

Action on malaria at a cross-roads

By : Michel ODIKA

In Congo-Brazzaville, as in many other African countries, building, sustaining and improving the malaria response will always be a continuing and challenging process. Yet this country has the will, means and knowledge needed to make real headway. Thus, today the foundations exist for the Congolese to mount a response commensurate with the challenge of controlling malaria. However, to get them to the point where they could be preserved from the devastating effects of the disease will require that every aspect of the response be sustained over the long termâ€¦



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How to engage all key stakeholders?

Michel ODIKA

Need for a clear and comprehensive sense of direction. In Congo-Brazzaville (Central Africa), as is often the case in many developing countries, malaria still gives reason for concern. For the most part, the dynamics of the disease continues to outpace the response. To date, for instance, few African countries can be cited as models of good practice when it comes to responding to malaria. In our globalized and increasingly complex world, key to success in fighting the disease lies in a full-scale response under the auspices of an Observatory (1,2,3):

- Partnership and network that have yet to be established;
- Innovative structure expected to be strong at its base without having weaknesses at the top;
- With the Minister of Health as chair;
- With an Action Framework, a Coordinating Authority, a Monitoring and Evaluation System, Warning Mechanisms;
- Inclusive of a broad range of actors and sectors;
- Responsive to people's needs and expectations.

Further evidence and better performance. As part of the Coordinating Authority, a National Malaria Commission should have representatives from the health sector, sanitation services, universities, research institutions, parliament, civil society organizations, and key ministries such as finance, planning, environment and social welfare :

Typically, a Malaria Coordinating Authority should also include Advisory Committees on specialized areas i.e. hygiene and sanitation (4), prevention, care : Its authority would derive from three sources:

- 1) 1) From government, which requires better governance and further leadership, sustained political will and commitment, as well as delegation of authority through laws and procedures;

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- 2) 2) From its own competence, which requires adequate budgets, qualified staffs and permanent access to advice, training and technical support;
- 3) 3) From stakeholders who recognize its mandate from government and its competence.

As partners considered to be equally important and essential to successful outcomes, stakeholders will only have confidence in a national Malaria Coordinating authority if they feel they are adequately consulted and otherwise involved in mutually beneficial relationships with the authority.

Providing credible alternatives to failing approaches. In practical terms, connecting actors from converging sectors should be all involved in regular reviews and updates of National Malaria Plans. Their engagement would mean that they are strongly committed to ensuring that the plan is implemented.

In Congo-Brazzaville, as in many other African countries, building, sustaining and improving the malaria response will always be a continuing and challenging process. Yet this country has the will, means and knowledge needed to make real headway. Thus, today the foundations exist for the Congolese to mount a response commensurate with the challenge of controlling malaria. However, to get them to the point where they could be preserved from the devastating effects of the disease will require that every aspect of the response be sustained over the long term.

Doctor Michel ODIKA, copyright 2010

1. Michel ODIKA, Advocacy for a Malaria Observatory
2. Michel ODIKA, Malaria Observatory (Slide presentation)
3. Michel ODIKA, Malaria Observatory & Human Development Project
4. Michel ODIKA, Assainissement: vers une nouvelle donne (Tribune de Genève, copyright 2010)

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