

Foreword



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The *World Malaria Report*, published annually by WHO, provides an in-depth analysis of progress and trends in the malaria response at global, regional and country levels. It is the result of a collaborative effort with ministries of health in affected countries and many partners around the world.

Our 2016 report spotlights a number of positive trends, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the region that carries the heaviest malaria burden. It shows that, in many countries, access to disease-cutting tools is expanding at a rapid rate for those most in need.

Children are especially vulnerable, accounting for more than two thirds of global malaria deaths. In 22 African countries, the proportion of children with a fever who received a malaria diagnostic test at a public health facility increased by 77% over the last 5 years. This test helps health providers swiftly distinguish between malarial and non-malarial fevers, enabling appropriate treatment.

Malaria in pregnancy can lead to maternal mortality, anaemia and low birth weight, a major cause of infant mortality. WHO recommends intermittent preventive treatment in pregnancy, known as IPTp, for all pregnant women in sub-Saharan Africa living in areas of moderate-to-high transmission of malaria. The last 5 years have seen a five-fold increase in the delivery of three or more doses of IPTp in 20 African countries.

Long-lasting insecticidal nets are the mainstay of malaria prevention. WHO recommends their use for all people at risk of malaria. Across sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion of people sleeping under treated nets has nearly doubled over the last 5 years.

We have made excellent progress, but our work is incomplete. Last year alone, the global tally of malaria reached 212 million cases and 429 000 deaths. Across

Africa, millions of people still lack access to the tools they need to prevent and treat the disease.

In many countries, progress is threatened by the rapid development and spread of mosquito resistance to insecticides. Antimalarial drug resistance could also jeopardize recent gains.

In 2015, the World Health Assembly endorsed the WHO *Global Technical Strategy for Malaria*, a 15-year malaria framework for all countries working to control and eliminate malaria. It sets ambitious but attainable goals for 2030, with milestones along the way to track progress.

The Strategy calls for the elimination of malaria in at least 10 countries by the year 2020 – a target well within reach. According to this report, 10 countries and territories reported fewer than 150 locally-acquired cases of malaria. A further nine countries reported between 150 and 1000 cases.

But progress towards other global targets must be accelerated. The report finds that less than half of the 91 malaria-affected countries are on track to achieve the 2020 milestones of a 40% reduction in case incidence and mortality.

To speed progress towards our global malaria goals, WHO is calling for new and improved malaria-fighting tools. Greater investments are needed in the development of new vector control interventions, improved diagnostics and more effective medicines.

WHO announced that the world's first malaria vaccine would be piloted in three countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The vaccine, known as RTS,S, has been shown to provide partial protection against malaria in young children. It will be evaluated as a potential complement to the existing package of WHO-recommended malaria preventive, diagnostic and treatment measures.

The need for more funding is an urgent priority. In 2015, malaria financing totalled US\$ 2.9 billion. To achieve our global targets, contributions from both domestic and international sources must increase substantially, reaching US\$ 6.4 billion annually by 2020.

The challenges we face are sizeable but not insurmountable. Recent experience has shown that with robust funding, effective programmes and country leadership, progress in combatting malaria can be sustained and accelerated.

The potential returns are well worth the effort. With all partners united, we can defeat malaria and improve the health of millions of people around the world.

