

# THE COMIC RELIEF GSK PARTNERSHIP

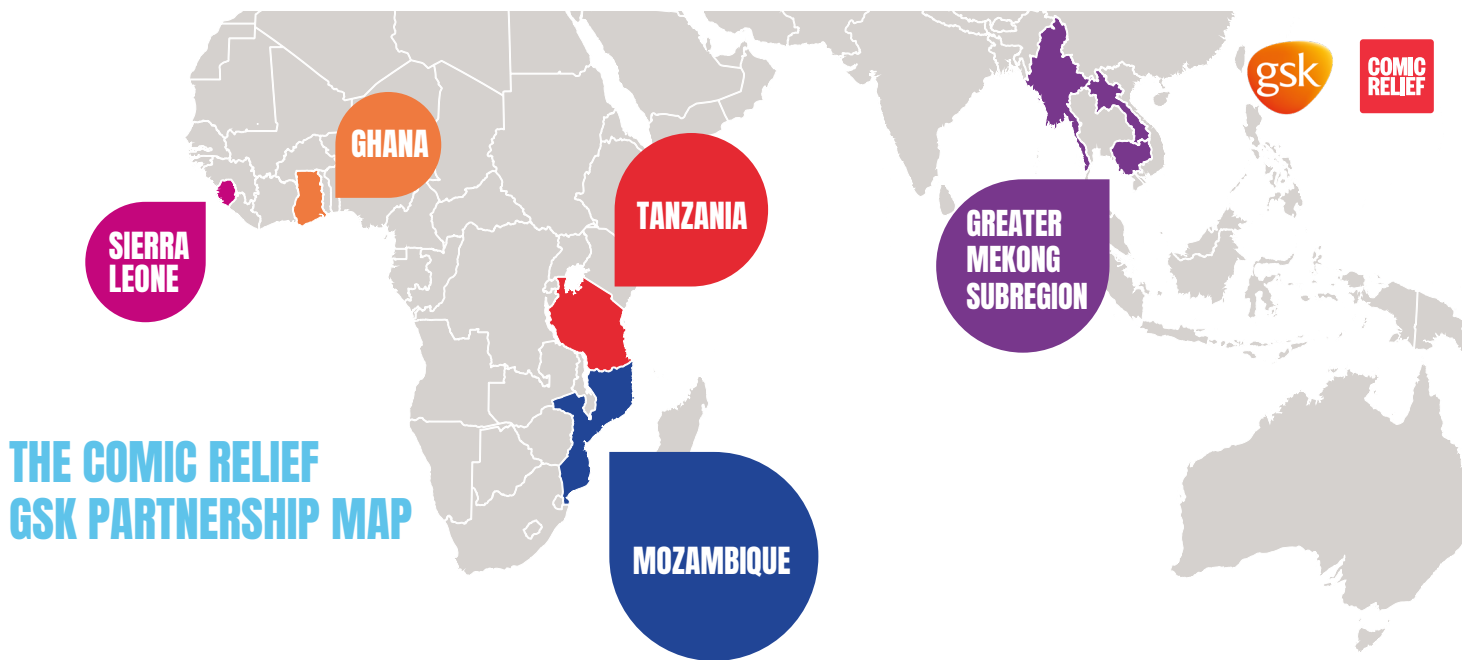
Protecting progress towards malaria eradication and  
universal health coverage through the COVID-19 pandemic



# 1. FIGHTING MALARIA, IMPROVING HEALTH

Fighting Malaria, Improving Health is a five-year partnership programme funded by Comic Relief and GSK. It aims to reduce the impact of malaria and strengthen health systems in several malaria endemic countries across sub-Saharan Africa and the Greater Mekong sub-Region. Comic Relief and GSK believe that

strengthening local and national health services is one of the most effective ways to combat malaria, increasing the overall resilience of the health system and helping to protect progress towards universal health coverage (UHC). This is particularly pertinent as countries battle the COVID-19 pandemic.



