

issues. WHO is coordinating with nongovernmental organizations with staff in Somalia and working through them. In Djibouti, where malaria could be controlled if not eliminated with the available tools, the main challenge is the lack of human resources, Mnzava said.

Achieving malaria-free status and reducing the malaria burden is an impressive achievement for countries in the region considering the challenges faced.

Transmission in these countries may be seasonal or unstable, and depend on environmental factors, such as floods, so control strategies need to be adapted. The emergence of treatment-resistant parasites poses a major challenge. Mass migration of people infected with malaria also threatens a malaria-free status, as countries in the region are climatically suitable for malaria transmission and have abundant breeding places for the anopheline mosquitoes that carry malaria.

Countries that still have pockets of malaria include Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq. The Islamic Republic of Iran has progressed on elimination, but transmission remains intense on its south-eastern border with Pakistan. Despite the political turmoil, Iraq has been successful in malaria control with only 47 cases in 2005, and 26 in 2006.

The development of drug resistance poses a major challenge to malaria control efforts. WHO recommends



Malaria patients in West Darfur.

WHO Sudan

artemisinin combination therapies (ACT) – the most effective antimalarial treatment – and Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Somalia and Sudan have adopted them.

The challenge for UAE and similar countries will be to maintain their malaria-free status and prevent reintroduction by travellers who are infected with malaria. In 2005 alone, 1544 cases of imported malaria were reported there.

Dr Charles Delacollette, former medical officer in charge of malaria elimination at WHO in Geneva and currently coordinator of the Mekong

Malaria Program, said: “The tricky bit with certification of malaria elimination in any country is that imported malaria cases will continue to be detected by the health services. How then to prove that local transmission has been interrupted, and all detected cases are indeed imported?”

There is no easy answer but UAE as well as other malaria-free countries in the region, have plans to monitor the influx of imported cases with a “very strict machinery of early case detection within a very strict surveillance system”, said Khalifa. ■

May Meleigy, *Dubai*

Recent news from WHO

- The revised International Health Regulations (IHR), which represent a major step forward in international public health security, came into force on 15 June. Find more information, including the IHR text at: <http://www.who.int/csr/ihr/en/>
- WHO released the first ever country-by-country analysis of the impact that environmental factors have on health. The data, released on 13 June, show huge inequalities but also demonstrate that in every country, people's health could be improved by reducing pollution, hazards in the work environment, exposure to UV radiation, noise, agricultural risks, changes to climate and ecosystems. Please find the data at: http://www.who.int/quantifying_ehimpacts/countryprofiles/en/index.html
- WHO said on 13 June it was working with vaccine manufacturers to move ahead on plans to create a global stockpile of vaccine for the H5N1 avian influenza virus.
- WHO launched a new initiative on World Blood Donor Day on 12 June to improve the availability and use of safe blood to save the lives of women during and after childbirth.
- An innovative approach is showing progress in addressing severe acute malnutrition, which affects an estimated 20 million children under the age of five worldwide. WHO, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition and UNICEF announced on 7 June that, according to new evidence, about three-quarters of children with severe acute malnutrition can be treated at home with highly fortified, ready-to-use therapeutic foods.
- WHO and UNAIDS issued new guidance on provider-initiated HIV testing and counselling in health facilities on 30 May.

For more about these and other WHO news items please see: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/2007/en/index.html>