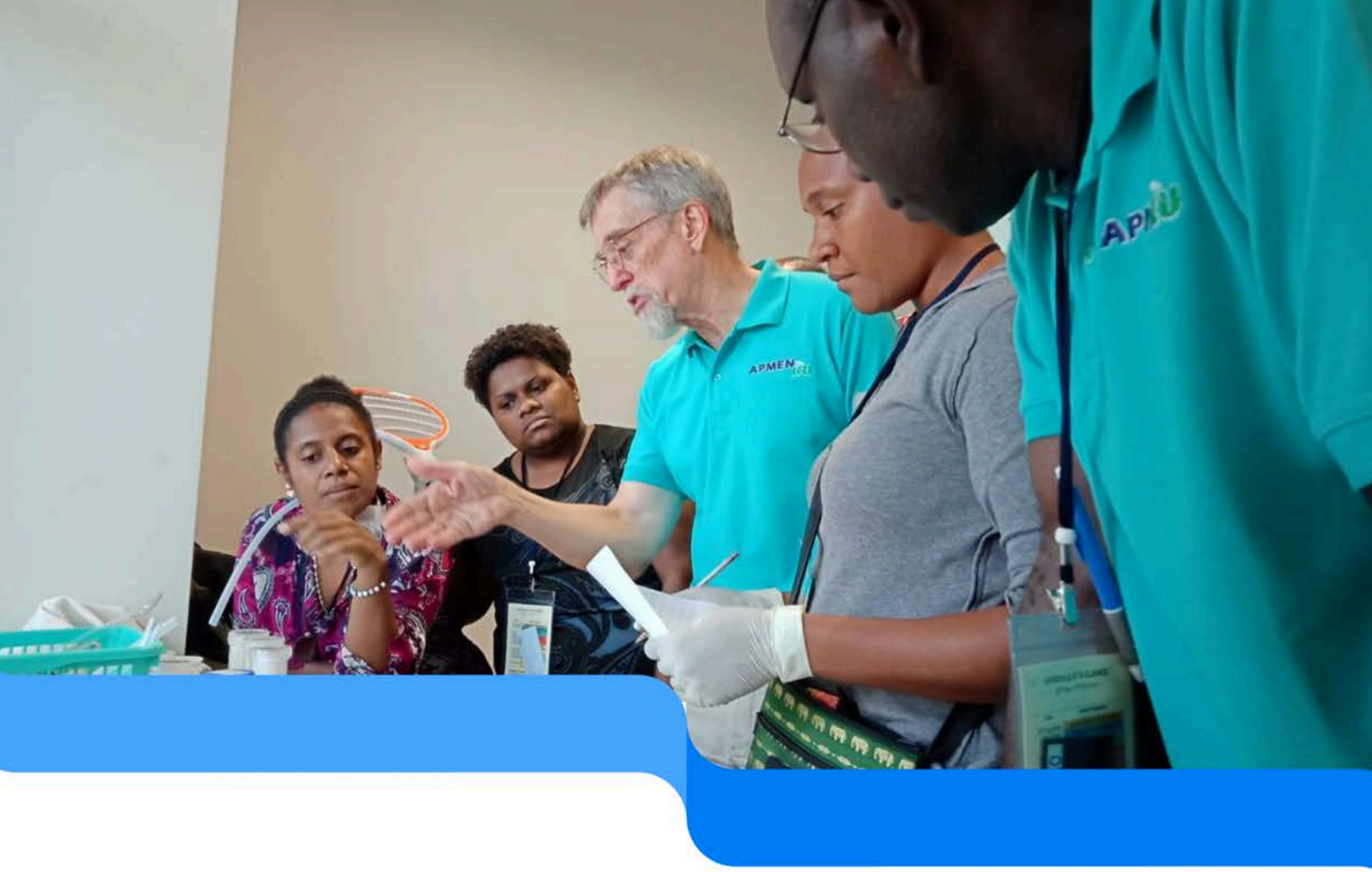
APMEN | Asia Pacific Malaria Elimination Network

