

The African Union and international experts highlight the importance of investing in sound frameworks to enable the development of gene drive for malaria control

Two reports published last week highlight the importance of investing in the establishment of sound frameworks and guidance to enable the responsible development of gene drive technologies for malaria control.

Africa remains the continent most affected by malaria, with 90% of cases worldwide recorded in sub-Saharan Africa. The near simultaneous publications of an expert paper in the American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (AJTMH) on pathways to deployment and of the African Union's High Level Panel's report on gene drive speak to the increasing relevance of gene drive approaches for malaria control on the continent*.

The timeliness and coherence of these two reports is welcome. The most recent WHO World Malaria Report put urgency back into the global fight against malaria, with past gains in fighting the disease now being threatened by growing technical and financial challenges. New tools and technologies are essential to any successful effort to eradicate malaria.

The High Level Panel's report emphasises that the Africa region needs to be at the forefront of developing the policy and regulatory frameworks that will enable the development and evaluation of gene drive technologies. The commitment to guide this research expressed at the highest level by the African Union and African experts is very positive.

The crucial role that Africa needs to play is echoed by the AJTMH expert paper. As a project committed to the co-development of its technology, Target Malaria particularly welcomes the paper's emphasis on ensuring research is done in Africa, or with the participation of African collaborators. Target Malaria's teams in Burkina Faso, Mali and Uganda are creating centers of excellence which will enable African scientists to lead in the development of these new tools.

The AJTMH expert paper offers an important addition to the existing body of guidance available to policy-makers, funders and researchers. It presents a clear, comprehensive and practical outline of the considerations and options research teams should consider. By doing so, it demonstrates that the novel elements or questions that gene drive research raises can be addressed and resolved.

Gene drive mosquitoes are several years away from being ready to be evaluated for use against malaria, but governments and regional authorities need to invest early in building the policy and regulatory capacity to assess and manage these technologies on a case-by-case basis. These two publications are a timely step in that direction.

* [*“Pathway to Deployment of Gene Drive Mosquitoes as a Potential Biocontrol Tool for the Elimination of Malaria in Sub-Saharan Africa: Recommendations of a Scientific Working Group”*](#) was published in the American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (AJTMH), on June 7th. It provides recommendations to support the establishment of best practices for the development of gene drive mosquitoes for malaria control.

The report of the African Union High Level Panel on Emerging Technologies was launched on June 8th at the Africa Innovation Summit. Entitled [*“Gene Drives for Malaria Control and Elimination in*](#)



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[Africa](#)", it calls for further investigation of gene drive technologies, noting the high potential of these approaches to help Africa achieve its objective of malaria elimination by 2030.