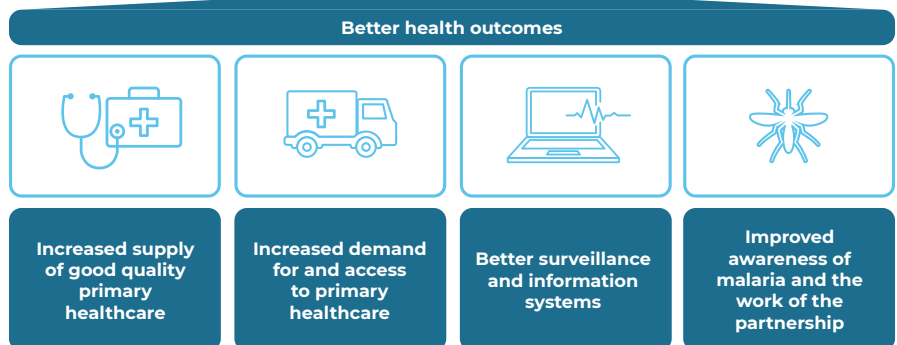
**5,437,862**  
people reached

**532,729**  
children under 5 reached

**1,462,281**  
with increased knowledge  
about malaria prevention



## A MALARIA FREE WORLD



# 2. THE COMIC RELIEF-GSK PARTNERSHIP, UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The rapid spread of COVID-19 across the globe is affecting the way we all live. It has shone a light on the importance of investing in strong health systems, enhancing equitable access to care, and improving readiness to prevent and control disease outbreaks.

Strengthening health systems increases resilience in the face of disease outbreaks and public health pressures, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and is also one of the most effective ways to combat malaria and drive progress towards UHC.

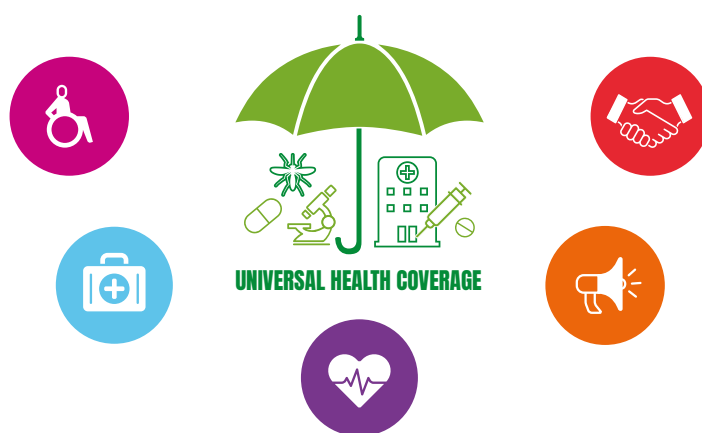
The Fighting Malaria, Improving Health programme contributes to building the health system by improving the supply of quality healthcare, raising awareness and promoting preventative and health-seeking behaviours, and building strong surveillance and data management systems. We also support and encourage civil society to hold their governments to account and campaign for greater multi-sectoral investments in malaria and health systems at the national, regional and global levels to drive sustainability.

This briefing aims to demonstrate how our programme exemplifies some of the key principles of the UHC agenda:

- Ensuring no one is left behind
- Upholding quality healthcare through a strengthened workforce

- Building better surveillance and information systems
- Political leadership within and beyond health
- Working in partnership and moving together

As a partnership, we are responding flexibly to minimise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the malaria control and health systems strengthening efforts we support. This briefing will also showcase how our partners are responding on the ground, in record speed, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the communities they serve.