APMEN CASE STUDY

APMEN REACH:

Connecting Countries, Partners, and Technical Innovations for Malaria Elimination



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1. Introduction: Connecting for Impact

Malaria remains a significant public health challenge in the Asia Pacific region, where more than two billion people are at risk. Despite encouraging advances—including new-generation insecticide-treated nets and antimalarials, malaria vaccines, and seasonal chemoprevention—the region is not on track to meet global elimination targets. Progress is hindered by fragile health systems, weak surveillance, chronic funding gaps, and political and social instability. These challenges are further compounded by climate change, outdoor transmission, zoonotic malaria, drug and insecticide resistance, and population displacement, all of which sustain malaria transmission in vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities.

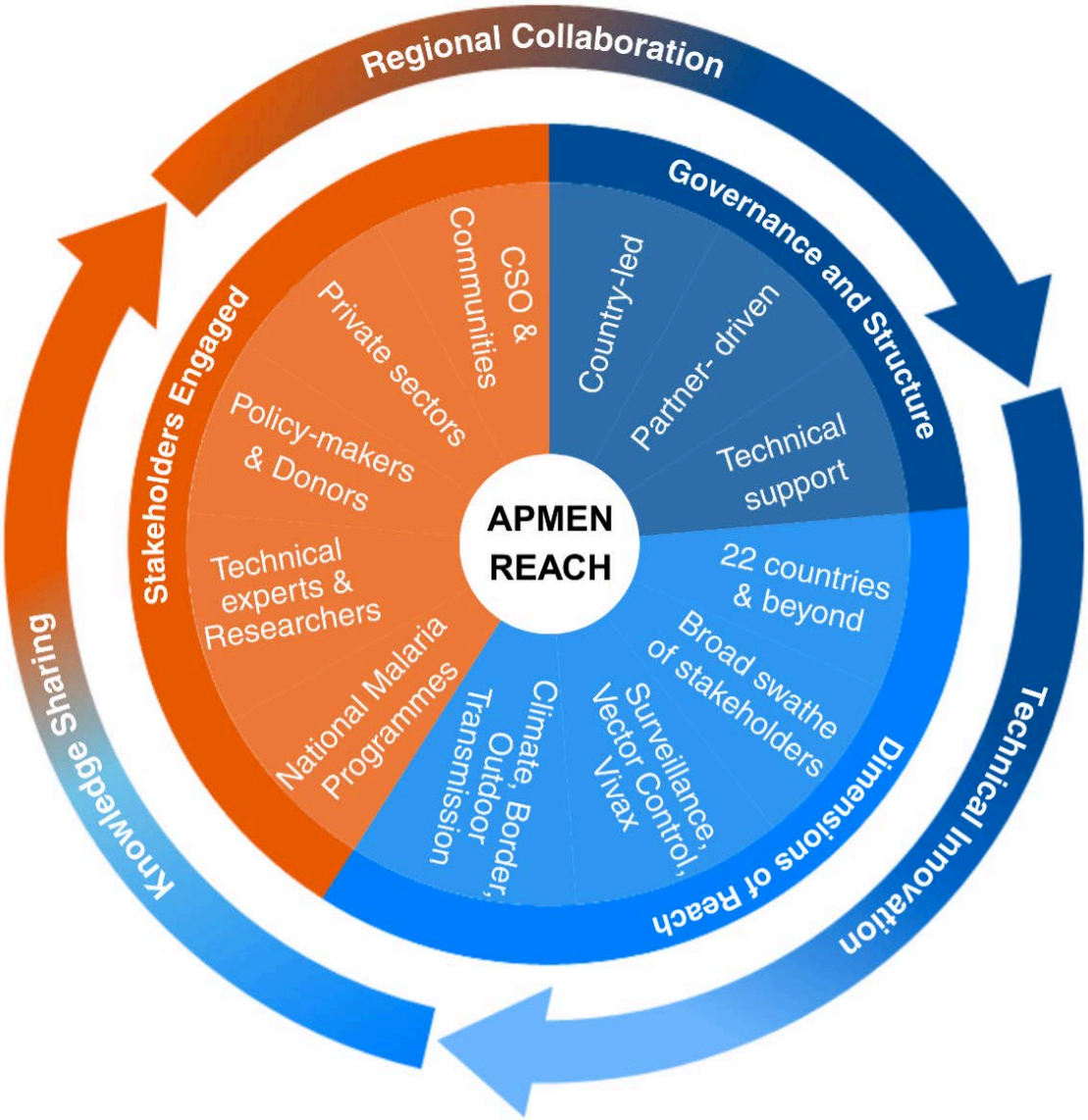
The Asia Pacific Malaria Elimination Network (APMEN), established in February 2009, exemplifies how a regional platform can accelerate malaria elimination through country-led action, strategic collaboration, and technical innovation.

