Photo: Toby Madden (MMV)

OPT-SMC

Optimizing Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention in West and Central Africa

EDCTP

This project is part of the EDCTP2 programme supported by the European Union

OPT-SMC Project:
Improving the delivery of Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention by enhancing the capacity of National Malaria Control and Elimination Programmes

➔ Why is the OPT-SMC project needed?

Malaria continues to be a major public health challenge. In 2018, an estimated 405,000 people lost their lives to the disease.[1] Children under the age of 5 are especially at risk, and the most intense malaria transmission occurs in West and Central Africa during and shortly after the rainy season. Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention (SMC), an intervention introduced in 2012, is a proven strategy developed specifically for children living in these areas, recommended by the World Health Organization.[2]

Although SMC has been shown to substantially reduce cases and deaths due to malaria,

coverage remains suboptimal in some areas. While countries have been quick to adopt SMC, only about 65 - 73% of eligible children had access to SMC in 2018.[1] Moreover, in areas where SMC is being implemented, not all children received all the required monthly treatments. Thus, there is an urgent need to optimize the delivery of SMC to close these gaps.

To address these challenges, EDCTP put out a call for proposals, and a consortium led by University of Thiès responded and was awarded a five- year grant to work on these issues.

1. WHO (2019) World Malaria Report 2019. WHO: Geneva. https://www.who.int/malaria/publications/world-malaria-report-2019/en/
2. https://www.who.int/malaria/areas/preventive_therapies/children/en/
3. WHO (2020) Tailoring malaria interventions in the COVID-19 response. https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/tailoring-malaria-interventions-in-the-covid-19-response

➔ What are the project's objectives?

The primary objective of this project is to strengthen the capacity of National Malaria Control and Elimination Programmes (NMCEPs) in the following areas:

➥ Effective planning
➥ Implementation research to improve SMC delivery
➥ Monitoring and evaluation of delivery and impact
➥ Surveillance and monitoring systems.

In addition, the project aims to develop tools for planning, monitoring, implementation research,

and evaluation of SMC delivery; and to promote inter-country collaboration and sharing of information and expertise.

Presently, there is a risk that malaria mortality in children could increase due to the COVID-19 pandemic as it could restrict access to health care.[3] The pandemic could also expose the health workers and care givers to additional risks of infection. OPT-SMC has produced training videos to show how to deliver SMC safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The project team is also supporting countries to develop plans for their operational research projects.

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L'HUMILITÉ MON CHOIX, L'EXCELLENCE MA VOIE — UNIVERSITE DE THIÈS

LONDON SCHOOL of HYGIENE &TROPICAL MEDICINE

MMV — Medicines for Malaria Venture

> "...only about 65 - 73% of eligible children had access to SMC in 2018."

➡ How is the project organized?

Work Package	Activity	Leading partner
Work Package 1	Project management and networking	University of Thiès (UT)
Work Package 2	Capacity development for implementation research	WHO Special Programme for Research & Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR)
Work Package 3	Data management, data analysis and data sharing	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)
Work package 4	Communication, dissemination and use of results	Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV))

➡ Who is involved in the project?

The OPT-SMC project will build upon the existing network of **SMC Working Group**. Formed in 2013, the SMC Working Group is a body that was created to coordinate and provide guidance on SMC implementation to participating countries. Thirteen of these countries are already implementing SMC (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo).

Countries are being supported by academic partners in Senegal (**UT**) and the UK (**LSHTM**)) as well as international organization and product development partners, (**TDR**) and (**MMV**), respectively (see table above). The advisory group for the proposed project will include **West African Health Organization (WAHO)**, and **World Health Organization (WHO)**.