

Insecticide-treated net (ITN) distribution channel selection toolkit

Step 3: Rate preferred channels on performance and operational readiness criteria

Objectives

- Determine past performance (where relevant) and operational readiness of feasible delivery channels and identify/prioritize operational gaps.
- Understand how selected channels would be implemented, as a prerequisite to developing plans of action.

Guidance

- For each population group, the feasible delivery channels from Step 2 should be assessed for operational readiness. This will help inform final channel selection and identify operational gaps to address before implementation. Ideally, existing systems should be ready to support a given ITN distribution channel without major new investment or restructuring.
- The table below presents operational questions for consideration and rating in terms of channel readiness for implementation. Each proposed channel should be scored for each question. The table is also available as an Excel template to which additional channel columns or operational questions can be added.
- This step should be completed for each feasible channel in the strategy matrix. Assessment of channels that could serve two or more population groups (or geographic areas) can consider the groups or geographic areas together where operational readiness considerations apply to all groups or areas. If operational readiness differs between population groups or geographic areas, make a note of these differences.
- Review the questions for each operational area, discuss responses and arrive at a consensus readiness classification using a traffic-light rating (green, yellow, red). Record one rating per question in the table and note any actions required to move the rating from yellow or red towards green. Separately, document any meaningful deviations in operational readiness and/or performance across population groups, geographic areas and/or administrative units in which the channel will operate.
- Each operational area has a series of specific questions about existing functions, followed by a summary question to assess the readiness of existing systems, staff and functions to expand to support ITN distribution. Summary readiness decisions should consider both existing readiness and the feasibility of addressing gaps with no more than minimal additional effort, input or resources.
- This activity can be performed as a desk review led by the NMP with partner inputs through the coordination body. Subject area experts at national and sub-national levels should be included in the review team to provide relevant inputs.
- In summarizing the outputs from this step, users may consider putting more weight on the results for certain operational areas based on their context. When reviewing existing channels, users can reference existing documents as evidence sources for the green, yellow or red classification (e.g. reports from recent mass campaigns or recent assessments of continuous distribution channels).

- Use the following guidance when deciding how to score each question:

Rating	Meaning	Guidance for scoring
Green	Ready Systems are in place and functional with only minor or routine improvements needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Processes are already operating for similar interventions. - Staff have the required skills or training can be done through existing mechanisms. - Data systems and supervision structures are functioning and can incorporate ITN distribution requirements with minimal adaptation. - No significant additional costs or new structures required, and maintenance costs for systems are assured.
Yellow	Partially ready/moderate gaps Core elements exist but need strengthening or some additional resources before implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Processes like those required exist but are inconsistently applied or under-resourced. - Substantial additional training, supervision and/or logistics support would be required before roll-out. - Channel could be implemented if these moderate gaps are addressed within available resources and timelines. - Financial resources needed are moderate and primarily one-off.
Red	Not ready/major gaps Key systems or capacities do not exist or are non-functional. Major new resources or reforms would be needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No established processes or mechanisms exist. - Required staff cadres are not consistently available at the required coverage. - Reporting and accountability systems would need to be built to cover ITN distribution or existing systems would require major redesign. - Costs or time exceed available resources.

- Once all questions have been answered, consider overall readiness by summarizing the colour classifications:
 - A channel with mainly green ratings is likely ready for inclusion in the final channel mix.
 - A channel with mostly yellow ratings may still be included, provided affordable actions are planned to close readiness gaps.
 - A channel with mostly red ratings should be excluded or deferred, unless the NMP and partners plan a specific investment to establish it and have identified sufficient funding which does not reduce the provision of other core malaria services.
- Where meaningful sub-national differences in operational readiness have been documented, consider the implications of these when assessing overall readiness. For example, how easily could learnings and practices from more operationally ready areas be applied to areas with gaps?
- Once all channels have been considered, update the strategy matrix to prioritize feasible channels based on their level of operational readiness. Some feasible channels may be excluded or deferred at this point if they are not operationally ready or have major gaps.