Bringing together 22 Country Members and over 50 Partner Institutions, APMEN connects more than 6,000 professionals from National Malaria and Vector-Borne Disease Control Programmes, research institutions, the private sector, donors, and civil society. Its Technical Working Groups—focused on Surveillance & Response, Vector Control, and Vivax Malaria—are complemented by thematic Interest Groups addressing Climate and Environmental Change, Border Malaria, and Outdoor Transmission, ensuring a comprehensive and adaptive response to regional priorities.

Through its APMEN REACH Approach, APMEN fosters trusted partnerships, peer learning, and inclusive governance to address shared challenges, scale innovations, and strengthen national capacities. This case study illustrates how APMEN expands its geographic, stakeholder, and technical reach, providing practical lessons for other regional and global health networks committed to malaria elimination and the control of vector-borne diseases.

2. The APMEN REACH Approach: Country-Led, Partner-Driven, Technically Anchored

Malaria elimination in the Asia Pacific requires regional approaches that are grounded in country leadership, supported by diverse partners, and underpinned by technical excellence. The APMEN REACH Approach is a conceptual reflection of the network's ability to connect diverse stakeholders and its influence in accelerating malaria elimination through three interconnected dimensions: geographic, stakeholder, and technical reach. It connects 22 countries and beyond, engages thousands of stakeholders and malaria- affected communities, and drives technical innovation through three Working Groups and three thematic Interest Groups. Guided by a country-led, partner-driven governance structure with strong technical support, the APMEN REACH Approach promotes regional collaboration, technical innovation, and knowledge exchange, enabling inclusive, adaptive, and evidence-based action against malaria at both regional and global levels.



