

## Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (MERG)

### Terms of Reference

#### I. Purpose

The purpose of the RBM Partnership to End Malaria's Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (RBM MERG) is to facilitate alignment of partners on strategies and "best practices" in surveillance, monitoring, and evaluation (SME) of malaria control and elimination programs. It also identifies emerging questions and needs related to the implementation of SME initiatives, communicates these to appropriate partners, and brainstorms solutions.

MERG welcomes participation from all partners working on SME of malaria and actively pursues engagement with professionals in malaria endemic countries. This open membership and country-level dialogue distinguish MERG from the World Health Organization's SME Technical Experts' Group (SME TEG) and make the two bodies complementary.

The MERG will at all time ensure that its work is aligned with, and complements, that of WHO.

The MERG is accountable to the RBM Partnership Board through the RBM CEO.

#### II. Functions

**Convene:** MERG brings together individuals and partners who are well versed in SME and have the ability to advise on, and advocate for, improved SME for the RBM Partnership.

**Coordinate:** MERG is a forum to coordinate efforts in SME, including:

- Harmonising SME activities to leverage partner resources and avoid duplicating efforts
- Identifying and prioritising critical actions for country, regional, and global SME work
- Identifying critical SME bottlenecks and organising specific Task Forces to address the challenges and provide recommendations
- Promoting operational research to support evidence-based, efficient programme implementation and the use of SME tools
- Identifying and recommending strategies for capacity building in SME at all levels
- Developing and maintaining consensus around SME strategies across partners and institutions
- Monitoring changing needs for SME as country programmes, and the RBM Partnership itself, evolve

**Facilitate Communication:** MERG is a forum for communication and mutual learning, including:

- Advising the RBM Board, through the RBM CEO, on appropriate SME frameworks for the RBM Partnership
- Keeping partners informed of SME developments and initiatives
- Informally advocating for increased attention to and resources for SME activities within RBM and member institutions

- Disseminating SME resources to RBM partners, including meeting materials such as agendas, meeting minutes, and participant lists
- Other activities pertinent to SME as requested by the RBM Board, through the RBM CEO

### **III. Membership**

MERG is a willing assembly of RBM partners; as such, membership is open to all interested parties. The MERG co-chairs may actively approach and encourage individuals or organisations to join the MERG to diversify the group or introduce new strengths and skills. MERG membership strives for a balance of scientific and programmatic knowledge and experience and for geographic representation. Membership to the MERG can be requested through the contact information available on the RBM Partnership website.

The role is a voluntary role, and there is no remuneration for participating. However, members representing organisations with means are encouraged to support the travel of endemic country participants to MERG meetings. This financial support is critical to MERG's purpose to address country-level SME needs and to maintaining well-rounded discussions.

#### **Expectations of all members**

- Institutional investment or personal involvement in SME of malaria
- Expertise and experience in relevant field for SME
- Ability to fund their own participation and attendance at MERG meetings (individually or through their institution), unless they qualify for financial support from MERG partners

#### **Roles and responsibilities of all members**

- Active participation in MERG events
- Responsiveness to requests from the MERG Secretariat and Co-chairs

#### **Invited Guests and Presenters**

Other experts in specific fields will be invited to participate in general MERG meetings and Task Forces, depending on the agenda and the focus of activities.

### **IV. Structure**

#### **Co-chairs**

Two Co-chairs will be elected from the MERG membership. The Co-chairs will serve a two-year term and are limited to two consecutive terms. There is no limit on the number of non- consecutive terms a co-chair may serve.

Roles and responsibilities include:

- Strategic and technical direction of MERG
- Preparation and chairing of MERG meetings
- Communication with RBM Management Team, including taking part in quarterly coordination meetings chaired by the CEO
- Liaising with RBM Partner Committees and other RBM Working Groups, including taking part in relevant Partner Committee Steering Committees
- Review of meeting minutes, quarterly update and annual reports

## **Secretariat**

Roles and responsibilities of the MERG Secretariat include:

- Coordination and organisation of MERG plenary meetings and Task Force meetings in collaboration with Co-chairs
- Preparation and dissemination of meeting minutes
- Preparation of quarterly updates on the MERG's work for the CEO, and annual reports to the RBM Board
- Coordination with RBM relating to MERG homepage updates, maintenance of membership list, meetings minutes, and MERG products
- Communication among MERG membership
- Maintenance of momentum on MERG tasks and products
- Liaising with RBM Partner Committees and other RBM Working Groups
- Other supporting functions as appropriate

## **Task Forces**

Task forces may be established to work on specific issues or products of interest to MERG. Any member may propose the creation of a Task Force to meet an explicit SME challenge or need. MERG Co-chairs must endorse the Task Force, with support from the MERG Secretariat. Following this endorsement, Task Forces will be named on the MERG website along with contact information.

