FACTS ABOUT MALARIA

What is malaria?

- Malaria is caused by the parasite Plasmodium, which in humans grows first in the liver and then spreads to the red blood cells.
- Once the parasite reaches the blood of an infected person, it can be picked up through the bite of the female Anopheles mosquito. Inside the mosquito, the parasite moves to the insect's salivary glands, where it can be passed to the next person the insect bites.
- Since mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water, cleaning up stagnant water is crucial to malaria prevention.

What are the effects of malaria on a community and the world?

- 3.3 billion people in the world — about half of the world's population — live in areas of malaria transmission. About 90 percent of all malaria deaths occur in 30 different countries in sub-Saharan Africa.
- The World Health Organization reported 207 million cases of malaria in 2012. Every 60 seconds a child in Africa dies of malaria, accounting for 22 percent of all childhood deaths.
- Countries with high rates of malaria transmission experience as much as a 1.3 percent decrease in their gross domestic product.
- Concerted efforts to contain malaria are making a difference. The World Health Organization reported that malaria mortality rates have fallen by 33 percent worldwide and by 49 percent in Africa since 2000.

What are the symptoms of malaria?

- Common symptoms of malaria include fever, chills, sweating, headaches, nausea and vomiting, body aches and general malaise. If left untreated, or if infections recur, malaria can cause worse complications, such as organ failure, anemia, respiratory distress and death.
- People whose immune systems are compromised — pregnant women, infants, the elderly, those living in poverty or those living with HIV and AIDS — are most vulnerable to the lethal effects of malaria.

Malaria treatment and prevention

- Malaria is completely treatable if the right drugs are used. Treating malaria promptly is important both for the health of the person and to prevent the transmission of the disease to others.
- Two anti-malarial drugs currently in use are quinine, which is derived from the cinchona tree in South America (in use since the 17th century) and artemisinin, which is derived from the qinghao plant in China (in use since the fourth century). These are two of the many drugs that help treat malaria. Artemisinin-based treatments, used in combination, are recommended in treating the strain of malaria that is most prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Malaria can be prevented with insecticide-treated nets and by spraying inside the house. These prevention techniques benefit the entire community. As the number of mosquitoes decreases, so do the cases of malaria, even for those people not protected by a bed net.

Thanks to ELCA Malaria Campaign, 2015