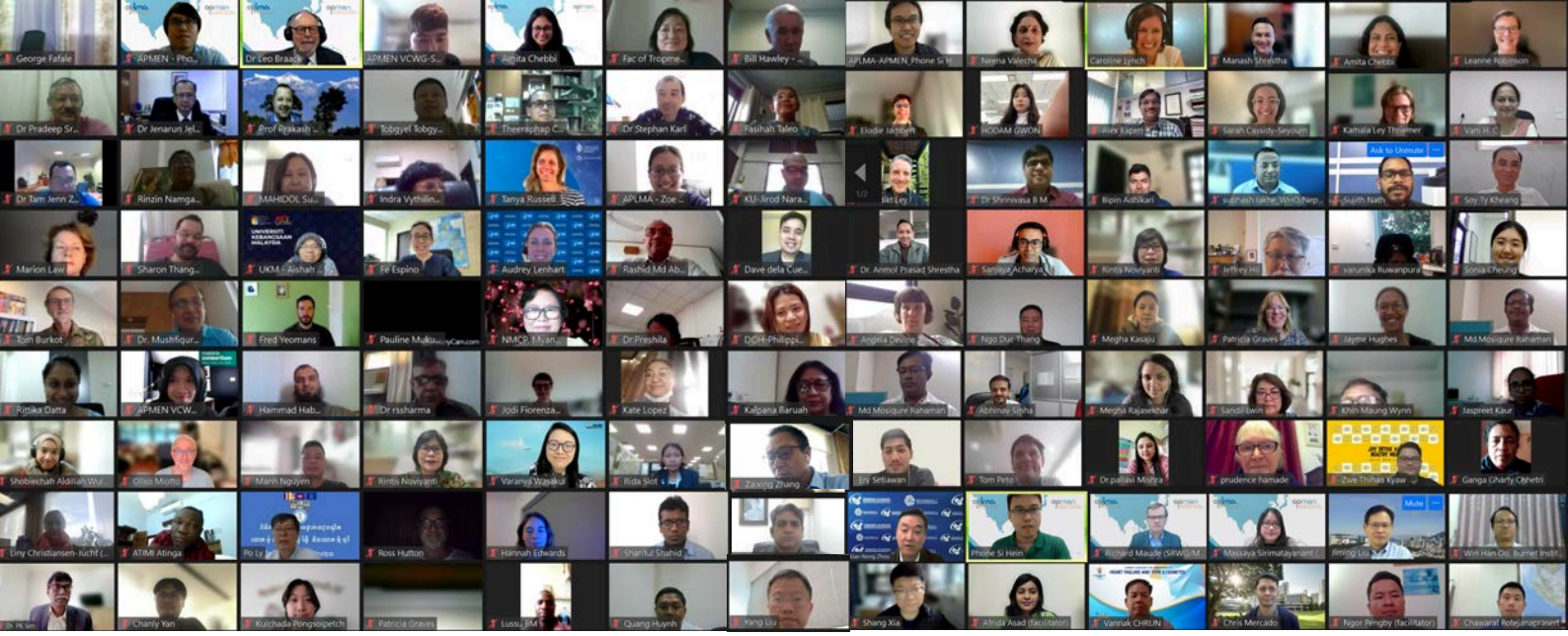
Governance and Structure: Country-Led and Collaborative

APMEN operates through a country-led governance mechanisms that places National Malaria Programmes (NMPs) at the center of decision-making. NMPs define priorities, lead technical agendas, and shape the network's strategic direction, while technical agencies, academic institutions, and civil society partners provide targeted expertise and operational support. This ensures that regional and global initiatives align with national realities and complement local efforts.

The network structure includes three core Technical Working Groups—Surveillance & Response, Vector Control, and Vivax Malaria—each chaired by senior officials from the governments and co-chaired by partner institutions. These groups, hosted by leading technical partners, facilitate collaboration, develop practical tools, and advance innovations.

APMEN currently engages 22 country partners, 54 partner institutions, and hundreds of core technical experts, creating a diverse and flexible structure that addresses emerging challenges including border transmission, drug resistance, impacts of climate and environmental changes, and the spread of urban malaria and simian malaria.

This collaborative network with inclusive and adaptive governance enables APMEN to respond effectively to evolving malaria threats and to contribute to both regional and global elimination efforts.



Three Dimensions of Reach: Expanding Impact Beyond the Region

The APMEN REACH Approach is distinguished by its ability to extend impact across three critical dimensions—geographic, stakeholder, and technical—ensuring malaria elimination efforts are coordinated, inclusive, and evidence-driven.

- **Geographic Reach:** APMEN connects 22 countries across the Asia-Pacific and actively contributes to global malaria control and elimination efforts. Through regional and global collaboration, the network helps address critical transnational challenges such as border malaria transmission, the spread of drug-resistant malaria parasites, and the rapid expansion of *Anopheles stephensi*. This geographic reach supports not only regional priorities but also strengthens the global fight against malaria by sharing innovations, harmonizing strategies, and fostering collaboration beyond the region.

