria control efforts totaled **\$3.5 billion** in 2021, which is around half as much as the estimated **\$7.3 billion** needed to implement the WHO's Global Technical Strategy for that year. In Ghana specifically, the National Malaria Elimination Program's (NMEP) National Strategic Plan (NSP 2021-2025) currently has a funding gap of **\$412 million USD**. Malaria elimination in Ghana is predicted to cost **USD 961 million** between 2020 and 2029. This includes more than **1 billion** missed days of work, **US \$2 billion** in health system expenditures, **US\$29 billion** in private-sector losses, and **US \$580 million** in reduced household income. Reducing these costs will remove barriers to universal health coverage and sustainable domestic financing of health.<sup>4</sup>

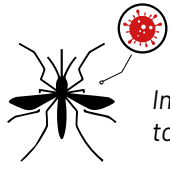
In order to achieve malaria elimination by 2030, the funding gap of the NMEP's Strategic Plan must be fully filled. The **"Zero Malaria Starts with Me"** campaign, through its collaborative approach, supports malaria-risk communities across the continent by advocating for stronger political leadership, increased funding, and a concerted, multi-sectoral effort towards malaria elimination.

<sup>1</sup>-<https://www.gatesfoundation.org/our-work/programs/global-health/malaria>

<sup>2</sup>-<https://www.malariafreefuture.org/malaria>

<sup>3</sup>-<https://www.malariabizalliance.org/>

<sup>4</sup>-[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341834720\\_Estimating\\_the\\_risk\\_of\\_declining\\_funding\\_for\\_malaria\\_in\\_Ghana\\_the\\_case\\_for\\_continued\\_investment\\_in\\_the\\_malaria\\_response](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341834720_Estimating_the_risk_of_declining_funding_for_malaria_in_Ghana_the_case_for_continued_investment_in_the_malaria_response)



## **BRINGING TOGETHER MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS TO ELIMINATE MALARIA IN GHANA**

A multistakeholder approach for malaria aims to explore options for improved coordination and collaboration, and to identify synergies between different sectors (public and private sectors, media, civil society, etc). In Ghana, there is a collaborative effort among stakeholders to discover more effective ways of reducing the spread of malaria.

### **THE NMEP DRIVING THE MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACH TO MALARIA ELIMINATION**

In Ghana, the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ghana Health Service (GHS) lead malaria control and elimination efforts. The NSP 2020-2025 is aligned with the Health Sector Medium Term Development Plan and national and global goals. Implementation of all malaria control and elimination activities is led by the GHS and NMEP and supported by numerous stakeholders and partners at all levels of the health system (national, regional, district, sub-district, and community levels). In addition, the inclusion of all key partners (in both public and private sectors) in the development of the NSP 2021-2025 aimed at harmonizing actions by all partners in support of one strategic plan. This was to ensure that efforts and resources are as efficient and effective as possible to maximize impact.

Sustained and consistent funding is necessary for successful prevention and control of malaria in Ghana. There is a need to leverage other government agencies and corporate bodies interested in preventing and controlling malaria. Private sector investment can help ensure that resource gaps identified in the funding gap analysis are addressed to cover the priorities identified in the strategic plan. The success of malaria control interventions depends greatly on government and partners' political will, commitment, and policy decisions to provide adequate funding for delivering services like preventive measures and quality-assured diagnoses and treatment; strengthening management in areas like surveillance, logistics and supply systems; and integrating malaria programs into primary health care and other health system platforms.

Today, Ghana shows leadership in being especially open to new innovations and approaches to tackling malaria. Especially in being 1 of 3 countries to host the trials of the RTS, S antimalarial vaccine and being the first country in the world to approve the use of the vaccine prior to the official recommendation of the WHO. This shows the government's willingness to be bold, confident and take ownership of its approach to the drive towards malaria elimination.



## THE PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS ON MALARIA OF GHANA TO STRENGTHEN ADVOCACY IN SUPPORT OF NATIONAL MALARIA ELIMINATION PRIORITIES

The Parliament of Ghana plays a key role in directing the affairs of the country, including the direction of the nation's investments in key sectors such as education, health, housing, sanitation and so on. It is therefore critical to the malaria elimination agenda to ensure the effective and ongoing engagement of Parliament. Indeed, the NSP 2021-2025 itself outlines activities targeting the Parliamentary Select Committee on Health. These parliamentary engagements are expected to propel critical actions required to highlight malaria elimination on the national health agenda.

