



Newsletter #19 December 2020

This issue is devoted to the 2020 malaria report of the World Health Organisation (WHO) which was published on 30 November. However the year has been dominated by the spread of the Covid pandemic which has stretched hospital and clinic facilities to the limit and so help may not always have been available to those suffering from malaria. So your help is more needed than ever to provide protection against being bitten by a malaria carrying mosquito.

Progress

The WHO report observes that in the past 20 years, the global programme has averted some 1.5 billion cases of malaria and 7.6 million deaths. However, progress against malaria continues to plateau, particularly in the high burden countries in Africa. In 2019, the global tally of malaria cases was 229 million, an annual estimate that has remained virtually unchanged over the last 4 years and in 2019, the disease claimed some 409,000 lives compared to 411,000 in 2018, mostly under the age of 5 years old.

As in past years, the African Region has shouldered more than 90% of the overall disease burden even though the region has reduced its malaria death toll by 44% since 2000.

Impact of COVID-19

In 2020, COVID-19 emerged as an additional challenge to the provision of essential health services worldwide. According to the report, most malaria prevention campaigns were able to move forward this year without major delays. Ensuring access to malaria prevention – such as insecticide-treated nets and preventive medicines for children – has supported the COVID-19 response strategy by reducing the number of malaria infections and, in turn, easing the strain on health systems. WHO has worked swiftly to provide countries with guidance to adapt their responses and ensure the safe delivery of malaria services during the pandemic.

However, WHO's concern is that even moderate disruptions in access to treatment will lead to an increased loss of life. WHO notes that, for example, a 10% disruption in access to effective antimalarial treatment in sub-Saharan Africa could lead to 19,000 additional deaths. Disruptions of 25% and 50% in the region could result in an additional 46,000 and 100,000 deaths, respectively.

Need for more resources

The report observes that gaps in access to life-saving measures are undermining global efforts to curb the disease. "While Africa has shown the world what can be achieved if we stand together to end malaria as a public health threat, progress has stalled," said Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa. "COVID-19 threatens to further derail our efforts to overcome malaria, particularly treating people with the disease. In spite of the devastating impact COVID-19 has had on African economies, international partners and countries need to do more to ensure that the resources are there to expand malaria programmes which are making such a difference in people's lives."

Stepping up the fight

WHO is therefore calling on countries and global health partners to step up the fight against malaria, a preventable and treatable disease that continues to claim hundreds of thousands of lives each year. A better targeting of interventions, new tools and increased funding are needed to change the global trajectory of the disease and reach internationally-agreed targets.

"It is time for leaders across Africa – and the world – to rise once again to the challenge of malaria, just as they did when they laid the foundation for the progress made since the beginning of this century," said WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "Through joint action, and a commitment to leaving no one behind, we can achieve our shared vision of a world free of malaria."

"High burden to high impact"(HBHI)

Launched in November 2018, HBHI builds on the principle that no one should die from a disease that is preventable and treatable. Over the last two years, all 11 HBHI countries in sub-Saharan Africa have implemented activities across four response elements - political will to reduce the toll of malaria; strategic information to drive impact; better guidance, policies and strategies and a coordinated national malaria response.

Scouts for SDGs

is the response of the World Organization of Scouting Movements to meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. **Scouts against Malaria contributes to the SDG 'leading a healthy life'.** As part of the SAM initiative, UK Scouts have learnt about the incidence of this disease and how it can be prevented and have been challenged to raise on average £5 which will cover the cost of purchasing and distributing a long life insecticide impregnated net (LLIN) to a vulnerable family.

Previous campaigns

With funds raised by UK Scouts, over 20 campaigns have been organised by African Scout Associations in Ghana, Uganda, Malawi and the Gambia. Working with local health officers, their Scouts have identified vulnerable families in local villages, supplied them and helped with erecting LLIN treated nets and explained why treatment is needed if bitten and where help can be sought.

But there have never been sufficient nets to help all the vulnerable families.

In this way each Scout (UK and African) can earn the SAM badge, illustrated on the front page.



A Scout erecting a bed net for a family with young children, NyameBekyere Village, Ashanti District, Ghana

Leading healthy lives by reducing the incidence of malaria

This is a set of activities in which anyone can learn about this disease.. A resource box can also be ordered.

If you or 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.

Editor Rayner Mayer