- **Stakeholder Reach:** The network engages a broad and diverse swathe of stakeholders, including NMPs, policy-makers, donors, technical experts, researchers, private sector actors, and community representatives. This multi-sectoral engagement ensures malaria elimination efforts are inclusive, contextually grounded, and capable of co-creating solutions that reflect both evidence and local realities.

- **Technical Reach:** Anchored in scientific excellence and operational relevance, APMEN drives technical innovation through its Working Groups and Interest Groups. The network supports activities across malaria surveillance, vivax and vector control, climate and environmental adaptation, border malaria, and outdoor transmission. By co-developing tools, sharing innovations, and translating research into practice, APMEN ensures technical solutions are accessible, scalable, and tailored to country and regional needs.

Together, these dimensions of the APMEN REACH Approach enable APMEN to transcend traditional boundaries, fostering a truly regional—and increasingly global—movement for malaria elimination.

Stakeholders Engaged: A Diverse Regional Community

The strength of APMEN lies in its ability to convene and mobilize a diverse community of stakeholders. This broad engagement ensures that malaria elimination is not the responsibility of a single sector but a shared endeavor across disciplines and institutions. Key stakeholders include:

- NMPs and health workers, who lead strategy and implementation, and provide ground-level insights.
- Technical experts and researchers, who contribute evidence and innovation.
- Policy-makers and donors, who shape enabling environments and mobilize resources.
- Private sector partners, who offer tools, technologies, and operational support.
- Early career professionals, who represent the next generation of malaria leaders.
- Civil society and communities engaged through participatory programs that ensure interventions are locally relevant and accepted.

This diverse network fosters collaboration across sectors, promoting evidence-based decision-making and regional solidarity in malaria elimination. It also ensures that APMEN remains inclusive, resilient, and responsive to the needs of its members. Together, these elements form the APMEN REACH Approach —an adaptable, collaborative framework supporting Asia Pacific countries in their path toward malaria elimination.

3. APMEN in Action: Engaging Stakeholders and Scaling Regional Impact

APMEN has operationalized the APMEN REACH Approach through a set of interconnected mechanisms that foster trust, amplify country leadership, and scale technical innovations. This section presents the scope of APMEN's engagement, supported by concrete examples from recent initiatives.

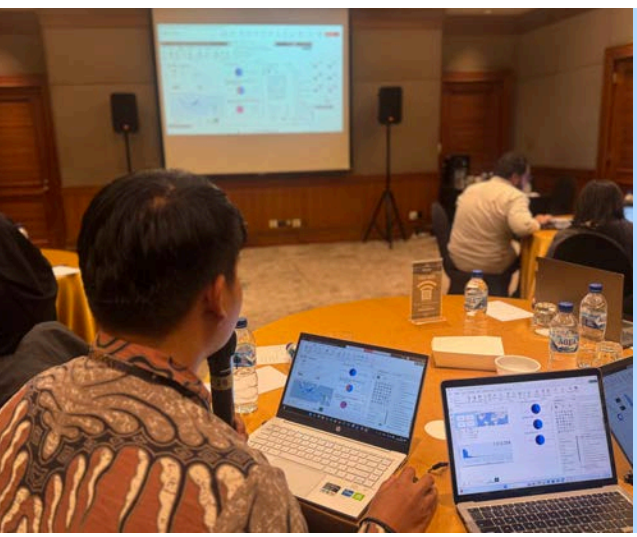
3.1 Regional Forums and Annual Meetings

APMEN's annual meetings and specialized regional forums are cornerstone mechanisms for strengthening regional collaboration and facilitating policy dialogue, technical exchange, and peer learning. These events create a safe space for countries and partners to share experiences, co-develop strategies, and establish joint priorities for elimination.

