



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: LESSONS FROM ASIA PACIFIC

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## *What does community engagement mean?*

Community engagement is a **participatory process** in which communities are **actively involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation** of malaria programs.

Whereas community engagement has become an integral component of successful public health programming in numerous health areas, it has **not yet been fully integrated into malaria elimination** efforts.

With widespread recognition that **traditional approaches** – without community engagement—**will not be sufficient to achieve elimination** in Asia Pacific, it is critical that stakeholders support NMCPs to engage communities more and better.

A recent global review found that community engagement is often misunderstood by malaria professionals as community-based interventions or social and behavior change communication (SBCC.) Whereas community engagement refers to a more holistic and integrated approach to **jointly designing, delivering and assessing malaria programs together with meaningful participation from communities at risk.**

“Implementing effective community engagement for malaria control and elimination: Opportunities and challenges” UCSF, May 2020

# Community Engagement: A Lifecycle Approach

**Understanding** the needs & preferences of communities affected by malaria

- Co-creating new vector control products to meet the needs and preferences of communities at risk
- Conducting ethnographic, HCD or other formative research to understand psychosocial and environmental barriers and opportunities to increasing consistent vector control practices
- Collecting and using continuous feedback and input to ensure programming aligns with community needs and preferences



**Delivering & Promoting** vector control products and services with communities

- Identifying distribution outlets and channels that already serve communities at risk, and integrating VC products and services into these channels
- Ensuring delivery mechanisms are aligned with the identify and influencers of those at risk
- Co-creating messaging and co-delivering content to promote the benefits of VC in terms that resonate with communities at risk. Delivery should be two-way
- Integrating with distribution/promotion of other health or non-health issues, considering recommendations from the community



**Monitoring, Evaluating and Refining** programming with communities

- Involving community members in the design, execution, analysis and interpretation of monitoring and evaluating findings
- Working hand-in-hand with communities to apply M&E findings to identify and implement improvements in programming going forward

As discussed during the  
APMEN VCWG Online  
Workshop July 2020

## BEST PRACTICES IN THE REGION: GOING BEYOND IEC & SBCC

- **Community Dialogue Approach** is one of multiple, emerging community engagement approaches gaining traction and evidence of impact.
- **Community health workers can serve as a bridge between communities and programmers, though should not be equated with community engagement.** Opportunities to leverage CHWs further for community engagement have been well-documented for malaria and other health issues.
- **Collaboration with local leaders is key—including traditional and religious leaders,** as well as local political leaders—to securing and sustaining community buy-in to support vector control and malaria elimination goals.

# BEST PRACTICES IN THE REGION: UTILIZING NON-TRADITIONAL DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

- **Multisectoral delivery approaches are required** for effective vector control, given the multisectoral nature of both mosquito and community behavior. Community actors and channels relevant to environmental, WASH, education, housing/urban planning as well as health have potential to assist with the delivery of vector control products and interventions.
- **Non-health distribution channels can expand access** for communities, including retail outlets, schools, community events and community outreach mechanisms outside of the health sector. One example of this is Cambodia's use of community rangers to distribute "forest packs"—containing multiple vector control products—to forest goers at risk of malaria.
- **Women and children are promising delivery and change agents.** Workshop discussion highlighted the potential of women and children to leverage their community-level access and influence to improve gender equity and increase as well as sustain vector control results.
- **Communities can help identify appropriate, targeted distribution approaches required in elimination settings,** compared with mass distribution used in control contexts.

# NORMALIZING WOMEN'S ROLE IN VECTOR CONTROL



Assess gaps in women's involvement in vector control at household, community & professional levels

- Conduct a needs assessment to identify gaps
- Develop & implement initiatives to increase women's involvement

Promote the role of women in vector control

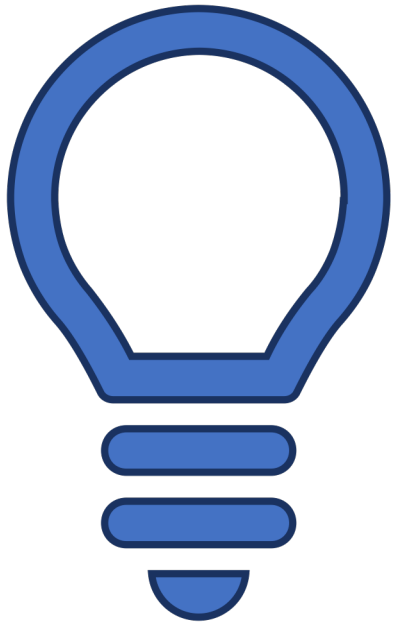
- Identify community champions of women's involvement in vector control, including women leaders and mentors
- Develop school-based curriculum featuring women as VC leaders
- Portray women and girls as actively and positively contributing to vector control programming through multiple channels of communication to promote VC

Prioritize women's employment in vector control

- Review VC positions and identify gaps in gender equity.
- Deliver training opportunities to enable women to be competitive for VC job opportunities
- Require reporting for vector control programming to provide opportunities on the ration of women/men employed by level

“Accelerate to Equal” meeting report  
published in the Malaria Journal 2018

# INNOVATIONS WITH POTENTIAL TO FACILITATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Digital  
research &  
health

- Mobile & digital methods are making it easier to engage communities *more quickly and more continuously* i.e. design, co-creation, monitoring & evaluation phases
- Digital technologies have potential to enhance the quality and reach of vector control programming

New  
products

- Manufacturers, product development partners and funders are working with communities to design new vector control products to better address the needs and preferences of underserved/last mile communities at risk

New delivery  
mechanisms

- Bundled products & services
- Integrated delivery, linking VC with other products and services valued by communities at risk

## EMERGING PRIORITIES

- **Organize a more focused review the use of community volunteers** –health and non-health—to support vector control and elimination targets in the region, against community engagement principles to identify opportunities to further leverage this channel. This would include sharing more detailed information about the specific approaches used to engage community volunteers in mapping, co-creating (for example contents of a forest goer “pack” of multiple vector control products), executing and evaluating vector control and other health programs in select countries.
- **Purposefully identify specific opportunities to use a gender lens to inform, deliver and evaluate vector control programs** in Asia Pacific. Assess and document Asia-Pacific cases where a gender-transformative approach has expanded vector control and elimination results.
- **Develop standard operating procedure (SOP)-type guides to promote vector control community engagement best practices** in support of vector control and elimination more broadly. These SOPs could be organized by opportunity area discussed during the July 2020 online workshop.
- **Leverage technology to discuss community engagement principles with a broader audience of stakeholders** and maintain momentum with a core group of “champions” to promote more and better application of community engagement principles and best practices.

**Thank You**