

## **Request for Information PMI Insights for Malaria Program**

This is a Request for Information (RFI). This is not a Request for Proposal (RFP) or a Request for Application (RFA) and is not to be construed as a commitment to issue any solicitation or Notice of Funding Opportunity, or ultimately award a contract or assistance agreement on the basis of this RFI, or to pay for any information voluntarily submitted as a result of this request.

This RFI is issued for the purpose of offering the opportunity for interested organizations to partner with PATH to develop and implement a potential research opportunity, with the expressed purpose to engage Africa-based research institutions to the maximum extent possible in this process. Therefore, this RFI serves to seek interested parties to provide recommendations and express interest in implementing a proposed scope of work to evaluate how, why, where, and for whom models of supportive supervision work to improve health worker performance and the correct management of children with suspected uncomplicated malaria. Specifically, requested activities could include, but are not be limited to: contributing to the development of the research protocol, conducting mixed methods data collection in health facilities; hiring, training, and supervising field teams to carry out qualitative data collection (in-depth interviews with key stakeholders) and quantitative data collection (facility audits, structured interviews with health workers, and exit interviews with health facility clients); contributing to the development and validation of program theories using realist methodologies; and contributing to the development of supportive supervision framework for use as an evaluation tool. The above scope of work is envisioned to take place in Tanzania and Benin.

Responses must be a maximum of seven pages in length and must focus on addressing the areas outlined in the 'Information Requested' section. Please do not submit applications, proposals, resumes, or promotional materials, as they will be discarded. The electronic submission must be written in English and typed on standard 8 1/2" x 11" paper (216mm by 297mm paper), single spaced, font size 12 with each page numbered consecutively. This RFI will be open from release April 19, 2021 through May 10, 2021 at 5PM Eastern Standard Time. Please send all responses to this RFI via email to [kvu@path.org](mailto:kvu@path.org) with a copy to [procreview@path.org](mailto:procreview@path.org).

Questions on this opportunity can be submitted to [kvu@path.org](mailto:kvu@path.org) by April 26, 2021 AT 5PM Eastern Standard Time.

### **Background**

The U.S. President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) Insights for Malaria (PMI Insights) project is a multidisciplinary partnership that collaborates with PMI, other donors, in-country research institutions, and NMCPs to, as one of its objectives, create and implement high-quality, ethically sound program evaluation (PE) and operational research (OR) activities to inform PMI programs and the global malaria community. As one of its research priorities for FY2021, PMI Insights seeks support in generating evidence and operational guidance for national malaria programs and their partners in endemic malaria transmission settings on the use of supportive supervision (SS) to improve malaria case management in health facilities. SS is a specific intervention that aims to improve health workers' capacity to deliver quality services. Though SS has been used to address a variety of aims in multiple settings, there remains a dearth of evidence on its effectiveness in improving malaria case management. Assessing the effectiveness of SS is a challenge as it is commonly iterative and non-static in nature, with programs working with

supervisors, district officials and health facility managers to inform the focus, content and timing of the SS process, SS models and their components. The contexts in which SS is implemented, also vary substantially, further rendering evaluation challenging.

The proposed study will consist of case studies using project/program monitoring data, qualitative methods incorporating approaches from realist evaluation, and cross-sectional quantitative methods if plausible. Study outputs may include: 1) a validated SS framework and guidance on its use as an SS evaluation tool; 2) explanation of what works for who, why and where in the countries where the SS is evaluated; 3) explanation of mechanisms (triggers of decisions) that drive successful SS components; 4) determination of SS components associated with effectiveness in terms of health worker and health facility performance, including on malaria case management and 5) a definition of contexts and SS models that should be applied. The evidence generated from these case studies will culminate in a final program theory that will present what works for who, where and why, and which will take into account the multiple layers and fluidity of context, interactions between context and SS among supervisors and health workers, and outcomes. The evidence will also result in the development of a SS framework for evaluation based on the experience and critique of application.

Primary research objectives may include:

- Characterizing SS interventions (in their broadest sense, including mentoring, data workshops, ad hoc trainings, 'reactive' activities, etc.) and describing time trends in program monitoring data
- Conducting a scoping literature review on SS frameworks and supporting theories
- Explaining time trends in program monitoring data
- Developing an initial program theory of what works for whom, where and why
- Developing a SS framework to be used as an evaluation tool
- Determining the potential for quantitative assessment of health worker and health facility performance, and if applicable identifying its design
- Determining the components of SS associated with effectiveness in terms of health worker and health facility performance including in terms of malaria case management
- Assessing how context influences the effectiveness of components of SS and the mechanisms through which it does so
- Developing a revised program theory of what works for whom, where and why
- Testing and validating a SS framework as an evaluation tool

### **Proposed Scope of Work**

To support the implementation of this study, PATH seeks an interested research partner to support the activities necessary to design the evaluation, collect and analyze data, and interpret results. Specifically, it is envisioned that the study will be conducted in Tanzania and Benin where SS is currently implemented by the national malaria control program and PMI. While the total number of sites is yet to be finalized, it is envisioned that activities will be implemented in a number of primary health care facilities or health centers over two periods (November 2021 – January 2022 and August 2022 – February 2023), with overall activities spanning 27 months (from protocol development to final write-up).

To that end, envisioned activities for a partner institution may include, but are not be limited to:

- Providing an individual that will serve as study co-Principal Investigator that possess training and expertise in malaria case management, quality improvement, quality of care, and or realist evaluation to contribute to the research protocol and research outputs.
- Providing an individual that will serve as study Coordinator that possess training and experience coordinating qualitative and quantitative data collection activities and managing a team of interviewers and enumerators.
- Contributing to the development of the research protocol and initial program theory.
- Engaging key stakeholders, such as national and regional malaria control program authorities, towards the design and implementation of study activities and review of findings.
- Supporting the obtainment of national research ethics and other required approvals to conduct proposed activities.
- Collecting/collating and summarizing data to inform site selection, client loads and SS model attributes.
- Organizing and implementing all aspects of field-based data collection activities.
  - Coordinating suppliers (vehicle rentals, purchase of electronic equipment, etc)
  - Recruiting, training, and supervising a team of field workers to:
    - Carry out in-depth interviews with key stakeholders (including health workers and clients)
    - Conduct audits of health facility resources, exit interviews with clients, and structured interviews with health workers
  - Managing and summarizing the qualitative and quantitative data collected.
  - Transcribing and translating qualitative interviews where languages employed in interviews require it.
- Supporting the analysis of qualitative data using realist methodologies to develop Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) configurations and to develop a final program theory.
- Engaging in the synthesis of findings to develop a framework for SS evaluation.
- Leading and co-authoring manuscripts to disseminate evaluation findings.

### **Information Requested**

PATH requests that interested organizations send a brief response (must be a maximum of 7 pages total) with the following information: comments on scope of services (up to 2 pages), including initial suggested modifications, if any; the relevant institutional capabilities and relevant previous work, especially in the target countries of Tanzania and Benin (up to 3 pages); and a detailed description of the proposed research team showcasing their current or previous expertise in this field. This information should include: the size of the proposed team, each member's relevant skills and experience, and proposed level of effort for each member of the team (up to 2 pages).