

Regional Committee for Africa - Seventy-second Session

Statement by RBM Partnership to End Malaria on Agenda 17.2: Global Strategy on human resources for health

Chairperson, Honorable Delegates, Regional Director,

The RBM Partnership to End Malaria welcomes this progress report on the Global strategy on human resources for health. The last years of the COVID19 pandemic have shown us how critical health care professionals and volunteers are to protect and save human lives.

I would like to draw your attention to Community Health Workers' role. These workers are an essential part of the health architecture. They relieve pressure on the central health system and enable the delivery of life-saving malaria services to the last-mile and remote communities that need it most, ensuring that no one is left behind on the road to ending malaria. In the fight against malaria, CHWs in a few countries are the ones who support communities with rapid diagnostics, treatment, distribution of LLINs, implementation of IRS, and prevention messages.

However, according to the latest data in the world malaria report, only about 5 percent of children with fever in sub Saharan Africa seek care from a community health worker. This suggests the need to further invest in expanding care at the community level.

Investing in community health workers, nurses, and other health workers serving our communities at dispensaries and health posts is instrumental in eliminating malaria, creating more equitable societies, and fighting against health threats worldwide. More significant investment in CHWs will also address critical gender inequality – women make up 70% of the community health workforce that has been instrumental in driving down malaria cases and deaths in remote and rural communities, especially during COVID-19. They serve as the foundation for the fight against malaria and preparedness for future pandemics. Yet, often their contribution is not reasonably recognised, and their hard work does not get compensated.

We call you to make an ambitious plan to scale up CHWs under the country's ownership and leadership, with appropriate status and financial compensation. In doing so, we should not forget the thousands of nurses and other health workers serving our communities at dispensaries and health posts, often overlooked as we get drawn into vertical investments in expanding disease specific CHWs. We need a holistic primary health care approach. By doing so, we will not only strengthen health services that are essential to end malaria, HIV, and TB and create a healthier, safer, and more equitable world for all.

Thank you very much.