

# Frontline Health Workers:

## Reducing the Burden of Malaria



Salamatu Mohammed and Sadiq Baba Wakasau are the public face of the fight against malaria in their community of Warji in northeastern Nigeria. These two farming women were chosen by their neighbors to educate farmers, pregnant women and children on ways to prevent and control malaria. As trained community health workers, they help distribute insecticide-treated bed nets, and instruct women and families on the importance of sleeping under them every day. They also link pregnant women and families to health facilities so they can be assessed, diagnosed and receive treatment. In malaria-endemic countries such as Nigeria, where 30 to 40% of outpatient visits and hospital admissions are attributed to malaria, frontline health workers like Salamatu and Sadiq play a crucial role in saving lives.

Each year, more than 200 million people contract malaria – a disease that disproportionately affects children and pregnant women. An estimated 10,000 pregnant African women and 200,000 infants die as a result of malaria infection during pregnancy.<sup>1</sup> With more than 3.4 billion people at risk of infection and 627,000 deaths in 2012 alone, the human toll of malaria is tremendous.<sup>2</sup> But, between 2000 and 2012, the collective efforts of the global health community against this disease have helped to reduce malaria incidence rates by 31% in Africa and 25% globally.<sup>2</sup>

### U.S. Leadership has Improved Outcomes

The United States (U.S.) has played a pivotal role in decreasing the burden of malaria through the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI).<sup>3</sup> U.S. investments in scaling-up programs have resulted in reductions in the malaria mortality rate of children younger than 5 in all 15 original focus countries. PMI now includes 19 focus countries and a regional program in the Greater Mekong Subregion. At the center of these achievements are PMI's efforts to train health workers in malaria prevention and treatment.<sup>3</sup>

*Frontline health workers (FHWs) provide services directly to communities where they are most needed, especially in remote and rural areas. Many are community health workers and midwives, though they can also include local pharmacists, nurses and doctors who serve in community clinics.*

### PMI: Helping Build the Health Workforce Needed to Fight Malaria

#### Health workforce strengthening under PMI<sup>3</sup>

##### In FY 2013 alone:

- **More than 61,000** frontline health workers (FHWs) received training on case management
- **More than 26,000** FHWs received training on malaria laboratory diagnosis
- **More than 16,000** FHWs received training on prevention and treatment of malaria in pregnant women

#### Progress against malaria in PMI focus countries<sup>3</sup>

- Under-5 mortality has dropped in all 15 original PMI focus countries\*
- PMI focus countries have seen significant reductions in their under-5 malaria mortality rates, from a 16% decrease in Malawi to a 50% decline in Rwanda
- Household ownership of at least one ITN increased from a median of 29% to 55% in 19 PMI focus countries

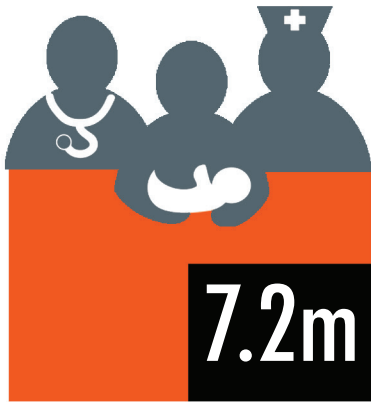
\* Evidence demonstrates that scale-up of malaria prevention and treatment plays a major role in recent unprecedented reductions in childhood mortality.<sup>3</sup>

1: Jhpiego. Malaria – Protecting Mothers and Their Families. (Accessed 03/14/2014) <http://www.jhpiego.org/files/malaria/Malaria-Brief-11-15-2012.pdf>

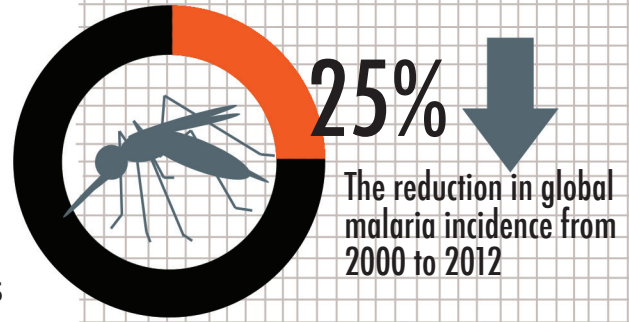
2: WHO. Factsheet on the World Malaria Report 2013. (2013) [http://www.who.int/malaria/media/world\\_malaria\\_report\\_2013/en/](http://www.who.int/malaria/media/world_malaria_report_2013/en/)

3: President's Malaria Initiative. FAST FACTS. (April 2014) [http://www.pmi.gov/docs/default-source/default-document-library/pmi-reports/pmi\\_2014fastfacts.pdf?sfvrsn=8](http://www.pmi.gov/docs/default-source/default-document-library/pmi-reports/pmi_2014fastfacts.pdf?sfvrsn=8)

## The Crucial Role of Frontline Health Workers



Current estimated global shortage of doctors, nurses and midwives needed to deliver basic services



The number of children's lives that could be saved each year if we fully utilized community health workers on the frontlines

627,000  
deaths from malaria in 2012



### Health Workers Expand Access to Malaria Health Services

FHWs can address the needs around malaria prevention and treatment in a number of ways, including prevention training and education on how to recognize symptoms of the disease and when to seek treatment. FHWs also conduct home management of malaria using Rapid Diagnostic Tests and ACT therapy regimens, a first line of treatment against malaria infection.

For many people, particularly those living in remote or rural areas, access to hospitals or clinics is a major barrier to care. Because FHWs are based in local communities, they extend the reach of the health system by providing essential services and referring patients to clinics and hospitals when required.

### The U.S. Can Accelerate Progress

In order to increase access to life-saving malaria-related prevention and treatment services, the United States Government (USG) must increase its support for frontline health workers and maximize the impact of existing support for these crucial partners in expanding access to health services. To this end, the USG should develop and implement a more coordinated and comprehensive strategy on human resources for health that outlines how it will contribute to strengthening the global health workforce to provide malaria-related and other essential health services. This plan should include a blueprint for an evidence-based, systematic approach to support recruiting, training, retaining, equipping and supervising frontline health workers across global health programs. This strategy should enable the U.S. to help partner countries ensure they have the health workforce needed to go the last mile in fighting malaria.

#### About Us

The Frontline Health Workers Coalition is an alliance of United States-based organizations working together to urge greater and more strategic U.S. investment in frontline health workers in developing countries as a cost-effective way to save lives and foster a healthier, safer and more prosperous world.

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