The APMEN Vivax Working Group and Surveillance & Response Working Group Joint Annual Meeting convened 110 participants from 19 APMEN country partners and experts from partner institutions. Participants exchanged progress, innovations, and lessons learned in malaria elimination, with sessions highlighting innovative tools, near-elimination strategies, health system strengthening, cross-border collaboration, technical advocacy, and policy dialogues. The meeting strengthened regional coordination, knowledge exchange, and the adoption of new tools to accelerate malaria elimination across the Asia-Pacific.

3.2 Technical Working Groups and Interest Groups

Working Groups on Surveillance & Response, Vector Control, and Vivax malaria, supported by cross-thematic Interest Groups on Climate and Environmental Change, Border Malaria, and Outdoor Transmission, provide technical leadership and peer exchange. These groups foster south-south learning and co-develop practical solutions tailored to country needs.

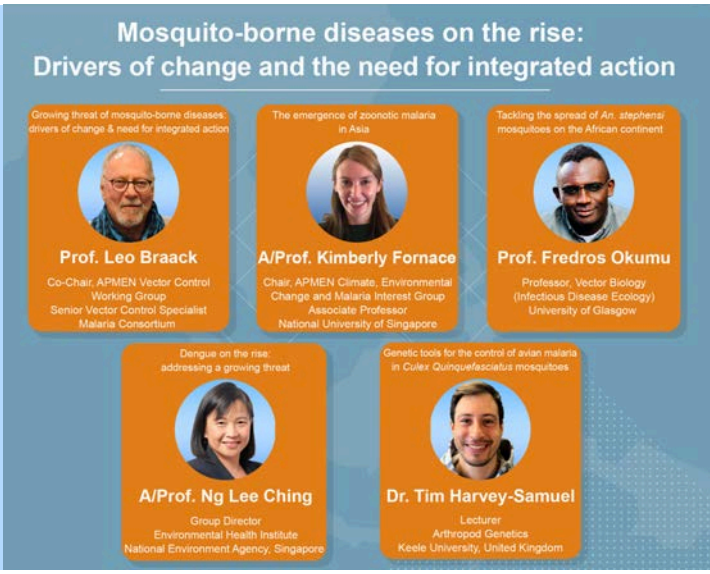


The APMEN Surveillance & Response Working Group strengthened malaria surveillance through the SISMAL dashboard in Indonesia, an interactive platform providing real-time, high-resolution data for evidence-based decision-making. Technical meetings and capacity-building workshops guided participants in leveraging the dashboard to track malaria trends, identify gaps, and optimize interventions. By fostering regional collaboration, the SISMAL dashboard initiative promotes robust surveillance systems and supports timely, data-driven malaria control and elimination across the Asia-Pacific.

3.3 Capacity Building and Knowledge Exchange

Continuous learning is a hallmark of APMEN's approach. Workshops, trainings, and fellowships equip malaria professionals and NMPs with skills in surveillance, outbreak detection, and vector management. Platforms like the Online Resource Exchange Network for Elimination (ORENE) and the APMEN Webinar Series disseminate timely guidance and innovative tools worldwide.

APMEN TechTalks and APMENxChange webinars provided interactive platforms for national programme managers, technical experts, and researchers across the Asia-Pacific to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices in malaria elimination. A total of 3,983 unique individuals from 127 countries participated in 10,488 engagements across 55 webinars between April 2020 and August 2025. These digital knowledge exchanges strengthened technical capacity, regional networks, and collective action to accelerate malaria elimination and sustain programme impact.



3.4 Collaborative Research and Tool Development

APMEN actively promotes country-led operational research, co-developed roadmaps, and the adaptation of innovative tools for malaria surveillance, vivax radical cure, and vector control. APMEN has published or sponsored more than 80 papers, identifying gaps and disseminating lessons learned and best practices. These APMEN research and development initiatives help to bridge the gap between evidence and policy.

