

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Global Fund Allocates \$19.8 Million to Fight Malaria Crisis in Venezuela**

**27 January 2020 (Toronto, CANADA and Caracas, VENEZUELA)** – On 16 January 2020, the Global Fund sent a letter to the Ministry of Health, communicating that Venezuela has been allocated \$19.8 million for a three-year malaria grant.

This is the first time that Venezuela has been allocated Global Fund resources for malaria. The allocation follows a May 2019 [decision](#) by the Global Fund’s Board, which made the upper middle-income country exceptionally eligible for malaria funding.<sup>1</sup> The exception is due to the significant upsurge in malaria cases in the country, the potential for the outbreak to deteriorate further with continuing high numbers of cases in 2019, the impact that it is having on the region, and the lack of national capacity to respond to the upsurge.

In 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) [estimated](#) that there were 471,995 cases of malaria in Venezuela (404,492 confirmed)—up from 57,926 in 2010. [More recent data](#) shows that between 1 January and 22 June 2019, there were 208,027 malaria cases reported in 21 states. Venezuela now accounts for 51% of all malaria cases in the Americas. A further 14 million people are estimated to be at risk, and the number of malaria deaths has increased nearly eight-fold since 2010.

ICASO and ACCSI applaud the news of Venezuela’s malaria allocation from the Global Fund. The funding will bring life-saving treatment and prevention services to thousands of people, and significantly strengthen the health system’s laboratory and surveillance capacity.

Yet, the potential for a significant funding gap is cause for concern. Venezuela’s (draft) Master Plan for 2020-2021 estimates the total funding need for Venezuela’s malaria response to be \$32.3 million for the two years. Beyond the Global Fund’s investment, there are no other domestic or external resources available. The anticipated shortfall of more than \$12.5 million risks a deepening malaria crisis in Venezuela and the region.

There are also worrying barriers for the meaningful engagement of civil society and affected communities. The humanitarian emergency in Venezuela is highly political, and has been called a government [strategy of repression](#). There have been [police raids of HIV service organizations](#) and [persecutions and arrests of human rights defenders and activists](#). In this context, it is unlikely that funding request development and grant oversight would be multi-stakeholder and democratic in nature. Indeed, Venezuela’s allocation letter indicates that “The Global Fund will coordinate the development of the funding request”, not a Country Coordinating Mechanism. [Alternative Global Fund governance mechanisms](#) are needed to ensure civil society and communities are meaningfully involved in the design and delivery of the malaria grant.

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<sup>1</sup> The [Global Fund’s Eligibility Policy](#) uses WHO malaria burden data from the year 2000 to determine eligibility for upper-middle income countries (as data from this period is the best metric to assess a country’s potential for malaria transmission intensity). Based on these metrics, Venezuela would not be eligible for malaria funding from the Global Fund. In May 2018, the policy was revised to include a clause which allows for technical partners to recommend to the Global Fund Secretariat that a country become eligible for a malaria allocation for a specific allocation period, in the event of a significant increase in malaria cases in a non-eligible upper-middle income country. This clause was successfully invoked to make Venezuela eligible for malaria funding in 2020-2022.

Finally, more support is needed for civil society and communities to be able to hold government to account. Lessons from Venezuela's HIV donation from the Global Fund—another exceptional investment—demonstrate [the importance of community-based monitoring](#). The Venezuelan Network of Positive People (RVG+) have documented numerous irregularities in the storage and distribution of different medicines throughout 2019. Also, community monitoring ensured that the medicines that were donated by the Global Fund reached people living with HIV as it was agreed. There must be funding set aside in Venezuela's new Global Fund malaria grant for community monitoring activities. Other partners must also invest in community monitoring to ensure that Global Fund resources in Venezuela are used effectively, efficiently and appropriately.

Mary Ann Torres, Executive Director of ICASO, voiced her appreciation for the global solidarity towards Venezuela's malaria crisis. *"Venezuela's malaria allocation is a significant milestone in the sustained advocacy efforts from technical experts and community activists from Venezuela, and their allies around the world,"* said Torres. *"Together, we pushed the Global Fund to make the eligibility exception. Now, we will continue supporting our partners in country to ensure transparency and accountability for these hard-won resources."*

Alberto Nieves, Executive Director of ACCSI said *"we are very happy with the Global Fund's decision to support malaria initiatives and protect the lives of some of our country's most vulnerable. We are happy that our community monitoring is being taken seriously and we commit to continue to monitor the situation. We also welcome the decision of the Global Fund to invest directly in Venezuela, where the emergency is happening."*

*"While providing Global Fund resources for malaria will help alleviate the situation, significant additional financial resources from other sources and changes in the political situation will be required before malaria can be controlled again in Venezuela"* said Javier Hourcade Bellocq, member of the Latin America and Caribbean delegation to the Global Fund Board.

**ICASO** is a Canadian organization that acts as a global policy voice on HIV issues that impact diverse communities around the world. Our advocacy work champions the leadership of civil society and key populations in the effort to end AIDS. We do this through collaborative partnerships with people and organizations in all regions and various sectors, always with a view to serving and empowering communities. [www.icaso.org](http://www.icaso.org)

**Acción Ciudadana Contra el SIDA (ACCSI)** (Citizens Action Against AIDS) is a Venezuelan organization working to ensure effective and coordinated strategies to protect, promote and defend human rights of people living with HIV and other key and vulnerable populations. [www.accsi.org.ve](http://www.accsi.org.ve)

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