



# Partners rally to launch new offensive against malaria in Zambezi region

24 February 2016

With a remarkable 97% decline in malaria cases over the last decade, Namibia has made significant progress towards its public commitment to eliminate malaria by 2020.\* Efforts from the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) and supportive community involvement have played a crucial role in this success. But malaria outbreaks in recent years have reminded us that a great deal of work remains if we are to wipe out malaria from the Zambezi Region and from Namibia as a whole. With this in mind, the University of Namibia (UNAM), the MoHSS, and a group of partners – under the banner of the Namibia Malaria Elimination Research Partnership (NAMEP) – are launching a second phase of research that will catalyze greater progress in freeing Namibia from malaria by 2020.

For the next two malaria seasons, NAMEP will collaborate with the MoHSS' National Vector-borne Diseases Control Programme (NVDCP) to test new weapons in the fight against malaria. NAMEP builds off of previous work to strengthen malaria surveillance and will use new strategies to investigate, test for, treat, and protect against malaria in randomly selected areas of Zambezi region, west of Katima Mulilo. NAMEP will assess how effective these strategies are, and the results will provide valuable insight into how best to combat malaria in the future. Evidence from this research will contribute to a further reduction in malaria cases and deaths in Zambezi, Namibia, southern Africa, and around the world.

Specific activities in the new research programme include:

- NAMEP and the MoHSS will use a new case investigation system to improve the prevention and treatment to those most at risk for malaria.
- In certain areas, everyone living around identified malaria cases will receive treatment for malaria, because we know that those living closest to a malaria case (within a few hundred meters) are at increased risk of also contracting the disease. In other areas, those living near people with malaria will first be tested and then treated, if positive, which is the current intervention employed by the MoHSS. By conducting both kinds of intervention we can compare them and determine which is most effective.
- Additionally, households receiving one of the interventions may receive additional protection against malaria from spraying (on interior walls) of insecticides that are new to Namibia. These insecticides are safe for humans but kill mosquitoes that transmit malaria and rest on interior walls of houses.

To launch this research campaign as a united force, senior members from the MoHSS gathered with a group of NAMEP researchers in Katima Mulilo on 17 February. The group included Dr. Davis Mumbengegwi from the University of Namibia's Multidisciplinary Research Center; Dr. Roland (Roly) Gosling from the University of California, San Francisco Global Health Group's Malaria Elimination Initiative (MEI); Dr. Michelle Hsiang from the MEI and the University of Texas, Southwestern; and Dr. Immo Kleinschmidt from the London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

\*Percent decline based on 2004-2014 data from the World Health Organization's World Malaria Report 2015.



To advance Namibia's goal of eliminating malaria by 2020, seven public health partners came together in April 2014 to establish the Namibia Malaria Elimination Research Partnership (NAMEP). The partnership was originally formed to support the implementation of a randomized controlled trial of innovative and targeted responses to malaria cases. NAMEP partners consist of:

- Namibia Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS), National Vector-borne Diseases Control Programme (NVDCP)
- University of Namibia, Multidisciplinary Research Centre
- University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Global Health Group's Malaria Elimination Initiative (MEI)
- University of Texas, Southwestern
- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)
- Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI)
- University of Witswatersrand
- Novartis Foundation

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