

Malaria investments: corporate social responsibility at the national level

Professor William Brieger provides the detail on how the private sector is truly starting to take on some of the burden of disease control

The 2014 World Malaria Day on 25 April continued with the theme of last year, 'Invest in the Future: Defeat Malaria'.

There have been major changes in the malaria funding landscape over the past couple of years, including a new funding mechanism for the Global Fund. The inability of donor assistance to address all malaria needs is clear. Thus, it has also become more apparent that local and national resources will be urgently needed to meet and maintain targets and move towards elimination.

Last year in this issue we looked at the broad role of international corporations in the fight against malaria. This year we bring the focus closer to where the planning and action take place, within the malaria endemic countries of Africa. Ghana is used as our case study to examine the various ways that locally based businesses can carry out their corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the fight against malaria.

First we should note that the line between international and national corporations sometimes becomes blurred. A major international telecoms company, for example, may have a locally licensed affiliate that makes its own CSR decisions. Also, there are truly indigenous companies that want to play their part. The important task is for National Malaria Control Programmes (NMCPs), their donor partners and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to identify these potential sources of support, make proposals to them, and bring them into an active national partnership to roll back malaria.

GhanaWeb's columnist Sodzi-Tettey wrote a feature in 2011 on malaria control in Ghana from pre-independence to the present.¹ He learned from the Ghana NMCP that there are 'specific opportunities for corporate Ghana to contribute...procuring insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) for free distribution to their staff, liaising with the programme to implement indoor residual spraying (IRS) programmes, procurement of rapid diagnostic test kits and the approved antimalarials to ensure that malaria is diagnosed and treated correctly in particular communities and clinics. Other opportunities include setting up workplace Malaria Control Programmes, providing desks with information on malaria prevention, education of staff on environmental management, branding of company products with malaria information, engaging local celebrities to champion malaria advocacy/concerts on malaria, supporting innovations

on malaria...research into vaccines, insecticide-treated wall linings, cloths, etc. Some of the actual contributions are described below.

Golden opportunities

We can build on our discussions from 2013 by looking at AngloGold Ashanti in Ghana.² They began in 2005 by focusing on Obuasi District, their base, with a programme of indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) for all houses in the district. They reduced the number of malaria cases seen at local health facilities,³ and parlayed this experience into a programme called 'AngloGold Ashanti Malaria Control Limited', that became a Principal Recipient (PR) of a Global Fund grant in Ghana, expanding IRS to 40 districts.⁴ In its role as PR, AngloGold Ashanti was featured by the Global Fund in a case study that outlines the following key lessons:⁵

- A successful public/private partnership project has the potential to play a great impact in the fight against malaria.
- Creating a not-for-profit legal subsidiary as a special-purpose vehicle for management of grant funds and activities is important for programme implementation and promotes transparency.

Subsequently, other gold companies have gotten into the act. In 2009, Chirano Gold Mines Limited launched a US\$600 000 4-year malaria control programme for its own operational area. They distributed insecticide-treated bednets, and carried out IRS, environmental management and public education. They too documented a reduction in malaria cases at the local health facilities.⁶ The corporation expects to extend its efforts into more communities by 2016. Kinross Gold, the parent company explained that the 'Chirano model has contributed to the development of standards for malaria control in Ghana by the Ghana Health Services (GHS), through the National Malaria Control Programme (NMCP). The Chirano Malaria Control Programme is represented on the Malaria Vector Control oversight committee of the NMCP of GHS'.⁷

Another gold mining corporation, Newmont Ghana Gold Limited (NGGL), which is operating the Ahafo Mine in the Brong Ahafo region, launched an integrated community malarial control programme in 2009 as part of its CSR in its host communities. Contributions included equipping the Gyedu Health Center Laboratory with diagnostic equipment to be manned by trained laboratory technicians and distribution of free treated nets to households at two of its settlement sites at Ntotroso and Ola senior high school.⁸

Professor William R Brieger is from the Department of International Health, The Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health; and is Senior Malaria Adviser for Jhpiego, an affiliate of the Johns Hopkins University.



