ACTWATCH LITE
PROJECT OVERVIEW

AT A GLANCE

ACTwatch Lite is a streamlined pilot multi-country (Nigeria, Benin, and Cameroon) private sector malaria market study generating malaria diagnostic and treatment data from formal and informal private sector outlets and their supply chains.

Data, methodology and tools are rapidly made available to stakeholders to inform strategic and programmatic decisions making for private sector case management.

The project will produce a comprehensive toolkit, reviewed by WHO. This will include tools, protocol methods and training materials to allow ACTwatch Lite to be replicated in other contexts.

The project is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), implemented by Population Services International (PSI).

PROJECT SUMMARY

ACTwatch Lite is a streamlined private sector malaria market study, implemented by PSI and funded by BMGF. The study generates data on antimalarial and RDT availability, price, and sales volumes in the private sector, alongside novel supply chain indicators describing product distribution networks, and data on the characteristic of private sector outlets. The approach is designed to produce rapid and actionable results from high quality data, with fewer resources required than in the original iteration of ACTwatch, (which was implemented by PSI between 2008 and 2017). The project will produce a WHO-reviewed toolkit for wider adoption of the approach.

BACKGROUND

Reductions in malaria cases and deaths have stalled globally and there is renewed urgency to take a holistic health system approach to achieve the necessary coverage of key malaria interventions, and to support governments with efficient uptake of new products (e.g., ASPY, vaccines, and vector control tools) and adopt new strategies (including MFT). The private sector is an integral component of the wider health system and interventions need to target both the
private and public sector as well as the multiple levels within the health system (i.e., community, provider, facility, through to policy makers).

The private sector is the first point of call for a substantial proportion of care seekers in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, with more than 30% of care-seeking happening in the private sectors in Uganda, DRC, Kenya, Cameroon and Nigeria, Benin and Tanzania, among others. The private sector is often the most accessible source of health care for millions of people in communities.

Understanding the private sector is essential to deliver on key malaria case management and surveillance goals, identifying and filling gaps in the complex ecosystem of malaria interventions and working with governments to ensure coordination with existing and planned public sector activities. A key barrier to progress is a lack of robust, contemporary data on private sector malaria markets that can be used by national decision-makers and their global partners to support appropriate intervention design. Between 2008 and 2017, the PSI-led ACTwatch research project served as the most reliable source of nationally representative data in many countries in the Global South on the availability, price, and market share of antimalarial medicines and diagnostics in the public and private sectors.

**APPROACH**

Stakeholder engagement is key at every stage of project development and implementation. Stakeholders are engaged at each of the points shown below.

ACTwatch Lite’s stakeholders typically include: NMPs, national pharmacy regulators and pharmacy councils, MoH, key supply chain actors, other NGOs and donors.

ACTwatch Lite uses a representative, cross-sectional probability sample, with national (Benin)/subnational (Nigeria & Cameroon), urban/rural quantitative estimates. The project conducts a census of all private sector outlets with the potential to stock antimalarials/testing and then conducts an audit of all antimalarials and RDTs in stock. This allows for full private sector market estimates (volumes and market share estimates), as well as measures of product availability and price.

Typically, the types of outlets/wholesalers included in the study include: Pharmacies, private for-profit health facilities, religious/NGO-run private health facilities, PPMVs (Nigeria), informal outlets (including, e.g. itinerant drug vendors, general retailers); terminal and intermediate wholesalers and importers. We also collect data on business characteristics and practices, data reporting/surveillance, stockouts and suppliers. The project has rigorous in and out of field quality control and data cleaning/management processes.
INTENDED OUTCOMES

ACTwatch Lite is a pilot project designed to provide a comprehensive picture of malaria commodity markets at the retail and wholesale level to:

Inform national / subnational decision-making

Understand drivers of market performance and target areas and channels for intervention

Provide NMPs with essential (and currently unavailable) market data as they develop private sector strategies, as well as GF concept notes and PMI MOPs.

Advocacy with country stakeholders, malaria donors and global policy makers, supported by the promotion of a WHO co-branded ACTwatch Lite Toolkit, will reignite interest in the use of malaria market data to inform private sector health interventions and expand ACTwatch Lite to new geographies, funded by a broad donor base.

ACTwatch Lite study tools and guidelines will be made publicly available with the aim of easing data collection for national and regional malaria control and case management decision-making across malaria affected countries. We will highlight key methodological features, lessons learned from pilot implementation, and overviews of tools, guidance documents and resources for others wishing to gather these important data using this approach.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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