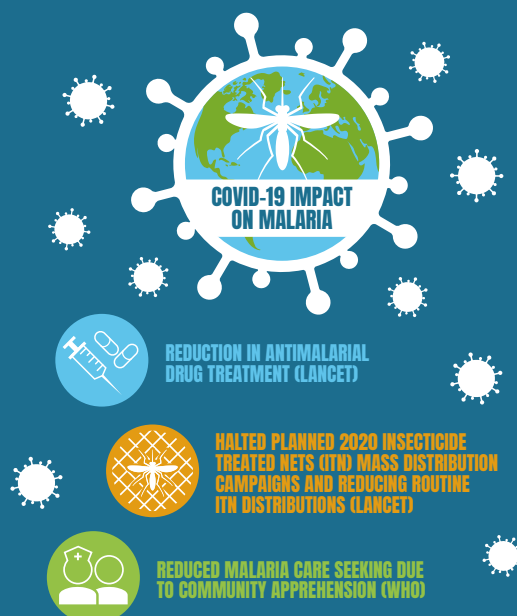


## SPOTLIGHT: COVID-19 THREATENS HARD-WON GAINS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA

The world has seen incredible progress in the fight against malaria since the turn of the century: estimates show that, in 2018, global efforts saved almost 600,000 lives per year and prevented almost 100 million malaria cases per year compared to 2000 levels. While the global death rate from the disease fell by 62 per cent between 2000 and 2015, progress towards ending malaria could be severely impacted because of COVID-19.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned that COVID-19 could result in between 20,000 to 100,000 additional malaria deaths.

The Comic Relief-GSK Partnership supports the WHO guidance on Malaria and COVID-19. It is critical that core malaria prevention and treatment programmes are maintained where it is safe to do so during the COVID-19 outbreak, both to protect vulnerable populations from malaria but also to reduce the strain that malaria puts on healthcare systems.



# 3. ENSURING NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND AND REACHING ‘THE FURTHEST BEHIND FIRST’

The wider impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to be felt most acutely by marginalised and hard-to-reach populations. According to the World Bank, between 80 and 110 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty this year as a result of the pandemic. Disruption to health and vaccination services, and limited access to diet and nutrition services, will disproportionately impact women and young children. Restrictions on movement because of COVID-19 have the potential to disrupt routine health interventions for hard-to-reach rural populations.

Ensuring no one is left behind and reaching the ‘furthest behind first’ is a guiding principle of UHC. Extending geographical coverage to reach the most marginalised populations is critical for achieving positive health outcomes in malaria and to achieving the wider UHC vision. This equity-focused approach to tackling malaria can, in turn, reduce poverty, inequality and unlock the human and economic potential for communities to thrive, something that is critical as the world responds to the impact of COVID-19.

Fighting Malaria, Improving Health is present in some of the hardest-to-reach communities across its focus countries. The partnership has a strong focus on pregnant women, rural populations, vulnerable adolescents and people living in extreme poverty.

■ In Sierra Leone, traditional healers and influential women in hard-to-reach communities have been working to provide ante and postnatal advice. With the emergence of Covid-19, awareness campaigns around the virus were incorporated into their messaging. Concern Worldwide provided them with more than 100 bicycles, enabling them to reach more areas with information on how to stay safe from coronavirus.

■ In Mozambique, the Programa Inter-Religioso Contra a Malaria (PIRCOM) trained and supported religious and community leaders, volunteers, and groups to challenge attitudes and beliefs that act as barriers to taking action to prevent and treat malaria. Using church meetings, mass media, and home visits, the project encouraged more people to sleep under bed nets and seek tests and treatment. Also, more pregnant women are taking medicines to prevent malaria.

## 1,462,281

**NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH INCREASED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MALARIA PREVENTION, DIAGNOSIS AND/OR TREATMENT**

## 1,091,058

**NUMBER OF PEOPLE APPLYING THEIR MALARIA PREVENTION, DIAGNOSIS OR TREATMENT KNOWLEDGE/DEMONSTRATING HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOUR**

## CASE STUDY



“I first contracted malaria when I went into the forest to look for non-timber forest products. I got sick, had a fever, and was very cold and alone as my phone was out of service. I thought I might die in the forest, leaving my wife and children behind, but fortunately, two people on motorbikes passed by and got off to see if I was okay. They were the HPA Mobile

Malaria Volunteers who came to educate people about the signs and symptoms of malaria, conduct a blood test and treat malaria in the fields and the forest. After taking the anti-malaria medicine for a while, my condition improved, and I returned home with their help.

I keep informing my family and my neighbours about malaria. When my family and I go to the forest, we always bring mosquito nets and sleep in the nets. Moreover, we also wear long shirts and trousers to prevent the bites from mosquitoes.”

**Mr Bounh, cashew nut plantation farmer in Cambodia**

# 4. UPHOLDING QUALITY HEALTHCARE THROUGH A STRENGTHENED WORKFORCE

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of frontline healthcare workers. Communities play an important role in the ongoing fight against malaria and the response to COVID-19. Effective responses must be grounded in the social, economic, and cultural context of a country or region. Neither disease will be defeated without working in close partnership with the communities affected.