The APMEN Options Assessment Toolkit, developed by the Vivax Working Group, provides countries with evidence-based guidance to select, adapt, and implement optimal malaria interventions. By combining research, technical expertise, and country experiences, the toolkit strengthens decision-making in programme planning, operational implementation, and policy development. This collaborative tool empowers national malaria programmes to accelerate vivax elimination and foster innovation across the Asia-Pacific region.

3.5 Digital Platforms and Communications

Digital tools, including webinars, online learning modules, an active website, and social media presence, expand APMEN's reach, ensuring continuous learning beyond physical meetings and across vast geographic distances, ensuring sustained knowledge flow.

APMEN's Flagship Online Vector Surveillance Training, hosted by the APMEN Vector Control Working Group, drew an overwhelming response, with 2,740 registrations from 128 countries and over 1,700 unique attendees from 104 countries. The training enhanced capacity in vector surveillance, data management, and evidence-based interventions, while fostering peer-to-peer learning and regional networking. Leveraging digital platforms, APMEN strengthened the capacity of thousands of global malaria practitioners and communities.

3.6 Cross-Border and Cross-Sectoral Partnerships

Recognizing that malaria transmission disregards political borders, APMEN facilitates harmonized surveillance and response efforts in border regions and engages subnational actors and the private sector to close critical gaps in elimination strategies.

The APMEN Peer-to-Peer Exchange on Cross-Border Malaria Surveillance and Response between Indonesia and Malaysia, held on 4–5 August 2025 in Putrajaya, convened division directors, programme managers, and provisional surveillance officers, from both countries and global technical experts. Participants shared best practices, strengthened cross-border coordination, exchanged *P. knowlesi* control measures, and identified joint strategies for surveillance, case management, and outbreak response. This exchange reinforced cross-country collaboration to prevent malaria re-establishment and advance regional elimination.

3.7 Adaptation to Climate and Environmental Change

Climate change is dramatically reshaping malaria risk across the Asia Pacific, altering vector behavior, transmission patterns, and geographic dispersion. To remain responsive and resilient, APMEN places climate adaptation at the center of its malaria control agenda, empowering member countries with the tools, insights, and collaborations needed to anticipate and manage environmental shifts.

The APMEN workshop, Climate Change, Malaria, and Other Vector-Borne Diseases: Impacts and Adaptation, held on 2–3 June 2025 in Singapore, convened 33 national malaria and vector-borne disease programme leaders, technical experts, policymakers, and researchers from 11 countries. Participants exchanged experiences, discussed challenges, and explored tailored adaptation strategies, harnessing science, technology, financing, policy, and regional collaboration to strengthen climate-resilient malaria and vector-borne disease control across the Asia-Pacific.

4. Drivers and Strategic Insights of APMEN's Effective Reach

APMEN's success in advancing malaria elimination across the Asia-Pacific is rooted in a set of interdependent drivers that combine strong governance, technical excellence, adaptive coordination, and inclusive engagement. The network's REACH Approach demonstrates that regional impact emerges when countries are positioned at the center of decision-making, technical evidence informs policy, and innovations are adapted to local realities.

4.1 Country-Led Governance

At the heart of APMEN's effectiveness is country-led governance. The network and its Working Groups are structured to position NMPs at the center and in leadership roles, ensuring that all strategies and interventions reflect national priorities and local realities. By placing country ownership at the core, APMEN fosters sustainable decision-making and ensures that regional support complements—and does not duplicate—national efforts. This governance structure also facilitates alignment with national strategies, allowing technical recommendations to translate into actionable policy and operational plans.

4.2 Bridging Technical and Political Spheres

APMEN's strength lies in its ability to connect rigorous technical work with high-level advocacy. Through Embedding advocacy within technical programming ensures that innovations and lessons from the field inform national and regional priorities, enabling timely and well-resourced malaria elimination strategies. This dual focus ensures that the network's technical outputs are not only scientifically robust but also politically actionable, creating a bridge between evidence generation and systemic change. Integration with the Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance (APLMA) and linkages with other regional and global advocacy partners, the network transforms technical evidence into policy influence and resource mobilization.