Figure 1. Malaria treatment provided by Ghana Health Service in STARCHPS compounds. Jhpiego, with support from Jubilee Oil Consortium, trains the community health officers on appropriate malaria case management

Banking on malaria control

The corporate contribution does not always involve commodities. Access Bank of Ghana provided an educational seminar for small- and medium- size enterprises (SMEs) on workplace policies for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), and malaria. The programme brought together 130 SMEs operating in different sectors of the Ghanaian economy. Participants were taught practical steps in developing workplace health policy on TB, malaria, and HIV/AIDS to improve the wellbeing of their staff and improve productivity and profitability.⁹

Stanbic Bank Ghana (a member of the Standard Bank Group), during the 2012 World Malaria Day, teamed up with other partners to distribute mosquito nets to its staff and the Frafraha community in Accra. The Bank wants to be considered as a member of the United Against Malaria (UAM) 'malaria safe' campaign by distributing bed nets, informational materials, and UAM bracelets to employees.¹⁰

Local affiliates take action against malaria

Ghana is well known for both gold and chocolate. The Hershey Company's Ghana operations jumped into the mobile communication movement to fight against malaria with its CocoaLink Mobile Phone Network for disease prevention which provides mobile phones and solar chargers for women in farming communities.¹¹ In the process it is working with the global non-profit, Malaria No More. Hershey has already 'recycled' over 500 cell phones from its employees to redistribute to the rural women. Text messages are delivered to the women in English and local languages address agricultural issues and disease prevention. Hopefully over 8000 rural women farmers will soon be reached. The link with Malaria No More's 'Night Watch' programme will ensure the women get messages warning about malaria and the need to use nets just before they and their children should be going to sleep. According to Hershey, 'CocoaLink is on track for a broad scale-up and is well positioned to touch more than 100,000 people in Ghana's cocoa region. All interested Ghana cocoa farmers can enroll in CocoaLink'.¹²

The Hyundai Motor Company has committed millions of Ghana Cedis in the fight against malaria in some principal cities in some selected regions of Ghana. Action was coordinated by Auto Plaza, the sole distributors of Hyundai vehicles in the country. In 2011 the company donated 500 ITNs and embarked on educational campaigns about environmental management.¹³ Deputy Health Minister Rojo Mettle Nunoo during the launch of the Hyundai Motor Company malaria campaign stressed that 'citizens also have a key responsibility in malaria prevention', by using the ITNs that donors provide.¹⁴

According to the Ghana News Agency in 2010, 'The mobile phone service provider, MTN Ghana, has supplied insecticide treated bednets and thousands of Cedis worth of malarial drugs to residents of selected communities across the country, as part of its annual 21-day 'Yello' Care' programme which started a week ago'. The Yello' Care train also made stops in various communities to educate the public about malaria.¹⁵

Oil and malaria don't mix

The Jubilee Consortium working off the coast of Western Region, Ghana, has pledged its support to improving primary healthcare including control of malaria in six coastal districts in a 5-year project that began in May 2011. The Consortium consists of Tullow Oil Ghana, Kosmos Energy, Anadarko, the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC), Sabre Oil, and the EO Group. The Consortium brought Jhpiego, an affiliate of the Johns Hopkins University, on board to implement the effort to improve the quality of services, including malaria, at the Community-based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) compounds.¹⁶ The project was named STARCHPS and is a unique public/private partnership involving the Jubilee Group, the Ghana Health Service (figures 1 and 2), and Jhpiego.

