

Newsletter #31 December 2024



In this issue we discuss the 2024 Malaria Report which has just been issued by the World Health Organisation in which progress is reported in averting illness and death but that the disease remains a serious global health threat particularly in sub Saharan Africa.

We also report on the most recent education and net distribution campaigns by Scouts in Uganda, Ghana and Malawi with funds raised by UK Scouts.

Overview WHO report

Malaria is a life-threatening disease primarily found in tropical countries. It is both preventable and curable. However, without prompt diagnosis and effective treatment, a case of uncomplicated malaria can progress to a severe form of the disease, which is often fatal without treatment.

Malaria is caused by the bite of a female mosquito of the anopheles species. In sucking blood to feed her young, the female species injects a parasite called a *plasmodium* which infects the liver and attacks the red blood cells.

In 2023, there were an estimated 263 million cases and 597 000 malaria deaths worldwide. This represents about 11 million more cases in 2023 compared to 2022, and nearly the same number of deaths. Approximately 95% of the deaths occurred in the African Region, where many at risk still lack access to the services they need to prevent, detect and treat the disease.

"No one should die of malaria; yet the disease continues to disproportionately harm people living in the African region, especially young children and pregnant women," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "An expanded package of lifesaving tools now offers better protection against the disease, but stepped-up investments and action in high-burden African countries are needed to curb the threat

Nearly half the world's population is at risk of malaria. In areas with high malaria transmission, young children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to malaria infection and even death. Since 2000, expanded access to WHO recommended malaria prevention tools and strategies have had a major impact in reducing the global burden of this disease.

As of December 2024, 17 countries had introduced malaria vaccines through routine childhood immunization. The continued scale-up of the vaccines in Africa is expected to save tens of thousands of young lives every year.

New generation nets, which provide better protection against malaria than pyrethroid-only nets, are becoming more widely available, supporting efforts to combat mosquito resistance to pyrethroids. In 2023, these new types of nets accounted for 78% of the 195 million nets delivered to sub-Saharan Africa, an increase from 59% in 2022.

.Kigungu Camapign, Uganda Cleopatra John reports

This campaign was undertaken in this community located on the edge of Lake Victoria. Insecticide treated bed nets were distributed to vulnerable families that is those with young children, expectant and lactating mothers and elderly people. Families were also shown how to erect these nets and why it was important to ensure that the nets were maintained in good condition with no tears or holes through which mosquitos could pass and infect sleeping persons.

A video of this campaign can be accessed at

Kwesitenten Campaign, Ghana Louis Okyere reports

Malaria remains a significant health concern in many parts of Ghana, particularly in rural communities. To help address this issue, the Ghana Scout Association initiated a malaria awareness and prevention campaign in Kwesitenten, a village community in the Eastern Region of Ghana on 10th October. The primary objectives of the campaign were:

Raise Awareness: Educate the community about the prevention methods of malaria.

Distribute Mosquito Nets: Provide 100 insecticide treated mosquito nets to the most vulnerable groups to reduce the risk of malaria transmission.

Engage the Community: Encourage active participation from community members to ensure the sustainability of malaria prevention efforts.



Interactive sessions were held to inform the community about malaria prevention methods. The first was a talk with the primary school children and their teachers,. the second session was with members of the community. Topics covered included:

- *Understanding Malaria:* Information on the causes, symptoms, and transmission of malaria.
- *Preventive Measures:* Strategies to prevent malaria, such as using mosquito nets, applying insect repellent, wearing protective clothing, and keeping the environment clean to reduce mosquito breeding sites.
- *Proper Use of Mosquito Nets:* Demonstrations on how to correctly use and care for mosquito nets to ensure their effectiveness.

Impact and Outcomes The campaign had a positive impact on the community in several ways:

- *Increased Awareness:* The educational sessions successfully raised awareness about malaria prevention and the importance of using mosquito nets. Community members demonstrated a better understanding of malaria and expressed a commitment to using preventive measures.
- *Improved Health:* The distribution of mosquito nets is expected to reduce the incidence of malaria in the community, particularly among children, pregnant women, and the elderly. Initial feedback from community members indicated that they felt more protected and were grateful for the support.

- **Community Involvement:** The campaign fostered a sense of community involvement and responsibility in malaria prevention efforts. Community members actively participated in the activities and showed a willingness to continue these efforts beyond the duration of the campaign.

The Association plans to build on this success by expanding the campaign to other communities and continuing to promote awareness and preventive measures.



Chiuzira Campaign, Malawi Howie Maujo reports

Objectives included distribution of ITNs to vulnerable populations, including pregnant women and children under five years old; to increase community awareness of malaria prevention through educational campaigns; to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of ITN use in reducing malaria incidence.

Planning and preparation Target population were households with pregnant women and children under five. High-risk areas were identified with the highest malaria transmission rates and 100 people were targeted for distribution which was done in collaboration with the local health authorities.

A household-based approach was used to ensure that all targeted families received the ITNs directly at their homes and in addition, a distribution centre was established in highly populated areas where beneficiaries could collect their nets.



Lessons Learned

Community engagement is key: Close collaboration with local leaders significantly boosted acceptance and proper use of the ITNs.

Flexibility in distribution methods: Combining door-to-door distribution with mobile outreach helped cover hard-to-reach areas.

Continuous monitoring: Regular follow-ups with households are necessary to ensure the proper and sustained use of ITNs.



Recommendations

- Increased community sensitization: Future distributions should include more extensive and prolonged awareness campaigns to combat misconceptions about ITN use.
- Strengthen logistics: Improve planning and coordination with local authorities to address logistical challenges, especially in remote areas.
- Post-distribution monitoring: Regular surveys and check-ins should be conducted to assess the proper use of ITNs and their impact on malaria rates.

Sectional activities

Scouts against Malaria is an activity which supports the World Organisation of Scouting Movements' (WOSM) global program, *Scouts for SDGs* (Sustainable Development Goals). SAM activities contribute towards SDG #3 *leading a healthy life*. 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.



We have developed a wide range of activities suitable for all sections which together with a slide set and videos of current campaigns can be downloaded from the SAM website. These are suitable for on-line learning for individual Scouts as well as sectional meetings. Alternatively we are willing to visit your Group and organise an evening's activities if you are willing then to raise funds to purchase ITN treated nets and live within a reasonable distance of NE Hampshire.

Editor Rayner Mayer.