



Against Malaria Foundation

The Against Malaria Foundation is a charitable organisation that aims to prevent deaths from malaria by increasing access to insecticide-treated bed nets. Here, Founder and CEO **Rob Mather** discusses how the Foundation has evolved, its efforts to remain cost-effective and the complexities of distribution

To begin, could you explain what led you to establish the Against Malaria Foundation (AMF) in 2004?

In 2003, I saw a television programme about a two-year-old girl called Terri who suffered 90 per cent burns in a house fire. I was very moved by her story and rounded up two friends to raise money for her trust fund with a sponsored swim. What began as a three-person swim developed into 150 swims in 73 countries, involving 10,000 participants. My colleague, Andrew Garner, offered to build a small website in his spare time so everyone swimming could see the other people involved.

A few people asked: 'What are we doing next year?' My throwaway line was: 'Get a million people to swim...'; the World Swim Against Malaria was the result. Overall, 250,000 people swam in 160 different countries and, as the swim developed, Andrew joined me full time.

As a result of the swim, many people became more aware of the burden of malaria and asked if they could raise funds in other ways. This led to the creation of the Against Malaria website to enable people to fundraise in whichever way they wished. The organisation's name was changed to the Against Malaria Foundation (AMF) to reflect that development.

What are the main activities of the Foundation today? Is the World Swim event ongoing?

At present, AMF's main activities are receiving funds, either through fundraising or direct donation, for long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) that protect people from malaria while they sleep. We also assess potential net distributions and ensure those we fund occur efficiently, effectively and accountably so people are protected with nets.

World Swim is a continuing event and involves many people swimming all over the world. All funds raised are used to buy LLINs. The next World Swim takes place on 26 June 2015 – we are aiming for 1 million swimmers. However, World Swim is now only one element of our fundraising. Since we established AMF, people have raised funds in a

myriad of ways: sponsored runs, bake sales, silences, poetry readings, birthday presents, sponsored beard growing, mountain climbing, bike rides and many more.

AMF was rated the world's most cost-effective charity by GiveWell in 2012 and 2013, and 100 per cent of funds raised through your website are used to purchase LLINs. How do you make this possible?

We aim to be highly cost-effective at using donor funds to prevent illness and avoid deaths from malaria. We do this in three ways:

First, we have a clear focus on a specific intervention – antimalarial bed nets – and particularly LLINs, which have been demonstrated to reduce illness and prevent deaths. This means the potential impact on lives saved and health improved per dollar donated is high.

Second, we have an operating model that has proved highly effective: a lean organisational structure, significant leveraging of technology and a pro bono partnership and distribution model. We have very few costs and those that do exist are covered by a group of private donors.

Third, we place great emphasis on the preparation, implementation and follow-up of distributions to ensure the potential impact of distributing nets is realised. We report on this transparently and in detail.

How much does each net cost and how does this value compare to their effectiveness? Can donors see where the nets they fund will be distributed?

Each net costs US \$3 and protects two people from being bitten at night for three or more years. There are very few fundamental health interventions that have this level of impact for such a low cost.

To ensure donors can see the impact of their generosity we link all funding to a specific distribution, and ensure people continue to use the nets by conducting post-distribution net use check-ups (PDCUs).

Why nets?

Sleeping under a mosquito net, specifically a long-lasting insecticide treated net, is the most effective means of preventing malaria

- Mosquitos typically bite between 10pm and 2am, so people are most vulnerable when they are sleeping
- For every 50-250 nets the Against Malaria Foundation distributes, one child's life is saved

- Nets remain usable after wear and tear – even with holes, nets remain 99 per cent effective

- Nets work in two ways:

1. As a simple mechanical barrier
2. As a mechanism for killing the mosquito – when a mosquito lands on a net it picks up insecticide on its legs, causing 'knock down' and death



Guiding principles – translating into practice

EFFICIENCY influences the way donations are spent and nets are distributed. The support of hundreds of individuals who give up their time, and the generosity of dozens of organisations that financially support the vision of AMF, means that 100 per cent of the money raised by fundraising and donations is used to buy nets. Furthermore, distribution is effectively managed to ensure the nets get to those who need them most.

TRANSPARENCY is maintained because information is recorded and published about every donation received, distribution carried out, and other operational activities performed. This means donors can see exactly where the nets they fund are distributed and all stakeholders have access to information on how decisions are made, the status of current distributions, progress with future distributions, level of recurring donations and governance mechanisms.

DEMONSTRATING IMPACT: AMF quantifies and reports net usage and malaria levels. The Foundation's distribution partners conduct PDCUs every six months to assess net use and condition. Monthly malaria case rate data are also tracked, by maintaining contact with all health centres and clinics in a distribution, to quantify and report the impact of the nets.





The distribution process

Choosing who should distribute the nets, and where to distribute them, is a complex process

There are four important operational elements for a distribution:

- Accurate household-level net-need data
- Independent supervision at the moment of net distribution
- Post-distribution monitoring of net use and condition
- Monthly malaria case rate data

Once a partner has been chosen, AMF must ensure distributions are efficient. A pre-distribution registration survey is carried out, comprising visits to all households in a distribution zone. This ensures a household needing three nets will receive three nets, not two or four. Detailed beneficiary lists are screened for 'ghost names' and independent supervision at the moment of distribution ensures the 'no show, no net' rule is followed. This imports a strong sense of fairness (nets will not be taken by others) and equity ('if I need three nets I will get three nets').

AMF's Malaria Advisory Group advises the Foundation on how funds should be spent. Who does this group represent and what expertise do they bring?

The Malaria Advisory Group is made up of some of the world's leading malaria experts and its members have extensive experience both in the strategies used to combat malaria and in the implementation of malaria programmes.

Can you explain the criteria the Foundation uses for deciding where the nets are distributed?

When deciding to fund nets for a distribution we look for two things: malaria prone areas with a need for nets, and distribution partners with whom we are comfortable working.

There is reliable information indicating where malaria is a problem. We liaise with a variety of groups, including national malaria control programmes, to establish where there is a net gap. Around 90 per cent of malaria deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa, therefore this region is the main focus of our activities. However, we also work in parts of Asia and other tropical countries where malaria is endemic.

Your distribution partners collect malaria case rate data on a quarterly basis and conduct PDCUs to monitor net usage and condition. How do you use this information and what have the results shown so far?

PDCU data is used to ensure nets continue to be used and can inform groups about the need for additional local interventions to increase this if necessary. These data, collected on a statistically significant sampling basis, have shown 90-95 per cent net usage rates.

Malaria data are monitored to keep track of the disease burden and associated trends. Analysis has shown sharp declines in malaria rates. However, sometimes these data can be difficult to interpret – it can even seem to show an increase in malaria following net distribution, due

to increased clinic attendance. For this reason, we believe PDCU data are a better guide to the impact of the nets.

How has AMF evolved since 2004, and how do you hope it will grow in the future? What do you consider to be the Foundation's biggest successes?

AMF has evolved from a single charity swim to an organisation receiving donations in a variety of different ways.

As a result of the continued work of the same two full-time staff members since its inception, AMF has evolved from distributing a few thousand nets, to distributions of many hundreds of thousands. Looking to the future, funds are currently being allocated for multi-million net distributions. We wish to help as many in need as we can.

We leave it to others to judge our success or otherwise. It is important to us that we always do what we say we will, steward the donations entrusted to us wisely and transparently, and ensure nets are distributed accountably and without material loss so that they can continue to be used to protect vulnerable people at risk of malaria.

www.againstmalaria.com