Quality primary healthcare is also the backbone of UHC and essential for building health systems that people, and communities can trust. Access to a broad spectrum of safe, quality services and products in their community, delivered by well-trained health workers, will be critical to making an impact on malaria. Malaria interventions often serve as an entry point to the health system in many of the world's poorest countries, that have the furthest to go on the journey to UHC.

Fighting Malaria, Improving Health places people and communities at the centre of efforts to improve the supply of quality primary healthcare. The programme is training health staff in both the public and private sectors and supporting over 2000 community health workers to engage with the hard-to-reach communities. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, our funded partners have responded with speed and creativity to ensure health workers are supported and have access to the knowledge, tools and equipment to safely continue delivering effective malaria interventions.

- In Ghana, the Anglican Diocesan Development and Relief Organisation has provided alcohol-based sanitizers and face masks to local health staff, trained them on the construction of safe sanitation facilities

in the community and provided sensitisation and health education on COVID-19 to community health volunteers.

- In Tanzania, The Association of Private Health Facilities provided training to health providers on the COVID-19 response and infection prevention to ensure healthcare workers and patients - including malaria patients - receive quality services without the risk of being infected with COVID-19.

## 2,700

NUMBER OF COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS TRAINED

## 3,773

NUMBER OF PRIVATE SECTOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS TRAINED

## 1,721

NUMBER OF PRIMARY LEVEL GOVERNMENT HEALTH STAFF TRAINED

## CASE STUDY

### LESSONS FROM EBOLA HELP FRONTLINE HEALTH WORKERS RESPOND TO COVID-19 IN SIERRA LEONE.

One of the biggest dangers of COVID-19 is the fear in communities that prevents individuals from seeking the healthcare they need. In Sierra Leone, King's College London are working in the country's busiest public hospital to improve care during the pandemic. 67% health staff at Connaught Hospital noted a reduction in patients as a result of COVID-19. A nurse at the Hospital stated, "People who are not coming to the hospital must be dying at home".

King's applied lessons from the 2014 Ebola outbreak to support local partners through the first phase of the epidemic. The partnership supported training sessions with over two hundred health workers. A staff survey conducted in May 2020 shows that 77% of staff say they are now equipped with sufficient knowledge about COVID-19.



With healthcare workers being supported to provide the highest quality of care, patients who were previously apprehensive about going to the hospital during the pandemic can attend safely and with full trust in their service providers.

# 5. BUILDING BETTER SURVEILLANCE AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for strong health information systems that collect and use quality, timely, reliable, disaggregated data. Ensuring health information systems can collect such data is also critical for tackling malaria, building strong health systems and achieving UHC.

Ensuring data is properly analysed to identify areas of weakness, develop innovative solutions and track progress towards equity targets to leave no one behind is also critical. A targeted and informed response remains fundamental to maintain the progress achieved to date in tackling malaria and avoiding the risk of resurgence.

Fighting Malaria, Improving Health is investing in health surveillance and information management systems across all its focus countries. It seeks to build the capacity of the primary healthcare workforce to collect and analyse data, but also to integrate data between levels of the health system, and between the private and public sectors.

■ In Mozambique, the Manhica Foundation is providing Ministry of Health staff with training on DHIS2 implementation and building the capacity of health workers to use DHIS2 reporting systems to generate, aggregate and report malaria data. It adopts a behavioural change approach and focuses on improving the 'data culture' in the system.

■ In Myanmar, Population Services International have used an app that allows for real-time reporting of malaria case data. PSI has trained its providers to use this app to enable real time reporting of malaria case data into the DHIS2 database.

■ In Tanzania, the Clinton Health Access Initiative has developed a surveillance system for private dispensaries and labs so that data from the private sector can be captured and integrated with the public management information system. Harmonising this private sector system across health programmes and partners is helping the Ministry of Health to make more informed decisions.

