



Module 3: Political engagement

Introduction

In the Zero Malaria Starts with Me approach, commitment at the highest political levels complements grassroots and private sector involvement to mobilize all members of society.

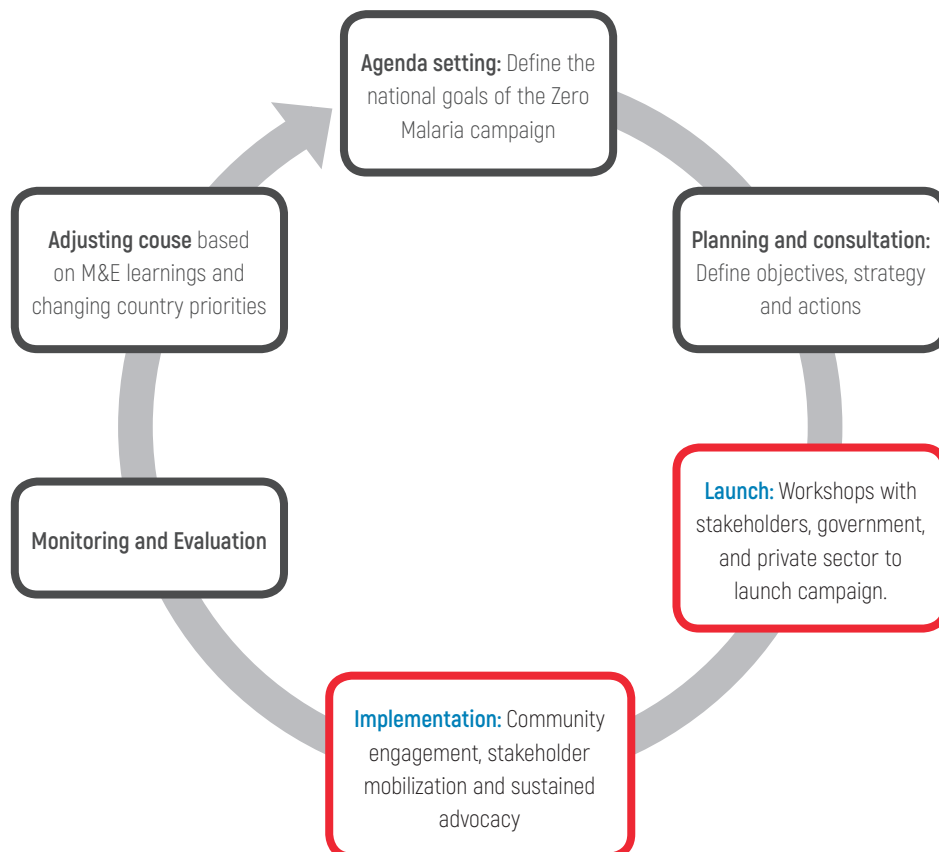
This module, along with [Module 4 Private sector engagement](#) and [Module 5 Community engagement](#) will help you navigate the “launch” and “implementation” stages of your campaign in the figure below. These stages will vary the most among countries depending on what you hope to achieve, who you need to engage with, and what approach is best for your specific context. There is no one-size-fits all solution for fighting malaria, so feel free to use these tools as they suit you and adapt them however you see fit.

Section 1 will present the rationale for political engagement, sharing how it can create a drive for anti-malaria efforts and providing examples of how different countries have made commitments. Section 2 will present various tools and approaches that may be useful for building and maintaining political will in your country, including a workshop guide, advocacy guide, a “Zero Malaria Pledge,” and various templates and graphics that can help you get started quickly.

If you haven't done so already, consider taking a look at some of the tools for Agenda Setting and Planning in previous modules before getting started. These tools can help you choose the right strategy for your campaign, saving you time and effort in the long run.

- [Module 1: Agenda Setting](#)
- [Module 2: Planning and Consultation](#)

Figure 5: Launch and implementation of engagement approaches in the Zero Malaria project cycle.



