

Malaria Free Mekong

The Steering Committee Meeting Report **16 November, 2022, Avani Sukhumvit Bangkok Thailand**

Introduction and Summary

On 16 November 2022, the CSO Platform hosted a Steering Committee (SC) meeting which was attended in-person and online by 15 steering committee members from all 5 GMS countries, CSO Representative to RAI RSC, Maxine Whittaker, alternate CSO Representative, Linna Khorn and Platform Secretariat staff. During the meeting, an update on the platform's progress and upcoming key activities and events was presented.

Following the presentation, an external facilitator guided the participants through group work and plenary discussions to review the current RAI3E Goal, Objectives and Priorities of the Platform, and revising and developing these, including concerning the Global Fund RAI4E FR/proposal development process and beyond. A session was also conducted to discuss some activities and indicators that align with the revised objectives.

Objectives:

- To review platform goals, objectives, key priorities, and strategy for the next three years
- To identify platform key activities for the future programming

The meeting also included a brief overview of the current Platform governance, followed by an open discussion on revisiting the governance structure. The final session of the meeting was a closed-door externally facilitated meeting attended only by the SC members and RAI RSC CSO Representative/Alternate Representative regarding the Platform hosting arrangement for 2024 – 2026.

Platform progress 2021 – 2022 and future plans

During the presentation, a brief history and background on the Platform were shared with the participants:

- The Platform was started in 2014 as a small WG for cross-border collaboration
 - Operated initially on a very small budget which was entirely activity based
 - In 2019 revisited the goals and objectives to inform the RAI3E funding proposals
- It was also noted that it is likely that RAI funding will be reduced, which will impact funding available for Platform activities.

Completed activities

The presentation provided an overview of the progress and activities undertaken so far. A few highlights of the activities were:

- 60 national and regional level CSO virtual consultations have taken place since the onset of COVID. as well as regular individual consultations with CSOs on a broad range of issues.
- 4 Cross-partner visits on best practices were completed (Cambodia, Vietnam, Thai – Myanmar border)
- Support was provided to 7 community networks (Vietnam, Thailand)
- Collaboration with WVFT to provide C19 support to Myanmar MWs
- Provided technical support through various tools incl. guide and handbooks
- Advocacy on the need for C19 vaccines,
- 11 videos of CSO stories and interviews with implementing partners and CSO Representatives were published. *A call for more stories from non-Thailand-based members was noted.*

Key challenges

Some of the key challenges identified were also presented, including:

- Engagement of CCM and malaria representatives in countries
- Delay in data and input from CSO partners due to workload and time constraints
- The perception of Platform and CSOs by the NMPs in some countries. *Laos was highlighted as a positive example, and it was noted that the relationship with the Vietnam NMP is being rebuilt due to changes in NMP leadership*
- Language barriers in promoting wider CSO partner participation
- Country partners' limited capacity to support platform activities
- C19 impacted the ability to conduct cross-partner learning and data collection

Current and future focus till the end of December 2022

An overview of the current and future activities under each of the three (3) key focus areas was shared, including:

Advocacy

- RAI4E FR finalization and signing – *this is an ongoing process*
- Requested Platform story for MME annual newsletter –a focus on the volunteer work

Capacity strengthening and Technical Support

- Aim to produce master/living documents that can be customized by platform members and their constituent CSO communities
- Work has been done to engage youth however, the applications for a youth leader mentorship have been very limited. Will re-launch this effort after the RaiE FR in March and the TORs for these positions will be re-circulated. *Thinking around potential youth networks to engage within the 5 GMS countries was encouraged by the Secretariat*
- Community Led Monitoring (CLM)

Coordination and partnership

- Community consultations and country dialogues for RAI4E
- Field visits to Laos and Thailand to take place in December
- Supporting RSC CSO Rep as the RSCs representative to the TB RCM

RSC and platform calendar for RAI4 Consultation 2023

The Secretariat provided an overview of key upcoming events for the RSC and the platform for the RAI4E 2023 Consultation.