It is in that context that a bipartisan group – the Parliamentary Caucus on Malaria – was established in July 2022 to raise awareness and demand rigorous and resolute action to fight malaria as part of global efforts to achieve elimination. Given Parliamentarians' power to hold governments accountable for their commitments, influence policies and funding, generate visibility, and provide leadership in support of malaria elimination, the Parliamentary caucus, composed of 20 parliamentarians with a diverse range of interests and sector specific interests, aims to :

- ▶ **Improve** the political, policy and funding environment to combat the suffering and mortality caused by malaria.
- ▶ **Advocate** for increased funding and

promote solutions for effective malaria reduction by developing a cohesive partnership and raising awareness, knowledge, and support among parliamentarians in Europe.

- ▶ **Promote** the sharing of knowledge and information, and support and coordinate parliamentarians' work around specific events, such as World Malaria Day.

In a two-day workshop held in July 2022, the caucus proposed an action plan that would guide their interventions for the rest of 2022 and 2023. The action plan focused on four specific objectives :

- ▶ **Keep** malaria high on the national and political agenda
- ▶ **Mobilize** resources and translate political commitment into concrete actions
- ▶ **Foster** multisectoral collaboration
- ▶ **Strengthen** parliamentary caucus oversight and accountability

To date, many activities planned were not completed due to a lack of financial resources. However, with minimal funds and abundant will-power, the caucus was able to engage with the media to place a high and regular spotlight on the malaria elimination agenda; map companies whose activities contribute to an increase in malaria burden who can be engaged to contribute to malaria control as a form of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); and give short statements on malaria to be used for quotes on printed materials and on social media.



Ecobank has set up a catalytic matching fund with an initial sum of **USD 120,000..**

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## ENGAGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA

The Ecobank Group, through its foundation, is the lead of the Zero Malaria Business Leadership Initiative (ZMBLI) in partnership with the RBM Partnership to End Malaria and Speak Up Africa. The initiative aims to mobilise national private sector companies to contribute to the fight to eliminate malaria by 2030. ZMBLI aims to achieve the following objectives :

- 1. Promote** domestic resource mobilization for sustainable funding of malaria control and elimination.
- 2. Mobilize** businesses and business leaders for malaria control and elimination.
- 3. Leverage** Ecobank's clients and partners to bring new resources.

Access to health has been a major focus of the Ecobank Foundation since its establishment in 1995. The Zero Malaria Business Leadership Initiative was launched at the regional level in July 2020 and has now been rolled-out in five African countries, including Ghana. As part of the initiative, Ecobank has set up a catalytic matching fund with an initial sum of **USD 120,000** in each of these countries to encourage companies of all sizes to support financially, or in kind, the efforts of national malaria programs. Ecobank also works with partners to help convey to business leaders the important role that the private sector can and must play in achieving the goal of malaria elimination. Hoping to target Ecobank's clients primarily, in three years, from 2020 to 2023, the initiative has mobilized **\$6 million USD** through financial and in-kind contributions from **60 companies**.

In Ghana, the initiative was launched on June 1st, 2023. Between June 2023 and March 2024, a total of **55 businesses** were engaged. Businesses were engaged during the launch ceremony and through two roundtable meetings organised separately by Ecobank and AngloGold Ashanti.

In addition, **3 business leaders** have been engaged as champions (*individual business leaders willing to leverage their influence and networks to support advocacy and resource mobilisation efforts*). While to date only 2 companies have made concrete contributions, there has been significant interest on the part of companies to contribute to malaria control and elimination efforts, therefore laying the foundation for further engagement in the coming months and years.

Given the significant negative impact of malaria on the Ghanaian economy, it is to the benefit of the private sector to play a key role in malaria elimination to promote equitable economic growth, in addition to their direct efforts to minimize the impact of malaria on businesses. Malaria interventions reduce healthcare costs for companies while improving workers' productivity. Broader investments in malaria control have the potential to unlock higher levels of consumer and household spending, boost market development, offer new growth opportunities, and bring social and reputational benefits to companies. Rather than working in silos and attempting to carry out individual malaria control efforts, businesses, organizations and the government must collaborate. The NMEP, non-governmental organizations, communities, media, and private sector companies should share experiences and knowledge to strengthen each other's malaria control and elimination efforts and align them with the NMSP 2021 - 2025.



AGAMal became the first private company to become a Principal Recipient of the *Global Fund*..

# 05

One of the examples of private sector engagement in the fight against malaria in Ghana is **3rd largest gold mining company in the world, AngloGold Ashanti (AGA)**.

In 2004, the company identified malaria as the biggest public health threat to its operations in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2005, the Mine Hospital recorded over **6,800 malaria cases** each month out of which **2,500 were mine workers**. An average of **3 days** taken off work per patient meant **7,500 man shifts lost per month**. Also, slow work rate during recuperation resulted in a major loss in productivity. Costs of malaria medication for treatment of AGA employees was over **US \$55,000** annually.