Learning objectives

By the end of this module, you will:

- understand how political engagement can support anti-malaria efforts;
- understand common political engagement approaches;
- know how to lead an effective workshop with political stakeholders; and
- know how to use the Zero Malaria Starts with Me pledge to build commitment.

Section 1: The role of political support for malaria elimination

Success against malaria requires simultaneous high-level political support, the involvement of the private sector, and community ownership of interventions. African leaders have long recognized the importance of fighting malaria and its impact on health, economic growth, and social inequalities.

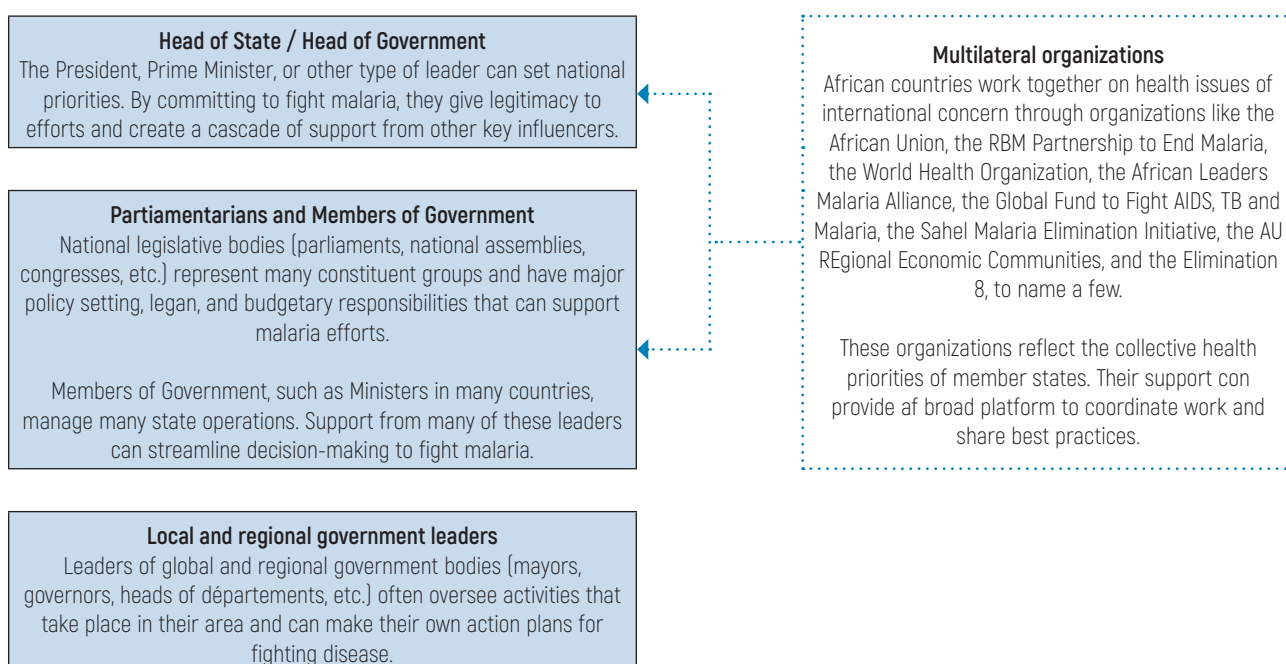
The Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign can work at every level of politics, securing commitments from the highest levels of national and international organizations and down through other critical decision-makers with more specialized responsibilities. The diagram below shows how multi-level political commitment can contribute to the malaria fight in your country and across Africa.

The [ALMA Scorecard for Accountability & Action](#) is a resource to compare African countries' political commitment to fight malaria. The tool uses national data to help identify bottlenecks and take rapid action to meet malaria control and elimination targets. It tracks key indicators like commodity financing, coverage, implementation, and other indicators. It is updated quarterly available in [English](#), [French](#), [Portuguese](#), and [Arabic](#). Additionally, over 30 countries in Africa have developed country-owned malaria elimination and control scorecard management tools, tracking progress against key malaria targets and identifying action nationally and sub-nationally.