4.3 Adaptive Response

Emerging challenges in malaria elimination require nimble and adaptive mechanisms. APMEN has developed strategies that allow rapid responses to dynamic situations such as malaria outbreaks, climate-related transmission spikes, political instability, and cross-border cases. By maintaining flexible coordination and continuous monitoring, the network helps countries anticipate and mitigate risks, respond efficiently to urgent events, and sustain progress toward elimination. This adaptive capability ensures that regional interventions remain relevant even as global conditions shift.

4.4 Digital Enablement

Digital innovations have become a cornerstone of APMEN's approach, enhancing both reach and efficiency. Online platforms, trainings, webinars, and meetings facilitate participation from remote or resource-limited settings, breaking geographic and logistical barriers. AI-driven forecasting and other digital tools and dashboards strengthen surveillance systems, accelerate response times, and support data-driven decision-making. By integrating these technologies into routine monitoring and planning, APMEN helps countries optimize interventions, identify emerging trends quickly, and improve the overall agility of malaria programs.

4.5 Multidirectional Learning

Knowledge sharing is a key driver of APMEN's regional effectiveness. Through peer-to-peer collaboration and south-south exchanges, countries share experiences, co-develop solutions, and adapt strategies to their unique contexts. While learning is not entirely bidirectional, these exchanges foster innovation and reinforce regional solidarity. Lessons from one country can be adapted by another, ensuring that practical solutions are contextually relevant and scalable. This multidirectional learning environment also promotes cross-country collaboration, strengthens technical capacity, and supports evidence-based policy adaptation.

4.6 Inclusivity and Capacity Development

Sustainable progress in malaria elimination requires engaging diverse stakeholders. APMEN actively involves early-career professionals, subnational managers, and private sector innovators to build long-term capacity in the region. Cross-sectoral engagement broadens intervention coverage, strengthens implementation, and ensures that innovations are adopted across multiple layers of health systems. Early career engagement is critical for nurturing the next generation of malaria leaders, securing the continuity of knowledge, and sustaining elimination efforts. This inclusive approach also enhances resilience, enabling the region to respond effectively to evolving challenges while building a strong, collaborative workforce.

5. Conclusion: Sustaining the Reach to Eliminate Malaria - A Blueprint for Global Health Collaboration

APMEN's REACH Approach demonstrates that malaria elimination is achievable when countries and partners work together through an inclusive, technically grounded, and adaptive platform. By placing NMPs at the center of decision-making, integrating rigorous technical expertise with high-level advocacy, and fostering collaborative learning across countries and sectors, the network has created an approach that is both responsive and sustainable.

The network's experience highlights several key lessons for advancing malaria elimination. Adopting a country-led, inclusive governance structure ensures national ownership and alignment with local realities, while investing in robust digital learning and knowledge-sharing platforms expands access, accelerates innovation uptake, and facilitates rapid responses. Promoting collaborative research and co-production of tools with end-users ensures that solutions are contextually relevant and scalable. Fostering cross-border and cross-sector partnerships enables countries to address transnational health challenges and maximize the impact of interventions.

Remaining flexible and responsive to emerging health threats—including climate-related changes, zoonotic malaria, and political or operational disruptions—further strengthens the network's capacity to sustain progress toward elimination.

APMEN's experience affirms that achieving malaria elimination requires more than technical innovation; it relies on strong partnerships, inclusive governance, and trusted platforms for action. The APMEN REACH Approach exemplifies how regional networks can bridge countries, disciplines, and sectors to drive sustainable public health outcomes. As the Asia-Pacific region advances toward its goal of becoming malaria-free by 2030, APMEN offers a replicable blueprint for other disease elimination initiatives worldwide, demonstrating the transformative power of collaboration, innovation, and shared commitment.

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