In view of this a comprehensive malaria control program was launched in 2005 to address this menace impacting productivity on the mine. The initial objective was to reduce the burden of malaria in Obuasi by **50%** within the first two years of Internal Residual Spraying (IRS) operations. In 2009, an independent entity, AngloGold Ashanti (Ghana) Malaria Control Limited (AGAMal), was created. In 2010, AGAMal became the first private company to become a Principal Recipient of the Global Fund and since then been receiving grant to implement IRS activities. This initiative enabled the Global Fund- funded IRS program to make savings on insecticide purchases and resultantly utilize the savings to expand into three districts in the Upper East region (Builsa North and South and Kassena Nanakana West).

Today, AGAMal continues to be a lifesaver and beneficiaries are extremely excited about the IRS initiative. Preliminary data from sentinel sites are indicative of some modest gains with respect to malaria morbidity in implementing districts. AGAMal has received a lot of support and recognition from the communities, local government,

Ministry of Health and the NMEP. There are collaborations and partnership initiatives with reputable research institutions to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation component of the initiative.

With their experience as a private sector company in the fight against malaria in Ghana, **Samuel ASIEDU, Director of AGAMal** shared some success drivers in engaging other private sector companies in malaria elimination efforts :

### **Reach out to other companies in the same sector**

Given the similarities in the thematic areas of interventions, it is easier to start discussions with companies of the same sector. One of the main aspects is the understanding of one another's priorities; in fact, for the mining sector, safety is a focus of all companies, therefore health preventive initiatives are always welcome as they are seen as a potential boost in workers' productivity and consequently high returns. So far, engagement meetings with private sector companies in the Ashanti and Eastern region were held in December 2022 to discuss synergies of action in the fight against malaria. In addition, in August 2023, a roundtable discussion was organized with a broader list of companies to further the conversations on preventive initiatives for their staff.

### **Start with clear and short engagements**

Although most private sector companies might be interested in the health of their workers, they do not have enough time on their hands to discuss it. It is therefore very important to prepare a pitch that allows them to clearly understand what is expected, why, who is involved, and what they will gain from such action; keep the messages short and sweet.



Public campaigns that can reach vulnerable populations through the media, can be highly impactful..

## **Foster vertical and lateral engagements**

Lateral engagements consist in engaging fellow line managers and other mid-level managers that master the operations of the company. The added value in reaching out to them is to discuss priorities and feasibility from a technical standpoint. Similarly, vertical engagements are also imperative as they ensure that upper management is committed to supporting the initiative that should fit into the company's strategic orientations. Finally, vertical engagements also include workers, as they are key stakeholders in the appropriation and success of the initiative.

## **Clearly outline what's in it for them**

When engaging a company in the fight against malaria, it is helpful to clearly present the argument for investing in malaria for the company and offer an analysis of the value for money and the value for resources of investment to meet desired goals. In other words, clearly outline what's in it for them. Outside of improving the health of workers, they will need to know how it will boost their revenue, appearance, and relationships with communities.

## **THE MEDIA, A KEY STAKEHOLDER TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT MALARIA CONTROL AND ELIMINATION**

A lack of knowledge and awareness regarding a disease is a major drawback to the prevention and control of any public health challenge. For malaria, this can be addressed greatly by strengthening health communication tools and disseminating health information through conventional and/or digital media. In covering the latest scientific data on malaria, personal stories, and policy interventions, the media can provide local populations with insights into how serious the disease's threat is and increase understanding of the various prevention and control strategies.

These can all lead to increasing the adherence of populations to interventions. The main media partner in the fight against malaria in Ghana is the African Media and Malaria Research Network (AMMREN), that is a registered non-governmental organization made up of African journalists and scientists working together towards the control and elimination of malaria. Established in 2006, AMMREN is based in Accra, Ghana, and has, over the past **17 years**, been actively involved in media advocacy for the elimination of malaria and other diseases on the African continent.

The National Malaria Media Coalition (NMMC), an initiative of the NMEP and Speak Up Africa, which was set up in 2020 as part of the Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign, aimed at enhancing the quality and quantity of malaria media coverage and supporting broader advocacy. The network currently hosts **100 members** across **16 regions** of the country.

*Dr. Charity Binka, Executive Secretary of AMMREN shared three main ways the media can help boost malaria elimination efforts :*

## **Raise awareness and education**

Since malaria is as much about prevention as it is about treatment, public campaigns that can reach vulnerable populations through the media, can be highly impactful. The media can target and reach communities from both urban and rural communities and encourage them to act on accessible prevention methods. To ensure a sustainable push for strengthened communications, it is vital to bring journalists onboard to become advocates for the cause of eliminating malaria.