The African Union has made malaria elimination a priority. In 2016, the AU endorsed [The Catalytic Framework to End AIDS, TB and Eliminate Malaria in Africa by 2030](#). The plan recognizes that country ownership and leadership is the key for a malaria-free Africa and outlines a roadmap for ending malaria transmission as well as preventing re-establishment in all countries by 2030.

Global efforts are coordinated by the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016–2030 (GTS). The GTS targets for malaria reduction and increased financing are a complement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and currently inform national and donor strategies.

Figure 6: Political engagement to fight malaria at different levels





Political leaders committed to the malaria fight can build a base of support for efforts that will make their work a national priority. When deciding to allocate scarce resources to public programmes, strong political will ensures that these programmes do not suffer from funding gaps that could stall progress or lead to a resurgence. Finally, success against malaria will often require cooperation with neighbouring countries. Through leading by example, governments motivated to reach zero malaria will inspire others to take the issue seriously.

Political engagement success stories

Across Africa, several examples demonstrate the power of high-level commitment in rolling out nation wide campaigns. In Zambia, President Edgar Lungu announced the country's first national strategy to eliminate malaria by 2021. This ambitious goal is the latest development in the country's long history of malaria innovation. It was among the first countries to pilot the "Scale-Up for Impact" approach, achieving high coverage of long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) and access to treatment beginning in 2005. Their motto, "malaria ends with me," is demonstrated in practice: approximately one-third of malaria funding came from domestic sources in 2016.

After successfully scaling up malaria prevention approaches nation wide, Senegal's National Malaria Control Programme (NMCP) and partners were looking for new ways to ensure that communities used the tools to finish the fight. Among their early supporters was Minister of Health Awa Coll Seck, who used her position to build support for the campaign among Parliament, Ministers, and the mayors of Senegalese cities. This high-profile platform made it possible for the campaign to initiate partnerships with major companies and launch their approach at community health facilities.

In 2018, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni launched Mass Action Against Malaria (MAAM), a national campaign to make Uganda malaria-free. As part of the campaign, Uganda committed to increase dedicated domestic funding for malaria and hold a Parliamentary Forum on Malaria to improve the existing legal framework for malaria programmes.

A number of countries are already working to form national End Malaria Councils; a multi-sectoral, high-level council of individuals convened by the head of state or government or senior leader, as applicable, to oversee the journey towards malaria elimination (see Figure 7). Its primary focus is ensuring sufficient resources are available to achieve this goal including:

- keeping malaria elimination high on the political and developmental agenda;
- sustained social mobilization including a grassroots movement to end malaria;
- increased and sustained malaria financing including domestic funding and the use of innovative financing; and
- engaging the private sector to play a significant role in ending malaria

Section 2: Political engagement tools

This section contains guides and tools that you can use to launch and implement your campaign among political stakeholders. Some of the material here was developed by the Senegal NMCP and their partners and was used successfully to build momentum for the malaria fight.

