

Newsletter #28 December 2023



In this issue we highlight excerpts from the World Health Organisation (WHO) 2023 malaria report and the progress that is being made to control the incidence of this disease which is one of the most difficult to eradicate.

Overview

In 2022, the global tally of malaria cases reached 249 million – well above the estimated number of cases before the COVID-19 pandemic, and an increase of five million over 2021. Millions of people continue to miss out on the services they need to prevent, detect, and treat the disease. Conflict and humanitarian crises, resource constraints and biological challenges such as drug and insecticide resistance and climate change continue to hamper progress.

Taken together, these threats are undermining gains in the global fight against malaria.

Effect of climate change

Changes in temperature, humidity and rainfall can influence the behaviour and survival of the malaria-carrying *Anopheles* mosquito. Extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and flooding, can also directly impact transmission and disease burden. Catastrophic flooding in Pakistan in 2022, for example, led to a five-fold increase in malaria cases in the country.

“The changing climate poses a substantial risk to progress against malaria, particularly in vulnerable regions. Sustainable and resilient malaria responses are needed now more than ever, coupled with urgent actions to slow the pace of global warming and reduce its effects,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

Climate variability is expected to have indirect effects on malaria trends through, for example, reduced access to essential malaria services and disruptions to the supply chain of insecticide-treated nets, medicines and vaccines. Population displacement due to climate-induced factors may also lead to increased malaria as individuals without immunity migrate to endemic areas.

Trends in malaria infection

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted malaria services, leading to a surge in both incidence and mortality rates, exacerbating already stalled progress against the disease.

Globally there were an additional five million malaria cases in 2022 over the previous year and five countries bore the brunt of these increases. Pakistan saw the largest increase, with about 2.6 million cases in 2022 compared to 500 000 in 2021. Significant increases were also observed in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea and Uganda.

Meanwhile, in the 11 countries that carry the highest burden of malaria, the rates of new infections and deaths have levelled off following an initial upsurge during the first year of the pandemic. These countries, supported through the WHO “High burden to high impact” approach, saw an estimated 167 million malaria cases and 426 000 deaths in 2022. In view of current trends, progress towards the critical 2025 milestones of the WHO global malaria strategy is off track by a wide margin.

Two vaccines have now been approved and are now being rolled out in 3 African countries, which will reduce mortality particularly amongst young children.

Concerted effort

“It is crucial to recognize the multitude of threats that impede our response efforts. Climate variability poses a substantial risk, but we must also contend with challenges such as limited healthcare access, ongoing conflicts and emergencies, the lingering effects of COVID-19 on service delivery, inadequate funding and uneven implementation of our core malaria interventions,” said Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa. “To forge ahead toward a malaria-free future, we need a concerted effort to tackle these diverse threats that fosters innovation, resource mobilization and collaborative strategies”

Mosquito breeding

The combination of extreme heat and rainfall in sub-tropical Africa results in ideal breeding places for mosquitos, of which one species, the anopheles’ mosquito, is primarily responsible for the spread of the malaria parasite when its bites someone to extract blood to grow its young. So, in a changing climate, the incidence of malaria is likely to increase and in many sub-tropical countries, the only safe solution is to sleep under an insecticide treated (ITN) bed net.

Aftermath of Cyclone Freddy, Howie Maujo reports

Malaria is a serious disease caused by a parasite and spread by mosquitoes and it is common in Malawi. If left untreated, malaria can result in a slew of medical problems. Just to name a few; anaemia, mental confusion, jaundice, seizures, and comas. In the worst case scenarios, malaria can lead to death.

The Scout Association of Malawi in partnership with UK Scouts, embarked on a joint venture to reach out to vulnerable group of people in Malawi that were affected by the Cyclone Freddy earlier this year and living in an evacuation centre. Two interventions were carried out to scale up the need and demand that resulted in the increase number of beneficiaries (as reported in our September newsletter). Those that needed the ITN's were more than 1000 and our interventions only managed to reach out to a myriad

of beneficiaries that included infants, pregnant women, the elderly and other disadvantaged groups of people.

A third intervention was undertaken on 16th September in response to the Cyclone Freddy devastation in Sochi, Blantyre district.

Young Scout Leaders that spearheaded the SAM response

The specific objectives included -

- Identifying and distributing insecticide treated mosquito nets (ITN) to vulnerable groups that were hit by Cyclone Freddy
- Educating and explaining the proper use of ITNs to prevent mosquito bites



- Encouraging vulnerable groups to use impregnated mosquito nets more frequently
- Having a healthy and energetic community that works together on hygiene and sanitation to prevent breeding of mosquitoes
- Scaling up the intervention to meet the existing demand in the communities that were heavily affected by the Cyclone Freddy



The Sochi Scouts distributed 55 mosquito nets to all the vulnerable children in the area.

The project has been life changing as the beneficiaries have been those who lost much of their properties and they have been the victims of Malaria.

While we work to understand the full extent of the devastation, our priority is to ensure that affected

communities and families receive health assistance for immediate needs as well as to limit the risks of malaria and water-borne diseases and other infections spreading.



Scouts in Sochi reached out to many families in the community spreading the message on how people can stay safe from Malaria and distributed the mosquito nets.

The Scouts targeted the young children to benefit from the project because there have been cases where these children have been missing classes because they have been suffering from malaria.

The chief and the community leaders appreciated the good

job done by the Scouts in their community for reaching out to the vulnerable families in the fight against malaria. The people in the community pleaded with the Scouts to scale up the project in order to reach out to many families in the area in the sense that they become more productive in their daily activity.

Fund Raising.

We acknowledge the fund raising efforts of the Cub Packs in Blackdown District, Somerset, who over the past year have learnt not only about malaria and how it can be prevented, but also have raised more than £900 which we will now send to several African Scout Associations to continue the fight against malaria.

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..

Dairy date Thursday 25th April World Malaria day Theme *Ready to beat malaria*

Editor Rayner Mayer