RSC and platform calendar for RAI4E consultation 2023		
Country	Dates	Consultation
Myanmar	17 January, Tuesday	Community Consultation
	18 January, Wednesday	Country Dialogue
Cambodia	19 January, Thursday	Community Consultation
	20 January, Friday	Country Dialogue
Thailand	23 January, Monday	Community Consultation
	24 January, Tuesday	Country Dialogue
Vietnam	30 January, Monday	Community Consultation
	31 January, Tuesday	Country Dialogue
Laos	1 February, Wednesday	Community Consultation
	2 February, Thursday	Country Dialogue

Bangkok	7-8 February, Tues-Wed	Regional CSO Consultation
	9-10 February, Thu-Fri	RSC Regional Dialogue
Laos	9-10 March, Thu-Fri	RSC Meeting to endorse FR
20 May RAI4E FR Submission		

Following the presentation, a discussion was held regarding the following issues:

- Need for innovative solutions to ensure services can be provided to vulnerable populations in Myanmar, and the role of internal CSO networks to support this approach
- Clarification/definition of ‘community’ in the Platform operations provided, namely implementers/platform members or actual clients and providers
- Emphasis on the importance of utilizing every opportunity and fora to bring community voices in e.g., at country meetings
- Security issues for providers and volunteers in many rural and remote settings

Review process of current goal, objectives, and focus areas

One of the main objectives of the SC meeting was to obtain input on and decision-making from the participants on future platform goals, objectives, priorities, and strategies. The discussion outcomes will serve as a guide for the platform’s future operations as well as inform the RAI4E funding proposal.

An external facilitator led the participants through a review and revision process of the current platform goal, objectives, and priorities using group work activities and plenary discussion. The -work-based discussions were marked by highly active and engaged participation by the SC members. The following major common themes and discussion points emerged

- 1 What does the Platform objectives mean to you::
 - Integration with a primary health care approach
 - *PHC closely aligned with community interests and demands*
 - Improving community well-being and development
 - Community needs and demands to address “drivers” of poor health such as illiteracy, lack of education, poverty, and economic conditions,
 - These social issues have greater implications beyond the malaria ‘agenda’
 - The rights-based approach in access to services including the gender and equity agenda

- Further building of community ownership, engagement, resilience, and sustainability
 - Local leadership building can contribute to domestic resource mobilization and stronger collaboration between sectors
 - Need to target MMPs as a priority population
2. Revision of the Platform Goal
- Should revise as:
 - We want to achieve more
 - Our ambitions may be bigger than those of funding agencies/donors
 - The goal is the CSO goal, ambitious but not unachievable
 - Funding is necessary to fully achieve the goal
 - A more ambitious goal may be an eye-opener to Global Fund but could also prompt questions about CSO platform resources, capacity, etc.
 - There may be scope for linking the goal with the SDGs
 - A realistic timeframe for the new goal –At least 5 years

Consensus reached that the goal is expanded beyond the malaria agenda, to make it more ambitious and visionary, and, given decreasing targeted or earmarked malaria funding opportunities explore and secure other avenues of funding beyond Global Fund.

Goal statement

RAI3E Goal statement	RAI4E Goal statement
Contribute to malaria elimination effort in the Greater Mekong Subregion	Support communities to improve their health, achieve malaria elimination and prevent malaria reintroduction in the GMS

3. **Revision of Platform objectives.** Discussions noted:
- Competitiveness around funding and a limited amount of funding for malaria elimination and the GMS region
 - The very complex landscape in MYA
 - Need to build and maintain trust between state and non-state actors
 - Customization /tailoring of any training to the country context.

- Coordination challenges with the NMPs
 - effective collaboration linked to having established rapport with individual officials –
 - Need for soft skills training e.g. negotiation skills, advocacy for the CSOs
- Provide more specific language on the stakeholders
- Need more partnering across the platform
- Develop stronger evidence of the outcomes and impact of Platform activities to support fundraising and support

Ways to motivate partners to support evidence base e.g. awarding a Prize for the ‘best’ documentation/storytelling The participants developed the following as the revised **Overall objectives** for the Platform.

Present objectives	Agreed new objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate meaningful coordination and partnership among civil society organizations and other key malaria actors including malaria national programmes, technical partners ethnic health organizations and donors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate stronger coordination and partnership among community and civil society organizations, the national malaria control programmes and other key stakeholders
<p>To advocate and share best practices, challenges, and knowledge for an enabling environment and sustainable malaria response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To share knowledge of best practices and challenges to advocate for quality, accessible, and sustainable health outcomes for all.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To strengthen the capacity of CSO for improved malaria services in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To strengthen the capacity of CSO to support and deliver quality integrated community-led health services

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support removing gender and legal barrier to receiving malaria services through advocacy by collecting information and data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support improved inclusiveness and equitable access to health services by removing barriers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To advocate for continued resourcing for the achievement and maintenance of a malaria-free GMS