Political engagement approaches for malaria

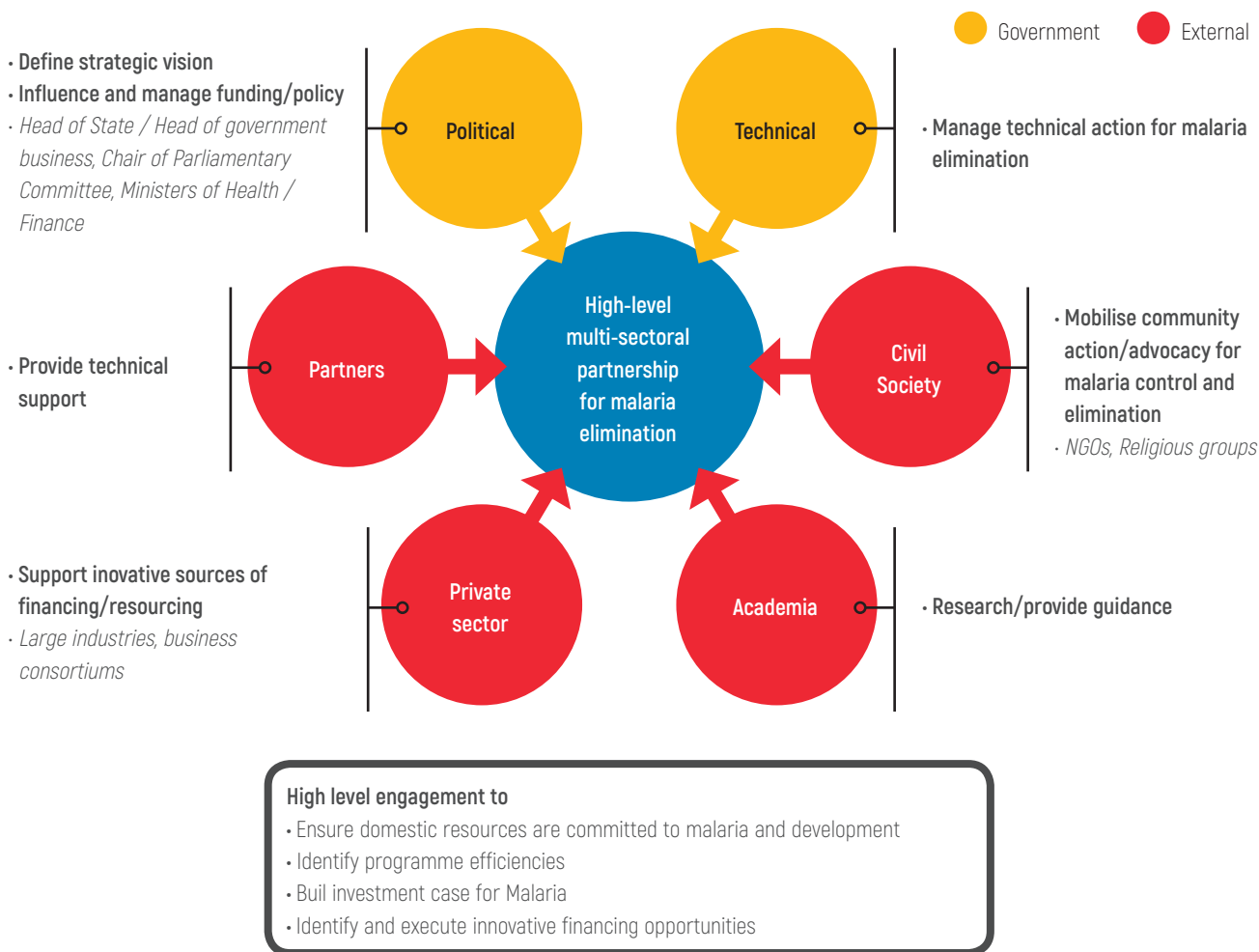
Political engagement can help your campaign influence decision-makers to support malaria goals. If you used the [Stakeholder Analysis tool](#) in Module 1 and the [Supporters and opponents map](#) in Module 2, then you already have a strong idea of who you will need to contact and how difficult it will be to change their views.

In general, the high-level policy-makers you will engage with have many competing priorities. They are constantly being solicited by citizens and interest groups to support or oppose various positions. Consider your time with them precious. You will need to make an impression through brief but impactful evidence-based statements that link to what most interests them. See the [Message development](#) guide in Module 2 for more about how to communicate effectively.

Political engagement takes time. Impressions are made and opinions changed over multiple interactions, preferably using a variety of formats. Here are a few tactics you can use to get the attention of decision-makers and persuade them to commit to the campaign:

Schedule an in-person meeting: Despite all of the electronic communication tools now available, the best way to make an impression is still in person. It may be difficult to meet with individuals that are particularly high-up in the political world unless you have a connection to them. If you are able to schedule a formal meeting, come prepared with messages tailored to their interests, bring a few resources, such as factsheets or one-page briefings about the campaign to share with them, country malaria control

Figure 7: National End Malaria Councils at work



and elimination scorecards, and develop a concrete, realistic request to support the campaign. Some campaigners have found it useful to start with a small request, and then increase the scope of following requests. This develops a sense of commitment to the campaign over time in the individual. Be sure to follow up with a thank you note or email.