An example of how this has been done is the production and broadcasting through traditional and social media of a series of advocacy and sensitization videos featuring the champion Gifti Anti as part of the **Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign**.





The *media* can generate public support for malaria control efforts...

## Influence advocacy agenda and policy change

Media has the power to influence public opinion and drive policy change. To eliminate malaria, we need the political will and concerted action of decision-makers, who are influenced and held to account by media houses across the country, continent, and the world. The agenda-setting role of the news media is a powerful influence on what we pay attention to and how we understand the world that lies beyond personal experience. By highlighting the impact of malaria on individuals, families, and communities, the media can generate public support for malaria control efforts and advocate for increased government funding and resources.

## Translate scientific research and knowledge

The media has been pivotal in amplifying the reach and the impact of public health awareness campaigns on malaria. However, in order for scientific research and knowledge to be translated by journalists for the lay public, they need to be equipped with the necessary skills to provide timely information on malaria control and elimination efforts and drive the national conversation on the disease. Thus, AMMREN has over the years been involved in the training of African journalists in malaria reporting and produced documentaries and published the Eyes on Malaria magazine on the disease. Between 2007 and 2010, AMMREN members across Africa, followed the RTS, S malaria vaccine trials, visited the **11 trial sites** and reported extensively on the process to sustain public interest in the final outcomes of the vaccine to ensure its appropriation when licensed. The network also built the capacity of scientists to work with the media at the vaccine trial sites.

There is also a need to prepare current and future leaders to effectively utilize communication strategies to promote malaria control through behavior change and policy implementation and strengthening engagements between health professionals and journalists to help create a better public understanding of the current state of malaria interventions.

Recently, AMMREN has also organized field trips for journalists to visit health research centers carrying out studies on malaria to further deepen their understanding and engagement with issues related to the disease.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND ADVOCACY GROUPS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF MALARIA IN GHANA

Civil society plays a crucial role in the fight against malaria in Ghana. In fact, it can advocate for policy change, monitor interventions, and foster partnerships to work towards the reduction of the burden of malaria and improve the health outcomes in communities.

The Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Malaria (GCNM) is a civil society network in Ghana with over **200 individual members** across the **16 regions** of the country. This coalition serves as a Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM) for Global Fund with a mandate to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria, and other communicable diseases in the country. They advocate for members to include malaria elimination activities in their work plans, work with government and private sector to increase domestic funding to malaria through advocacy and strategic engagements.



*Empower individuals to adopt behaviors that foster control and elimination of the disease..*

The National Malaria Advocacy Committee is a semi-independent body that aims at supporting the NMEP in carving out advocacy strategies to ensure that the zero-malaria agenda gets attention nationally, especially in regard to funding allocated to the elimination of the disease. It regroups members from various sectors, including academia, private sector companies, public sector institutions, civil society and media, and aligns its communication and advocacy strategy with the NSP 2020-2025.

As mentioned previously, private sector companies are key actors for resource mobilization for malaria elimination.

In Ghana, they have shown engagement and willingness to contribute to NMEP's elimination agenda. Typically, private sector companies are keen to match one-another's contributions to get the same amount of visibility, workers productivity, and reputation as their competitors. The NMAC can leverage that natural competition to ensure that they highlight companies' achievements through media engagements and information sharing using online platforms and vehicles such as newsletters.

The advocacy efforts focus on mobilizing support from individuals like traditional, religious and opinion leaders including

queen mothers, chiefs and policy makers such as regional house of chiefs, aimed at increasing their commitment at all levels to allocate resources to malaria services. On a more organizational level, advocacy continues to be done with members of district assemblies and other political bodies, corporate bodies, the media, civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based groups (community-based, non-governmental, and faith-based organizations) and other opinion leaders. Moreover, advocacy groups are established to target members of parliament and the private sector to increase domestic funding.

Communications and advocacy efforts of the malaria control and ultimate elimination agenda focus on near-term priorities such as mobilizing the power of mass communications to empower individuals to adopt behaviors that foster control and elimination of the disease and directing policy makers' attention to important subjects regarding malaria and framing those issues for debate and resolution. It is important to note that GHS has set up an inter-agency coordinating committee on health promotion. NMAC aims to see how to fuse efforts for the fight against malaria to be included to that health promotion agenda for more consistency and sustainability.

*In conclusion, Ghana's journey in combating malaria underscores a compelling narrative of innovation, collaboration, and resilience. Through strategic initiatives and the unwavering dedication of various stakeholders, significant strides have been made towards malaria reduction. This case exemplifies how leveraging diverse partnerships and embracing multistakeholder approaches can catalyze progress in public health challenges. Ghana's experience offers invaluable lessons on the importance of unity and adaptability in the global fight against malaria, highlighting a path forward that can inspire other African nations.*



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