Expected outputs

- Completed channel operational readiness table
- Revised strategy matrix reflecting the inclusion of feasible and operationally ready channels
- Accompanying documentation on the data used and discussions held during step 3

Integration opportunities								
Do national and/or sub-national teams have experience planning and implementing multi-intervention campaigns?								
Do national and/or sub-national teams have experience planning and implementing integrated outreach activities?								
<i>Consider for school-based and community-based channels:</i> Are there existing [health/education/community] programmes that could serve as delivery points for ITNs?								
Are mechanisms in place to plan joint activities across programmes (e.g. between malaria and other health areas, or between MoH and other Ministries)?								
Summary: In your opinion, could ITN distribution be effectively integrated with other health, education or community interventions through this channel, with no more than minimal additional inputs?								
Logistics								
Does adequate storage capacity exist at regional level for the required quantity of ITNs? <i>“Regional” refers to the level 1 administrative unit</i>								
Does adequate storage capacity exist at district level for the required quantity of ITNs? <i>“District” refers to the level 2 administrative unit</i>								
Are logistics management systems in place to monitor stock and coordinate transport to the lowest delivery points (e.g. health facilities, schools, community redemption points)?								
Do lowest delivery points have adequate storage capacity for the required quantity of ITNs?								
Do adequate security processes and measures exist at lowest delivery points or local storage points to prevent losses and diversion?								
<i>Consider where relevant:</i> Can transport systems and plans used by this channel for existing commodities be adapted to include the movement and storage of ITNs?								

Are personnel at distribution points sufficiently experienced or trained on commodity logistics and management (this does not have to be ITNs)?								
Summary: In your opinion, could the channel's supply chain for current commodities be used to manage ITNs for this channel with no more than minimal inputs to adapt the chain or strengthen known areas of non-critical weakness? <i>If not:</i> Could the public health commodity supply chain be used to manage ITNs for this channel with no more than minimal inputs?								
Training								
Does this channel have training modules for existing staff roles that can be adapted for ITN distribution through this channel?								
Are training modules available in the required language for where this channel would be implemented?								
Are trainers available to support the training for this channel?								
Are refresher trainings for existing and new staff budgeted and included in annual operational plans?								
Is it feasible to conduct training/retraining periodically as required by this channel? <i>Note whether activities are in-person, virtual and/or asynchronous.</i>								
Summary: In your opinion, could the current approach to staff training be used to manage this channel with no more than minimal inputs to address any gaps in training-related personnel, tools or systems?								
Supervision								
Are supervision visits a standard feature of this channel? <i>Note whether visits are standalone or integrated and who conducts them.</i>								
Are written supervision guidelines available or readily adaptable for this channel? <i>Note topics covered - guideline availability and understanding, service delivery, data capture, review and use, etc.).</i>								
Do supervisors currently have sufficient access to or funding for transport to enable them to conduct supervision as planned?								

Are financial resources currently sufficient to enable supervisors to conduct supervision as planned?								
Are digital resources currently sufficient to enable supervisors to conduct supervision as planned (e.g. phones and tablets with checklists)?								
Could written supervision guidelines be developed or adapted to cover ITN distribution, with minimal resource requirements?								
Does this channel have a track record of using data for decision-making and/or using supervision feedback to modify actions?								
Summary: In your opinion, could the current approach to supervision be used to manage this channel with no more than minimal inputs to address any gaps in supervision-related personnel, tools or systems?								
Social and behaviour change (SBC)								
Is there evidence that communities and staff in relevant local structures perceive ITN distribution through this channel as beneficial and feasible? <i>Relevant local structures may be schools, health facilities, CHW networks and community groups, depending on the channel.</i>								
Are health-specific SBC strategies and materials already in place in this channel?								
Could existing SBC strategies and materials be easily adaptable to include ITN messaging?								
Are communication channels active and trusted by all identified population groups that would be served by this delivery channel?								
Summary: In your opinion, could existing SBC mechanisms support this channel with no more than minimal inputs to address any gaps in personnel, tools or systems?								
Routine reporting and data management								
Is routine reporting already a standard feature of this channel?								
Are the necessary personnel in place for routine reporting, from the distribution points to the highest level?								
Are the necessary data capture and reporting tools in place for routine reporting, from the distribution points to the highest level?								

Are the necessary data systems in place for routine reporting, from the distribution points to the highest level?								
Can routine reporting for this channel make use of the national health management information system (HMIS) for data capture and reporting?								
<i>Consider for distribution through routine health services:</i> Are data from outreach services captured as part of health facility reporting?								
<i>Consider for distribution through routine health services and community-based distribution:</i> Are routine data (on ITNs or other commodities relevant to the channel) sufficiently reliable for monitoring stock for resupply?								
Do potential distribution points have identified persons for the recording and reporting of data?								
Summary: In your opinion, could the current approach to routine reporting be used to manage this channel with no more than minimal inputs to address any gaps in personnel, tools or systems?								