Organize a Zero Malaria workshop or training: The Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign in Senegal used workshops to explain their approach to groups of parliamentarians and mayors. Political leaders may accept an invitation to an event to learn more about an issue that affects their constituents so that they can make informed decisions. It is best to keep these workshops to only a few hours, as these individuals have many other demands on their time. Use the workshop planning tool included later in this section as a starting point.

Create opportunities for informal meetings: Ensure that you and your partners attend events where decision makers may be present, such as major health conferences, World Malaria Day activities and Independence Day events (See table below for more ideas). When you are active in the public sphere, you are much more likely to have chance meetings with people who could influence your campaign. Be ready for these meetings with business cards and a few well-rehearsed evidence points that could persuade them to increase their involvement.

Remind political leaders of their anti-malaria commitments: Many countries have made bold commitments to the malaria fight and your country's campaign can take opportunities to remind political leaders of what has been promised. Check to see if your country has signed on to the following:



- [African Union Catalytic Framework to End AIDS, TB and Eliminate Malaria in Africa by 2030](#)
- [African Leaders Malaria Alliance Commitment to Eliminate Malaria by 2030](#)
- [World Health Organization Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016–2030](#)
- *Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Commitment to Halve Malaria by 2023*
- [Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- *Any other public statements or commitments to fight malaria*
- *Commitments and targets in the country National Malaria Strategic Plan*

Operate a stand or stall at conventions: Conventions are a chance to take your place among other civil society actors to gain legitimacy and visibility. In Senegal, for instance, the Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign held a photo exhibit at an international event. They used beautiful images combined with powerful malaria messages to describe their work and inspire others to get involved.

Walks, marches, and celebrations to support anti-malaria efforts: You can bring many stakeholders together to demonstrate popular support for anti-malaria efforts by organizing walks, marches, and other celebratory events.

Media approaches: You will want to position the campaign as a source of malaria expertise that the media will come to for insight and opinions. To engage the media, you will often need a “hook” for the story—a timely event such as World Malaria Day, the launch of a new National Strategy, or the release of a report. More details about how to engage the media are available in [Module 6: Making the campaign visible](#).

Zero Malaria Starts with Me awards ceremony: Recognize influential decision-makers with a Zero Malaria Starts with Me award. By presenting them with a trophy or certificate, you can show them how much their efforts are appreciated, create an incentive for others to get involved, and possibly attract media attention.

Zero Malaria Starts with Me photo booth: At a convention or event, set up a small “photo booth” where people can have their picture taken. Make it fun by including a Zero Malaria Starts with Me backdrop, a large version of the pledge, and props, like long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs), indoor residual spraying (IRS) gear, or a large cardboard mosquito.

Engagement on key dates

Key dates and anniversaries provide an excuse to organize an event or communications activity. Political leaders are more likely to attend a malaria event on World Malaria Day than an event not connected to anything timely. Be creative when choosing your moment. Below are a few ideas:

Key dates for political engagement events

International Women's Day (8 March): Pregnant women are especially at risk from malaria, malaria interventions contribute to gender equality in health.

World Health Day (7 April): World Health Day is an occasion to show how your country is working to improve the health of all. Anti-malaria efforts are a major contributor to improvements among health, especially among children and pregnant women, so should be represented at any events to mark the day.

World Malaria Day (25 April): Every year, World Malaria Day is an opportunity to reaffirm country commitments to shared malaria goals. Many countries organize celebrations featuring speeches by political leaders and performances by musicians or theatre groups.

World Health Assembly (May, dates vary): The annual World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva brings together leaders from around the world to discuss health issues and vote on World Health Organization business. The WHA is an opportunity for your country to share its work with donors, other countries, and governance institutions.

International Children's Day (1 June): Malaria accounts for one out of every four childhood deaths in Africa.

International Poverty Eradication Day (17 October): Malaria creates a cycle of poverty, elimination and eradication can create lasting economic gains.

United Nations Human Rights Day: Access to malaria prevention and treatment is a human right.