Now near the end of its third year of operation the STARCHPS programme has reached all 61 functional CHPS compounds in the six districts, trained the community health officers in charge, trained community health committee members, and equipped community volunteers. A major intervention was the development of a unique set of service and performance standards for CHPS to ensure and maintain quality of services.¹⁷

In 2011, ExxonMobil Foundation announced a donation of \$500 000 to establish a malaria diagnostic laboratory for the HopeXchange Medical Center at its health facility in Kumasi. ExxonMobil said that the 'center will also serve as a site for clinical trials of antimalarial drugs using internationally recognized best clinical practices'.¹⁸

An indigenous company

Finally, we did find one example of a purely indigenous Ghanaian company getting involved in controlling malaria. The blog, Ghanaian Reactor Online reported in 2009 that, 'Private waste management giant in Ghana ZoomLion will start the Nationwide Mosquito Control Program (NAMCOP) in all ten regions of Ghana after its formal launch.¹⁹ The effort focused on prevention of mosquito transmitted diseases such as filariasis (also

known as elephantiasis), yellow fever, viral hemorrhagic fevers, and malaria’.

A major focus of ZoomLion is on clearing mosquito breeding areas. The initiative was a collaborative effort between the government and the management of ZoomLion, larviciding was a key component.²⁰

Lessons in malaria CSR

The foregoing examples of socially responsible malaria programmes by corporations operating within malaria-endemic countries show a great variety of potential intervention types, partnership arrangements, and geographical coverage. We assume that there are other examples of corporate contributions against malaria in Ghana, and therefore, the ones we present here are illustrative. While any one individual corporate effort will not eliminate malaria, the combination of this variety of programming makes a major collective contribution to the national fight against malaria.

To be most effective, corporations must sponsor interventions that reflect international standards and best practices. This is why training programmes for local enterprises on malaria control are important. Ensuring standard approaches also means public/private partnerships, wherein corporations link with national and regional malaria control programmes to ensure their actions promote the medicines and commodities approved for use by the country. Three-way partnerships have

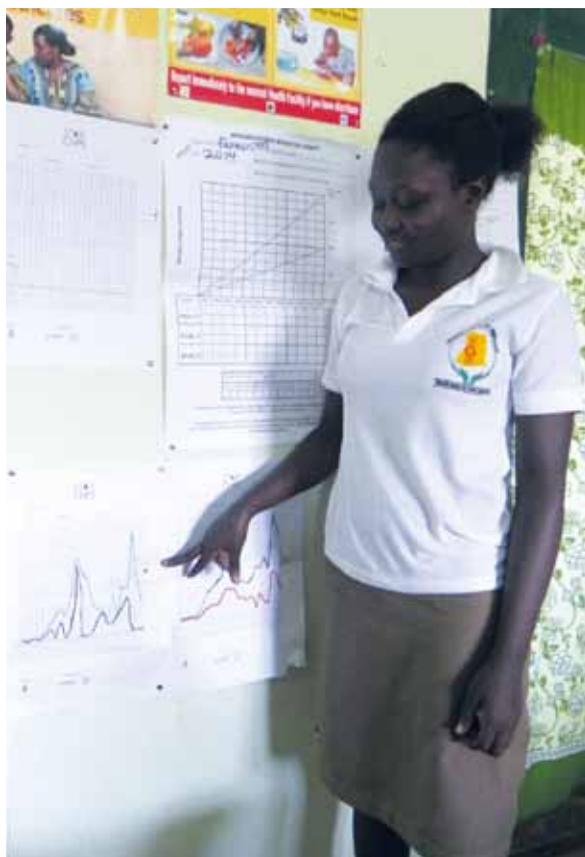


Figure 2. Community Health Officer working in a STARCHPS compound points out her graphing of malaria cases. She can perform rapid diagnostic tests and give artemisinin-based combination therapy

also been seen to be effective, wherein corporations enlist the technical capacity of NGOs to deliver malaria services in collaboration with NMCPs and regional and district health authorities.

No contribution in the fight against malaria is too small. If a branch of a company can provide ITNs in the community surrounding their worksite, this can make a difference to the local people. Some corporations might start with such a local commitment and over time develop the expertise to take their efforts to scale at a district or regional or even national level. Hopefully this review of Ghana will stimulate other malaria-endemic countries to recognise their own corporate partners and even bring new companies into the malaria control partnership.

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