



Interview with Joseph Wato

1. If we had to introduce you in a few words, what would you say?

Joseph Wato is an expert in International Relations with a focus on health diplomacy. A civil society activist, Wato is very active in the fight against malaria at both national and international levels. He is the National President of the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for Health Financing and Couverture Santé Universelle (COFIS-CSU) in Cameroon, Executive Director of the organizations Approche Participative, Développement et Santé de Proximité (APDSP) and the Pentecostal Advocates for Socio-Economic Development (PENASED) and was a member of Cameroon's Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) for non-government organizations (NGOs) representing malaria.

As an African advocate in the fight against malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS, at the international level he is a Member of the Global Civil Society Platform for Malaria Elimination (CS4ME). He is also a member of the Global Fund's Board of Directors (a Global Fund Advocates Network (GFAN) speaker and Member of the Delegation of NGOs from Developing Countries) and is currently one of the two civil society representatives on the Board of Directors of the Roll-Back Malaria Partnership to End Malaria (RBM).

2. 25 April marked World Malaria Day. The theme was "It's time to reach zero cases of malaria: invest, innovate, implement". How does this theme inspire you as a major civil society player? What does it say about the state of the fight against malaria in the world in general and in Africa in particular?

This theme is indicative of the real desire on the part of the international community to finally end malaria, which decimates millions of people every year, through the RBM partnership. In the current context of the new pandemics impacting the world, the fight against malaria is slowing down. We must therefore identify and invest in new and innovative tools in order to reverse the trend and end malaria.

For civil society, the priority is to ensure that the commitments made by world leaders, and those of Africa in particular, are respected. Willingness expressed in words is not enough to put an end to malaria. We need action. And that means providing financial resources and investing in research and development. It also means putting affected communities at the center of decisions and interventions, as stipulated in the Global Fund's new Strategy. To achieve zero cases of malaria, we need to go back to the community (beneficiaries), consult people at the grassroots level and focus investments more on disease prevention and social and behavioral change. The principle is simple: "Malaria is born in the community, develops in the community and will also end in the community if the community takes real ownership of the fight against it". So, investing more in affected communities is the best way to put an end to malaria as a public health threat.

3. We are currently engaged in the Grant Cycle Round 7 process (country dialogue, drafting of concept notes, national strategic plans, funding applications, etc.). What are you doing at the heart of this process?

Grant Cycle 7 (GC7) is simply the continuation of the Global Fund funding cycles for countries most affected by malaria, HIV and TB. In this context in Cameroon, as well as taking part in national dialogue and drafting the malaria funding request, we are also currently involved in drawing up the new Malaria Control Strategic Plan 2023-2028 (MCSP). Similarly, as part of GC7 preparation, we have helped to build the capacity of several CSOs involved in the fight against malaria. Specifically, in collaboration with Impact Santé Afrique (ISA), we helped them to identify and define the priorities to be included in the funding request. This has enabled us to draw up a set of community priorities that we want to see included in the GC7 funding request and the new NMCP.

4. What advice would you give to CSOs currently involved (Windows 3 and 4) in the GC7 process?

The work conducted by civil society as part of Window 2 has been completed, as the deadline for submissions was end May 2023. All that remains is for us to follow-up to ensure that the priorities introduced during the drafting stage have been maintained in the final document. Sometimes these are removed before or after Grant-Making. From experience, therefore, CSOs involved in Windows 3 and 4 should already be starting their own community consultations, anticipating the Country Dialogue in order to define their priorities well before their funding request is drawn up. To put it plainly, they must first take ownership of the Modular Framework in order to understand what is expected of them by the Global Fund. As part of GC7, the Global Fund has given civil society an important place and provided us with the opportunity to introduce priorities or activities.

5. The Global Fund's 49th Board meeting was recently held in Hanoi, Vietnam. What were your expectations? Were they met? What is your assessment of this meeting?

The Global Fund Board in the Developing Countries NGO Delegation prepared a constituency note which was shared before and after the 49th meeting. We also produced a report setting out the various points discussed, expectations and results. It is available to everyone. To answer your question, there were too many expectations to go into here; but you can read them in the [report](#) here.

6. To conclude, would you like to address an issue or subject that has not been covered in this interview?

Perhaps the report on the 27th RBM Partnership Board meeting. But this is a subject for another article.

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