National Malaria Control Programme (NMCP) anniversary: If your country's NMCP has a major anniversary coming up, take the opportunity to organize a gathering of partners and participants.

Workshop guide for political engagement

Below is a guide for organizing a simple, information-sharing workshop with political leaders—parliamentarians, ministry staff, mayors, or other officials that may be interested in the programme. A short workshop is a chance to formally introduce stakeholders to your campaign, allowing them to learn about your objectives and ask questions. For some of the stakeholders, it will also be a chance to meet other workshop attendees, helping build a network of advocates for malaria elimination.

When organizing a workshop, think through the following questions:

Workshop goals

- Which of your campaign objectives will the workshop support?
- What do you hope to achieve through the workshop? Ensure your goals are realistic and feasible.

Attendees

- Who should be invited to the workshop?
- Are there differences in priority among attendees? Is there anyone who must attend for the workshop to succeed?
- What are the characteristics of the attendees? Be sure to tailor the workshop to suit those in attendance, with regards to: position, previous knowledge about malaria, level of influence, attitude toward your objectives, etc. For instance, workshop for a scientific working group will need much more technical detail than one for politicians new to the health field.

Preparation

- How long should the workshop be? Unless attendees are particularly dedicated, a workshop longer than half of a day could make some reluctant to participate.

- What is your budget for the workshop? Will coffee, tea, a snack, or lunch be provided?
- What needs to be prepared for the workshop in terms of presentations, factsheets, and briefing documents? Who will prepare them?
- What logistics need to be prepared (booking a space, food and drink, etc.)? Who will be responsible for their preparation?

Your presentations are a form of messaging. Ensure that you use your key evidence points to build a narrative showing why your campaign is needed and how the support of your audience is critical. See the [Message development](#) guide for more information.

The format you use for your workshop should vary based on who is there, how much time you have, and how engaged the attendees are. Below are sample formats for different types of workshops. You can use these as a rough model when thinking about what should be included in your workshop.

Sample Workshop #1: Introducing the campaign

When introducing the campaign to new audiences, be considerate of the participants time and give them an opportunity to ask questions. Your presentations should give context to the campaign and make them interested to learn more.

Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduce parliamentarian group to the Zero Malaria Starts with Me Campaign ○ Obtain contact information from attendees ○ Identify opportunities for further engagement with potential campaign advocates 	
Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Twenty parliamentarians who work on health issues 	
Agenda	09:00	Arrival of attendees at hotel conference room
	09:15–09:30	Welcome speech by workshop organizer, explain objectives and agenda of the workshop
	09:30–09:45	Introductions of attendees: Say name, position, and why they are interested in malaria.
	09:45–10:30	Presentation of Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The malaria burden in our country ○ What must be done ○ The role of parliamentary leadership ○ The benefits of a malaria-free country
	10:30–11:00	Presentation on how parliamentarians can get involved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Think of specific ways members of parliament can contribute to your goals. This could be for supporting a specific piece of upcoming legislation, signing the Zero Malaria pledge, or offering to speak at an upcoming event.
11:00–11:30	Participant questions, comments, and concerns	
Logistics and Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Book hotel conference room for the date of the event ○ 20 notebooks, water bottles, and pens ○ Bring projector, screen, and laptop. ○ Print 20 copies of the Zero Malaria Starts with Me factsheet ○ Prepare presentation 	



Sample Workshop #2: Group preparation for an objective

Once you have a core group of support, you may want to bring them together occasionally to plan collectively or prepare to achieve a certain objective. This gives your biggest supporters the chance to contribute to the direction of the campaign, increasing their sense of ownership and making them more likely to use their influence toward the campaign objectives.

In this example, the fictional campaign has built strong support among mayors, who are now willing to launch a programme to fight malaria using their municipal resources.

Committing to malaria elimination: The Zero Malaria Starts with Me pledge

A signature feature of the Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign in Senegal was its use of pledges, where members of the political sphere, private sector, or communities pledge their commitment to malaria elimination. This pledge recognized the responsibility of all actors to do their part, and engagement prior to and following the pledge provided an opportunity for the campaign to share with these actors how their support could make a difference.