4. Preliminary open discussion of Key priority activities for the Platform

- Continue supporting community and civil society consultation and engagement at the national, regional and global level
- Broaden relationships with and key stakeholders engaged in work e.g youth groups, intersectoral, other partners, other donors and development partners, ethnic organizations, rights CSOs, other community volunteers/One health networks
- Support RSC civil society representatives in the decision-making and advocacy process of the global fund grant
- Continue communication and information sharing with partners through online and digital media
- Support improving the visibility of CSOs contribution to grant outcomes
- Provide demand-based capacity strengthening support and project-related tools including soft competencies
- Supporting civil society's capacity to assess quality and responsiveness services provided e.g., checklist, use of implementation "research"
- Support integrated health service at the community level and implementation of the Community Led Monitoring
- Enhance focus to monitoring and advocacy for mobile and migrant population
- Develop evidence-based advocacy strategies and templates for sustainable recourses for malaria elimination

Future activities and indicators/measurements in alignment with the revised objectives

The Secretariat will use the discussions (ANNEX3) to develop the "RAI4E Revised objectives and activities" draft document to be circulated to the Steering Committee members to share with and further develop in consultation with their respective country CSO constituencies as well as support the Platform's proposal for Regional component of the RAI4E proposal.

It was noted by the Secretariat that the document is a working/living document that should continue to evolve with the development of activity indicators/measurements and the setting of priorities in advance of the RAI4E FR submission in March 2023.

Platform governance: current and future

In the afternoon an overview of the current governance structure, including an overview of the role of the Steering Committee was provided as a basis for the subsequent discussion and decision-making on what this arrangement would look like going forward.

It was noted that:

- The selection and appointment process including the template for nominations is organised by the countries and thus driven by the platform members, not the Secretariat
- The current SC will serve until 2023, and the nomination/selection process will start 3-4 months in advance of the election for the next 3-year cycle
- The selection criteria for RAI RSC CSO representatives may need to be revised as the 4th alternate position has remained vacant for some time
- GF has training on conflict of interest which is beneficial and recommended for all SC members

- Global Fund requires the inclusion of information on the decision-making process for the governance structure in the Platform's regional funding proposal

The participants reflected

- the structure is quite easily comprehensible and workable
- consider ways to support the SC members from Myanmar to best represent a large number of CSOs in the country, and the current complexities around communications with them
 - Would working groups for different geographical regions of Myanmar assist
- Need to consider the role/number of SC members if the Platform expands to include more countries
 - Noted that the number of SC members per country is limited to 3 was due to funding constraints

The present Platform Governance Structure was endorsed by the Steering Committee to remain as is moving forward, i.e.



- 15 SC members (3 per country)
- 2 CSO Reps + 2 alternates
- 1 Senior Advisor

Platform hosting arrangement for 2024 – 2026 (closed session without the Alight team present)

A secret ballot managed by an independent facilitator was held to vote on future hosting arrangements for the Platform.

The steering committee, by a large majority, voted for ALIGHT to remain the platform host for 2024-2026.

Justification

- Good performance to date.
- Collaborative approach in their work with partners
- Strong logistic and financial management
- Strengthened platform relationship with partners
- Well-experienced in Global Fund process and partnership management
- Strong commitment and focus on engagement with CSO partners to ensure timely review and feedback in the global fund process and platform activities.

It was also noted that some improvements in Platform operations would be expected (noting that this has to be funded through the proposal) :

- more active platform secretariat engagement in countries where there are issues with cooperation with the NMP

The RAI CSO Representative emphasized that any feedback and input on areas of improvement are welcomed and can be shared with her who will then convey it to the platform host. An email detailing this process will be sent soon.

Next steps and action items

1. Platform to circulate the SC meeting report and relevant documents to SC members which include the following:
 - Platform Secretariat PowerPoint presentation on progress, upcoming activities and key event calendar
 - A revised platform Goal statement, Draft RAI4E Objectives and activities document
 - TOR for SC members



2. SC members share the revised Goal, objectives, and proposed activities with their respective constituencies in their countries
3. SC members in consultation with their constituencies further revise and develop activities and indicators with support from the platform host and RAI RSC CSO representatives



Annexes

1. Participant list
2. Agenda
3. Draft platform Goal statement, Draft RAI4E Objectives and activities document

Annex 2: Agenda

Malaria Free Mekong

The steering committee and advisors' meeting

16 November, Avani Sukhumvit Bangkok Thailand

Objectives:

1. To review platform goals, objectives, key priorities, and strategy for the next three years
2. To identify platform key activities for the future programming

Time	Discussion topics	Presenter/Facilitator	Comments
8.30-9.00	Registration	ALIGHT/Platform	
9.00-9.15	Overview of agenda and housekeeping	Platform	
9.15- 9.45	Room introduction and coffee break		
9:45- 10:00	Platform progress and future plan.	Shree	
10:00 – 10:30	Highlights of the platform's current goal objectives and focus areas.	Facilitators	
10:30 – 11:15	Group discussion on platform future goal-objectives-priority areas (3-4 priority)	2groups 1)Goal and objectives 2)Focus areas of the platform	
11:15 -12:00	Presentation of group work		
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch break		

13:00 – 13:30	Platform future activities and measurement (align with objectives and priority)	2 groups same assignment	
13:30-14:00	Group work presentation		
14:00 – 14:30	Platform operation and program coverage expansion beyond malaria?	Open discussion	
14:30 -14:50	Coffee break		
14:50 -15:30	Platform governance, current, and future	Presentation of the current structure and Open discussion to revisit	
15:30 -16:15	Platform hosting arrangement for 2024-2026	SC members and advisors	Close meeting without the ALIGHT team as a host
16:15 -16:45	Report back		
16:45 – 17:00	Wrap up		

Annex 3

A working draft of Priority Platform activities linked to the revised objectives

Objective	Broad category of activities
<p>✓ To facilitate stronger coordination and partnership among community and civil society organizations, the national malaria control programmes and other key stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSO meetings: regional and country levels. • Private sector involvement • Advocate for more community involvement in coordination meetings • Broaden relationships with and key stakeholders engaged in work e.g youth groups, intersectoral, other partners, other donors and development partners, ethnic organizations, rights CSOs, other community volunteers/One health networks • Strategies to engage govt more in our Platform discussions and share experiences of how to do this at the country level
<p>✓ To share knowledge of best practices and challenges in order to advocate for quality, accessible, and sustainable health outcomes for all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website and link to country networks • engage in APMEN and similar partnerships • RSC engagement via CSO Reps. • Community delegation and Board at GF engagement • Collation and analysis and dissemination of data • Engagement in national, regional and global events including beyond GF events representing the platform • Work with UNOPS/MME to extract more explicit CSO contribution to outcomes/dashboard including broader variables/indicators • Cross-country visits – including also NMCP partners (learning and for advocacy as well) – link to RSC visits as well/avoid duplication
<p>✓ To strengthen the capacity of CSOs to support and deliver quality integrated community-led health services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May need support to CSOs to contextualize/customize to their own needs – need mechanisms to ensure/support this; align with the national programme and WHO • Handbook plus tools - link to other technical partners. • Training (demand based) – broad language so can allow “wriggle-room” over 3-4 years e.g. Vivax adherence support, CLM, data for decision making -- link to other technical partners. Fill in gaps and link to real CSO and community needs

Objective	Broad category of activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support OR/IR capacity building and activities • Support strengthening of quality checklists used to assess services;? standardization (also will link to CLM for community/user perspectives) • Soft skills development: negotiation skills, coordination and communication skills, community systems strengthening, leadership, advocacy, etc. • IEC/BCC/RSC skills development /assessment of reach, coverage and quality (increase advocacy for this to be funded) • Measure outcomes of training
<p>✓ To support improved inclusiveness of and equitable access to health services by removing barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLM – find out from the communities about the barriers/and solutions (advocate for funding support to do CLM)(advocacy, capacity building, etc) • Policy landscape assessment - PSEA-like tool • Lessons shared beyond the malaria sector • Advocate for funding support to assist the poor to access services and adherence • Regular assessment of border situation and migrant and ethnic community needs and gaps and dissemination of findings
<p>✓ To advocate for continued resourcing for the achievement and maintenance of a malaria-free GMS</p>	<p>High priority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop evidence-based advocacy strategies and tools – may need some expertise ourselves or through partnerships e.g. health economists; for in the country, region and global audiences; government, non-government, donors and development partners and private and philanthropy audiences • Implementation/evaluation of advocacy • Collect stories from the field and share (need support to edit/disseminate) for broad-based advocacy and the role of CSOs/communities. Packaging appropriate to contexts, audiences, etc. • Partner with others /contribute to others’ advocacy on this theme • Support for CSOs involvement in broader fora