Message from WHO Representative to India

World Malaria Day 2016

Instituted in 2007 by WHO's decision-making body, the World Health Assembly, the World Malaria Day is an occasion to highlight the need for continued investment and sustained political commitment for malaria prevention and control.

The theme of the World Malaria Day 2016, **End Malaria for Good** calls for a vision of a world free of malaria. It reflects the ambitious goals and targets set out in the global technical strategy for malaria 2016-2030. The new strategy aims to reduce malaria cases and deaths by 90% by 2030 from the current levels.

It is also an opportunity for the national programmes to showcase their efforts and reflect on how to further scale-up interventions, provide education and understanding of malaria to the society, and spread information on year-long intensified implementation of national malaria-control strategies, including community-based activities in endemic areas.

As we all know, malaria is the leading parasitic killer disease in the world. It exerts a devastating impact on people's health and livelihoods around the world and in the country. Thus, malaria control and its elimination is inextricably linked with universal coverage of malaria interventions, health systems strengthening and poverty reduction.

According to the World Malaria Report 2015 estimates, 214 million cases of malaria occurred globally with about 438 000 deaths. Most of these cases were never tested or registered. For half of the world's population at risk of malaria, every day is a malaria day.

In India, the burden and the risk of malaria is enormous and it is a major public health concern. The country has the third highest number of cases in the world and accounts for the highest malaria burden of 70% in WHO South-East Asia Region in 2015. Although 90% of the population is at-risk, malaria is concentrated in 16 states, accounting for more than 80% of malaria cases and more than 90% of malaria deaths. In addition, India accounts for the highest burden of vivax form of malaria globally.

**End Malaria for Good**
The malaria burden in the country is mainly in tribal, remote, forested and difficult areas where the health system is at its weakest. The challenge is to ensure that interventions reach all populations in need, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable high-risk groups.

Issues of cross-border malaria, weak surveillance in these areas, health infrastructure, insecticide resistance, threats of resistance to Artemisinin are posing a challenge in sustaining the gains achieved.

To consolidate the gains, the Government of India has embarked upon the journey of a malaria-free India by 2030. It is another ambitious goal after the monumental achievement of polio-free India.

We congratulate the Government of India for this important initiative and its commitment to eliminate malaria from the country.

Effective tools against malaria prevention and control exist. With its effective use, major gains have been achieved in recent years. Between 2000 and 2015, new malaria cases in India have reduced from 2.03 million to 1.1 million. With concerted efforts, 77% of at risk population is now under low transmission area (annual occurrence of less than one malaria case in 1000 population). India is well on track to accelerate towards malaria elimination.

In conclusion, the World Malaria Day asks that not only must governments invest and ensure that measures are in place for universal access to malaria services and care but also that citizens and communities are empowered in order to have an impact on prevention and control of malaria.

We at WHO are committed to supporting the government's efforts for effective and efficient prevention, control and elimination of malaria in the country.

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WHO Representative to India