



**Vector Control
Advisory Group**

MEETING REPORT
Virtual meeting, 7–10 December 2020

Thirteenth meeting of the WHO Vector Control Advisory Group



**World Health
Organization**



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BACKGROUND

The World Health Organization (WHO) Vector Control Advisory Group (VCAG) serves as an advisory body to WHO on new tools, technologies and approaches – collectively referred to as “interventions” – for the control of vectors of malaria, dengue and other vector-borne diseases. VCAG is jointly coordinated by the WHO Global Malaria Programme (GMP), the WHO Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) and the WHO Prequalification Team for Vector Control Products (PQT/VCP). The specific functions of VCAG are:

- to provide guidance to product developers, innovators and researchers on the generation of epidemiological data and study designs to enable assessment of the public health value of new vector control interventions;
- to assess the public health value of new vector control interventions submitted to WHO; and
- to provide advice to WHO, for submission to the Malaria Policy Advisory Group (MPAG) and the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Neglected Tropical Diseases (STAG), on the public health value of new interventions.

VCAG experts met virtually with product developers, innovators and researchers (jointly referred to as “applicants”) from 7 to 10 December 2020 for the 13th VCAG meeting. The experts consisted of 14 VCAG members and three temporary advisors. The meeting was co-chaired by Heather Ferguson and Salim Abdulla. The full list of participants who were involved in the meeting can be found in Annex 1. The agenda for the meeting is reproduced in Annex 2.

This report details the proceedings and outcomes of the meeting, including advice provided to applicants who had made submissions relating to the following intervention classes:

- Bait stations
- Lethal house lures
- Reduced pathogen transmission induced by *Wolbachia*
- Spatial repellents
- Treatment of humans and/or livestock with an endectocide.

CLOSED SESSION

The initial closed session was attended by all VCAG members, the WHO VCAG Secretariat and affiliated WHO staff. All declarations of interest disclosed by VCAG advisors were reviewed in advance of the meeting, and relevant interests were disclosed, along with how they were being managed. The statement of declarations of interest is available in Annex 3.

Welcome

VCAG members were officially welcomed by Mr Deusdedit Mubangizi, Coordinator of RPQ/PQT (on behalf of Dr Mariângela Simão, Assistant Director General of MHP), Dr Pedro Alonso, Director of GMP and Dr Mwele Malecela, Director of NTD. The evolution of VCAG over the last number of years was noted. All three highlighted the

importance of the three departments' collaboration in navigating the evaluation of novel interventions in the vector control space and the importance of speaking with one voice. Dr Alonso noted that it is in the vector control space that some of the greatest progress is being made in the development of new and effective tools to combat malaria, and such advances need to continue. Dr Malecela informed VCAG that the NTD Roadmap 2021–2030 was approved by the World Health Assembly in its special session in November 2020. The Roadmap promotes a fundamental shift in the focus of delivery from disease-specific programmes to integrated approaches based on common delivery platforms. Integrated vector management, research and innovation are considered essential factors for the success of the Roadmap.

The effect of COVID-19 on the implementation of control programmes targeting both malaria and NTDs has clearly been felt over the past year, and the need to come together to support delivery efforts was echoed by all teams. All three speakers expressed their gratitude to the VCAG members for their dedication and commitment to the work of the group and the goal of bringing new and effective vector control interventions to the table.

Updates from the WHO departments

Since the 12th VCAG meeting (8–10 June 2020), WHO has published the latest evaluation standards for vector control interventions, called *Norms, standards and processes underpinning WHO vector control policy development (1)*. This publication was developed through the joint effort of the three departments (GMP/VCR, NTD/VVE, RPQ/PQT) as part of WHO's effort to improve communication around the linkage between the generation of data to inform the development of guidelines and how those guidelines are developed. This document provides both VCAG members and applicants alike with descriptions of WHO's revised evaluation standards for vector control interventions, replacing the document entitled *The evaluation process for vector control products*, which was published in June 2017. This revised guidance represents a move away from a one-size-fits-all approach and places greater emphasis on the proposal of trial designs that are suitable for specific epidemiological contexts and for the intended deployment and use patterns of the interventions. The generation of the highest quality evidence to demonstrate public health value remains paramount for each intervention that goes through the evaluation process.

Dr Jan Kolaczinski (GMP/VCR) informed VCAG of the position statement on genetically modified mosquitoes that was recently published by WHO, and the fact that WHO is supportive of further research assessing the potential epidemiological impact of this new technology. Dr Kolaczinski also informed VCAG that WHO's malaria guidelines are being collated into a single guideline (no longer separated by treatment, prevention and control). This guideline will be available on an online application called MAGICapp (as of early 2021), facilitating access to individual components of the guideline.

Dr Raman Velayudhan (NTD/VVE) provided further information on the new NTD

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