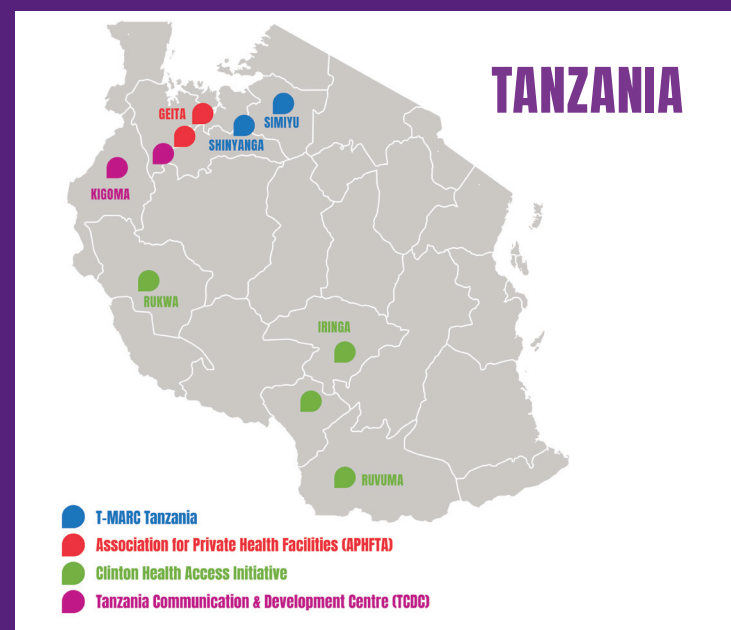
## 2,235

NUMBER OF HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS WITH IMPROVED QUALITY OF DATA REPORTING

## CASE STUDY

The Association of Private Health Facilities in Tanzania have adopted an electronic private health sector surveillance system that has enabled Accredited Drug Dispensing Outlets (ADDOs), Autonomous Laboratories and schools to report data on malaria through their mobile phones. This has improved the visibility of data, despite COVID-19 affecting reporting rates.

"Geita Region was able to promptly and effectively prepare health facilities to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this support, we were able to train all the big health facilities including private health facilities on Covid-19 Case Management and Infection Prevention and Control. This has built the confidence of the citizens to access services including malaria in our health facilities" says Onna Panga- Regional Covid-19 response focal person- Geita Region, Tanzania.



# 6. POLITICAL LEADERSHIP WITHIN AND BEYOND HEALTH

Tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and achieving UHC will require sustained political leadership, both within and beyond the health sector. While a strong health system remains the core goal of UHC, governments must also address the social and environmental determinants of health, which especially impact Malaria, a vector-borne infection. This requires coordinated action at the highest levels of government and at the municipal level.

As nations across the world battle the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial that leaders recognise the interconnectedness of malaria control and elimination, UHC and health emergencies; Fighting Malaria, Improving Health is connecting work at the community level with national and global level efforts needed to drive progress towards UHC. We are supporting local change makers' efforts to raise awareness of malaria and UHC with decision making audiences.

- In Ghana and Sierra Leone, Speak Up Africa have worked in partnership with the National Malaria Control Programmes to roll out the Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign in both countries. Through their advocacy with networks of journalists, parliamentarians, private sector decision makers and governments, SUA have helped ensure that malaria stays high on the political agenda throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Malaria No More UK have been building cross-party support for continued UK government leadership in the fight against malaria. Despite the pandemic delaying the 2020 Commonwealth Heads of

Government Meeting in Kigali, MNM have continued to engage with government, parliament, science and research institutes and the media to highlight the threat COVID-19 poses to the fight against malaria, culminating in a nationwide campaign this autumn.

- In Tanzania, the African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA) have developed a scorecard app that has allowed parliamentarians to access real-time health data to inform policy and funding debates. Over 60 MPs have been trained on how to use the app. Described by MPs as a 'game changer', MPs have shown a new commitment to resolving malaria challenges using the easy-access data tool. Coupled with training from ALMA, there is evidence malaria has climbed the political agenda.
- In the Greater Mekong sub-Region, we supported our funded partners to showcase their evidence and impact with policy making audiences across the Asia-Pacific Region. Our event *Sustaining malaria interventions during a pandemic – the critical role of community-based approaches in health system strengthening* was attended by 360 people, of which 20% were from government agencies in the region.

