



Newsletter #22 December 2021

Scouts against Malaria is a global partnership between Scout Associations to reduce the incidence of malaria in sub-Saharan African countries where the disease is endemic.

In this issue we review the World Health Organisation's (WHO) 2021 World Malaria Report and reflect on its contents.

We then consider how Scouts can help deliver WHO's strategic goal of 90% reduction in incidence of malaria by 2030. Such assistance will form part of WOSM's global project, Scouts for SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) which pledges 3 billion hours of voluntary service by 2030.

Malaria incidence

Malaria is endemic within the Tropics and is caused by a parasite called a plasmodium which is injected into the blood stream when a female Anopheles mosquito draws blood. In 2020 there was an increase in malaria cases and deaths (figure 1) primarily in sub Saharan Africa.

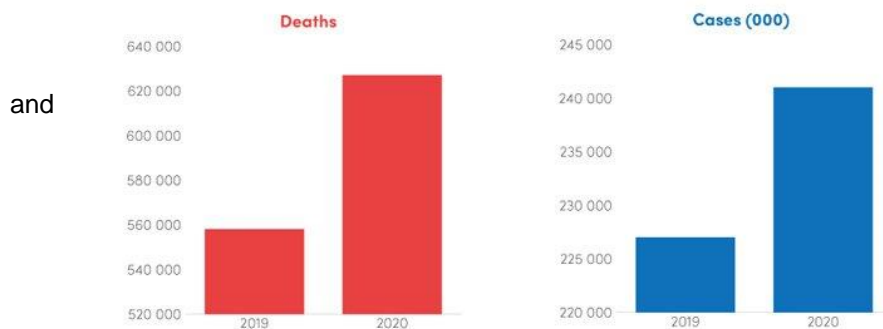


Figure 1 Global incidence of malaria the number of deaths (WHO)

Impact of Covid virus

This increase in infections and deaths is mainly attributed to the disruption in the delivery of malaria prevention, diagnosis and treatment by the need to treat persons suffering from the Covid virus. However due to the strenuous efforts of the malaria endemic countries and their partners, the impact of Covid on malaria incidence was much less than expected.



Insecticide treated nets (ITN)

As the Anopheles mosquito is only active from dusk to dawn, the safest form of prevention is to sleep under an insecticide treated bed net (ITN). Funds raised by UK Scouts have enabled 10,000 nets to be purchased and distributed by Scouts in Malawi, Uganda, Ghana and Gambia in more than 30 campaigns in collaboration with the local health authorities.

Figure 2 Ghanian Scouts helping to erect a bed net

Other forms of prevention

- Draining swamp areas and eliminating stagnant pools of water, where mosquitos can breed,
- Indoor spraying of insecticide but its use is declining as delivery of ITN nets has increased
- Recognising the symptoms, obtaining an early diagnosis and administering anti malaria drugs

Vaccines

The initial trials of a new vaccine designated RTS,S from a WHO-coordinated pilot programme has reached more than 830 000 children in 3 African countries since 2019 and the results have shown that the vaccine has been successful, especially when combined with administering anti-malaria drugs with a target efficacy of 75%. These trials have shown that the vaccine is safe, has substantial public health impact and is highly cost-effective.

The RTS,S vaccine represents a scientific and public health breakthrough as it is not only the first WHO-recommended malaria vaccine, but also the first vaccine against a human parasite. RTS,S is also the first tool in WHO's malaria toolkit that uses the human immune system to avert malaria infections and, in turn, their progression to severe disease and death. It is now planned to scale up vaccine production with a new investment by GAVI, the global alliance public/private partnership.



What Scouts can do

There will still be a need for ITN nets for many years as they will give 100% protection if correctly used.

There are sets of activities on the SAM website which will enable Scouts of all ages to learn about the illness and how it can be prevented. Then if each Scout is able to raise on average £5 this will enable one ITN bed net to be purchased and distributed in an African country which could protect a family against being bitten. In this way Scouts can earn the SAM badge and save a life.

Figure 3 Distributing nets in Kasakoso settlement, Uganda

Mosquito nets

We have been donated a large number of mosquito nets which are not insecticide treated, but can be used for training purposes. These conically shaped nets are 2.5m high and perimeter length 12.5m and can be erected and used to illustrate how mosquitos can be prevented from biting. We hope that you are willing to purchase one or more nets and donate £5/net plus postage and packing, which is currently £2.70 for a single net. Your donations will help African Scout Groups to purchase ITN treated nets and you will receive a badge for each net purchased.

Resources on SAM website

There is an activity handbook with a set of activities suitable for all sections and a resource box which can be purchased which provides the materials for such activities. There are also the previous editions of our newsletter If your Section/Group is willing to join the global partnership to fight malaria, visit our website www.scoutsagainstmalaria.org.uk or email us at info@scoutsagainstmalaria.org.uk.

Seasons greetings
Rayner Mayer