If you believe the pledge would be a useful tool for your campaign, here is how it works:

- First, build a relationship with influential stakeholders. Whether they are in politics or another field, everyone's support makes a difference.
- If the individual is ready to champion malaria interventions, request that they publicly sign the pledge. Meet with them when they sign and be sure to take photographs.
- Then, with their permission, display photos and text about their commitment and what it means for your country on your website and social media. If they are particularly famous, there is a chance the pledge could warrant media coverage. See [Module 6](#) for more information about visibility strategies.

The pledge can be used as a starting point to develop a network of allies committed to fight malaria. To cultivate these relationships over time, you could:

- Develop a network of Malaria Champions among pledge-signers, encouraging cooperation across sectors.
- Remind pledge-signers of their commitment when important actions need to be taken (passing a new budget, financing a new intervention, community-based anti-malaria efforts, etc.).
- Give pledge-signers the opportunity to give speeches encouraging others to make a commitment to malaria elimination.

Goals	○ Develop a launch strategy for the new "Mayors against Malaria" initiative	
Attendees	○ Ten mayors of major cities who have been engaged with the campaign over the past year	
Agenda	09:00	Arrival of attendees at hotel conference room
	09:15–09:30	Welcome speech by workshop organizer, explain objectives and agenda of the workshop
	09:30–09:45	Introductions of attendees: Say name, position, and why malaria elimination is an important goal for their city.
	09:45–10:30	Recap of Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Major accomplishments since launch ○ Malaria burden in municipal areas ○ Need for a new approach led by mayors
	10:30–12:00	Work session: developing the Mayors against Malaria initiative. Define objectives and available resources
	12:00–13:00	Lunch
	13:00–15:00	Work session: developing the mayors against malaria initiative. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Build an action plan and timeline ○ Identify risks ○ Define next steps
Logistics and Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Book hotel conference room for the date of the event ○ 10 notebooks, water bottles, and pens ○ Bring projector, screen, and laptop. ○ Print 10 copies of the Zero Malaria Starts with Me concept note and briefing booklet ○ Prepare presentation with research on malaria burden in each municipality 	

See [Module 6: Making the campaign visible](#) for tips on increasing the spread and impact of the pledge.

An example of the pledge can be found below.

Additional political engagement resources

When meeting with political stakeholders, it is useful to have some materials on hand to ensure your campaign is visible, memorable, and convincing. In this section, you will find some resources that can help you get started.

Briefing documents: This one-page brief may be helpful when introducing the campaign to new audiences. Available at zeromalaria.africa/political-engagement

Templates: If appropriate for your campaign, letterhead, factsheet, and invitation templates with the Zero Malaria Starts with Me branding can be downloaded through the online toolkit at zeromalaria.africa/political-engagement.

Zero Malaria Starts with Me

Pledge your support for a malaria-free future!

Over the last two decades, Africa has seen remarkable progress in fighting malaria. With over 6 million lives saved, malaria programmes have proven to be one of the best investments in health. But the fight is far from over. A malaria-free Africa is a bold vision, and one that is within our reach—but only if everyone commits to fight malaria whenever and however the can.

Whether you are a politician, a member of the private sector, a religious leader, or are simply concerned for the health of your family, friends, and neighbours, please pledge your support today!



I promise to act as a champion for the fight against malaria.

I commit to:

- *Make the fight against malaria a priority to set an example for others in my community, in my country, across Africa, and around the world.*
- *Support my country's investments and actions in fighting malaria through the National Malaria Control Programme, Ministry of Health, and other organizations.*
- *Spread awareness about malaria prevention, care, and activism among my colleagues, constituents, and community.*

Signed: _____

Date: _____



Graphic resources: The Zero Malaria Starts with Me logo, banners, and high-quality photos about the campaign are also available through the online toolkit, at zeromalaria.africa/political-engagement.

Zero malaria pledge: A printable copy of the Zero malaria pledge is available in the online toolkit at zeromalaria.africa/political-engagement.