## CASE STUDY

### AFRICAN YOUTH CALL ON LEADERS TO STEP UP PROGRESS FIGHTING MALARIA.

At the African Union Summit in January 2020, Results UK's Youth Leaders for Health Programme empowered young advocates from Ghana, Tanzania and Sierra Leone to develop and present a communique on malaria improvement to the deputy chair of the African Union Commission and the commissioner of Human Resource, Science and Technology.

Despite COVID-19, the young leaders took multiple opportunities to move their advocacy and campaigning online, targeting Commonwealth ministers, heads of state and other key stakeholders they otherwise would not have met in person. The youth leaders led successful and collaborative online campaigns for World Malaria Day 2020 and World Youth Day 2020, teaming up via multiple social media streams to



share malaria messaging and build awareness. The youth leaders were able to send direct messages to politicians on public platforms. This direct approach to advocacy elicited direct responses online which has proven to be a useful tool for accountability.

# 7. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP AND MOVING TOGETHER

Controlling malaria through the COVID-19 pandemic and driving progress towards UHC demands that organisations come together and work in partnership. In this spirit, *Fighting Malaria, Improving Health* seeks to bring stakeholders together in new and innovative ways to tackle malaria and strengthen health systems. This work is done in partnership and with the ownership of the National Malaria Control Programme.

Our partnership brings together the business and NGO sectors, and creates networks across global, regional and local partners, in order to catalyse collective impact. We have financially supported civil society and community groups as key contributors to health systems development, and advocate for vulnerable and marginalised populations to be at the centre of efforts to deliver UHC and build back better from COVID-19.

- In Sierra Leone, On Our Radar partnered with Fighting Malaria, Improving Health's funded partners to train community reporters to capture the stories of everyday people dealing with the burden of malaria amid the pandemic. This inspiring network of newly trained community reporters have uncovered stories

about gaps in healthcare service provision, essential commodity stock outs, health system preparedness and the overall community response to COVID-19.

- In Ghana, research has informed policymaker decision-making and encouraged better malaria treatment outcomes. The Alliance for Reproductive Health Rights, Anglican Diocesan Development and Relief Organisation, and the Kintampo Health Research Centre worked with Tetra Tech and the Ghana Health Service to test to efficacy of the Test, Treat, Track (3T) policy in health centres across the country.
- In Mozambique, the African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA) are supporting the development of a multi-sectoral End Malaria Council, which aims to mobilise political will and resources for the fight against malaria. In less than a year, the End Malaria Council has established its own fund, agreed its initial membership and has begun planning for a private sector resource mobilisation conference in 2021.

## CASE STUDY

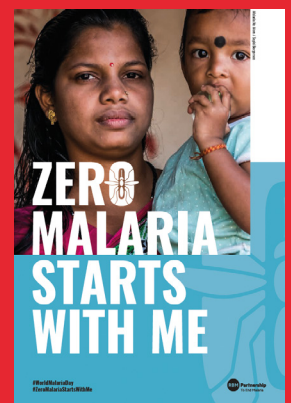
### THE MALARIA SECTOR UNITES AROUND A REFRESHED ZERO MALARIA CAMPAIGN BRAND

This year, Malaria No More UK joined forces with the RBM Partnership to End Malaria and many others to create a high impact campaign that would deliver increased action to tackle malaria across Africa and other endemic regions.

With the pro-bono support of world-leading communications agency, the Dentsu Aegis Network, MNMUK and RBM mobilised the malaria sector to create a unifying global brand for 'Zero Malaria' that can inspire, empower and unify individuals, communities and organisations to demand greater action in the fight against malaria. The new brand takes inspiration from the original grassroots Zero Malaria Starts With Me campaigns that the Comic Relief-GSK Partnership has supported across Africa. Zero Malaria was launched on World Malaria Day 2020 and a toolkit was shared

widely and freely to promote its use. The WHO and RBM adopted the brand in their official communications on the day and it has since been used widely, including in the malaria sector's COVID-19 campaign efforts.

This collaboration is an excellent example of organisations moving together in partnership towards a common goal. The Fighting Malaria, Improving Health Partnership is excited to see what 2021 holds for Zero Malaria as it advances towards the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kigali.



For further information about the Comic Relief-GSK Fighting Malaria, Improving Health partnership, please contact:

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