Each Task Force should be led by a Chair or Co-chairs, have a specific time-bound and task-oriented purpose, and dissolve when its objectives are achieved. Chairs may invite knowledgeable professionals who are not otherwise engaged in MERG activities to join a task force. Task Force meetings will include invitations to the MERG Co-chairs and Secretariat, and meeting minutes will be submitted to the MERG Secretariat.

## **V. Operating Procedures**

### **Convocation of Meetings**

**Plenary Meetings:** MERG Co-chairs will call up to two MERG meetings per year, with support from the MERG Secretariat, as budget allows and technical needs call for. The technical agenda will be in line with the programme of work, and will follow informal consultation with the RBM Management Team and MERG members on the suitability of proposed meeting dates.

**Ad Hoc Meetings:** Meetings on issues requiring the urgent review of MERG will be organised on an ad hoc basis if called for by the Board or Management Team.

**Task Force Meetings:** In-person or virtual meetings on specific issues or products of interest to MERG may be organised.

In the interest of efficient use of time and limiting costs associated with meetings, MERG will complement face-to-face meetings as held at a host partner's site with virtual meetings (i.e. teleconferences and videoconferences) of the MERG as a whole or its Task Forces as necessary.

### **Meeting Minutes**

The MERG Secretariat will draft minutes on the proceedings of meetings, including those of Task Forces. The Co-chairs, and other selected members depending on the subject matter, will review

these minutes within one month of a plenary meeting. Meeting minutes will be shared through the MERG and RBM websites, along with presentations, with the approval of all speakers.

### **Election of Co-chairs**

- The election procedure shall be transparent and open to all individual members, defined as those who have attended at least 2 meetings in the last 3 years (endemic country participants, generally defined as representatives from National Malaria Control Programmes and country-led research institutions, must only have attended 1 meeting in the last 3 years in order to vote).
- The Secretariat shall send out notifications one month prior to the election, soliciting nominations.
- Each member has the right to nominate one person or self-nominate. Nominees may be anyone working on SME of malaria issues.
- Prior to the election, the Secretariat shall obtain a confirmation from the nominees that they are interested and willing to run for election.
- Prior to the co-chairs' endorsement by the membership, they must gain assurance from their employer regarding the travel and workload required by the role.
- The election should be carried out through a secret ballot or through the use of electronic vote. A simple majority decides.

### **Annual Workplan and Budget**

Facilitated by the WG Co-chairs, the WG must develop an annual workplan and accompanying budget. This workplan will be the results of a defined consultative process, defined in the governance of the WG, including the opportunity for the RBM CEO to provide comments and inputs to ensure harmonization and consistency with RBM and Partner Committee workplans.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The identification and management of conflicts of interest should be undertaken in accordance with the RBM declaration of interest process, as overseen and directed by the RBM Secretariat.

## **VI. Dissolution of the Working Group**

The TOR will be reviewed by the Co-chairs and Secretariat on a biannual basis. The review process will be based on specific performance criteria. In other words, MERG will be measured on how well MERG accomplishes the activities and meets the goals and targets defined in annual workplans. If a majority of targets cannot be met in the two year time period of the workplan and there is a low rate of participation among members, if the mandate of the MERG has been completed, or if the Board no longer feels that the mandate of the MERG is relevant to the new Partnership Workplan, the Board can decide to dissolve the MERG.

The RBM Management Team will monitor the performance of the Working Groups and may request the Partnership Board to remove accreditation if a Working Group is either inactive or does not fulfil the requirement to ensure adequate participation of malaria-affected countries in its activities.

\* \* \*