

## Newsletter #26 April 2023



The annual World Malaria Day will be celebrated this year on Tuesday 25 April and so we discuss WHO's assessment the status of combatting this disease which infects 250,000 million persons each year and results in 620,000 deaths. We also report on the most recent campaigns to distribute insecticide treated bed nets in Malawi and Uganda and the impact of tropical Cyclone Freddy on the inhabitants of Malawi.

### World Malaria Day 2023

The World Health Organisation (WHO) reports that sub tropical African Region continues to shoulder the heaviest burden of the disease – accounting, in 2021, for an estimated 95% of all malaria cases and 96% of all deaths. Nearly 80% of malaria deaths in the African Region were among children under the age of 5.

In its Malaria Day message, WHO observes that the world is NOT on track to reach 2 critical targets of the WHO [Global technical strategy for malaria 2016–2030](#): these are -

- Reducing global malaria case incidence by 90% or more by 2030; and
- Reducing the global malaria mortality rate by 90% or more by 2030.
- To achieve these targets, WHO concludes that urgent and concerted action is required to reach [Target 3.3. of the Sustainable Development Goals](#), which calls for ending of malaria by 2030.

### Vulnerable populations

Malaria disproportionately affects the most marginalized populations in society, including the rural poor, pregnant women, children, migrants, refugees, religious minorities and indigenous people. Children in the poorest households are 5 times more likely to be infected with malaria. Malaria is also more prevalent among young children, whose mothers have a lower level of education and live in rural areas. Reaching these populations with malaria prevention, diagnosis and treatment is a critical strategy for achieving global malaria targets and delivering on the promise of “zero malaria.”

**Key to success: strong health systems** Despite a remarkable effort to scale up malaria control over the last 2 decades, WHO concludes that too many people are missing out on the interventions they need to prevent, diagnose and treat the disease. Overall, 30% of the global population cannot [access essential health services](#), and between 1.4–1.9 billion people face catastrophic or impoverishing [health spending](#), with significant inequities affecting the most vulnerable.

Despite recent setbacks in malaria control, investments in R&D have played a crucial role in reducing the global burden of malaria over the last 2 decades. The development and massive roll-out of rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs), insecticide-treated bed nets (ITNs) and artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs) have been the backbone of the malaria response since 2000. Continued investment in the development and deployment of next-generation tools will be key to achieving the 2030 global malaria targets.

**28 new products** are in the R&D pipeline. Tools under evaluation include new types of insecticide-treated nets, targeted baits that attract mosquitoes, spatial repellents, lethal house lures (eaves tubes) and genetic engineering of mosquitoes. Should these tools demonstrate efficacy in controlling the disease, WHO will develop new policy recommendations or amend existing ones to support their deployment in malaria-affected countries.

A number of malaria vaccines are currently in development. Like the RTS,S vaccine, many of them target the malaria parasite before it enters the human liver where it can quickly multiply. The most advanced of these candidates is R21, which recently completed Phase 3 of the clinical trials. Other vaccine candidates seek to stop transmission of the malaria parasite, and still others to protect women during pregnancy. However sleeping under insecticide treated bed nets remains the safest form of protection against being bitten while sleeping.



**Challenges** There are several new challenges, which are very formidable. These include increasing resistance to currently used insecticides and the changing behaviour of mosquitos which appear to be biting earlier *before* people go to bed for which the ITN nets offer no protection.

*Illustrating how to hang a insecticide treated bed net*

But the biggest challenge could be the spread of another species

of mosquito called *anopheles stephensi* from Asia to parts of Africa. This mosquito carries not one, but *two* types of parasite, both of which are responsible for inducing malaria. Moreover this species of mosquito is resistant to many of the currently used insecticides and unlike *anopheles gambiae*, which is active in rural areas, this species of mosquito is generally found in urban areas.

*Opportunity for Africa Scouts to assist*

*Apart from educating communities how to avoid being bitten, there appears to be an opportunity for African Scouts to help with the distribution of ITN nets as 40 million nets manufactured in 2022 could not be delivered and distributed.*

**Kadidi area, Blantyre, Malawi** Howie Maujo reports .....

Although there are malaria cases in urban areas, lack of malaria transmitting mosquitoes have been reported, suggesting other factors contributing to the disease ecology, including a variety of vector breeding sites, mostly artificially made through, for example tyre tracks, urban farming. Also back and forth human movement between rural and urban areas have been hypothesized as the potential risk factor. However, the complexity of the disease necessitates one to explore other risk factors sustaining malaria transmission. We hypothesize that rural–urban migration and nearness to putative sources of malaria transmission, for instance, nearness to a dam, river, garden, swamp water or standing water should be associated with increased malaria risk.

Kadidi area is one rural area in the district of Blantyre that has high rate of Malaria infection hence the intervention

Specific objectives included –

- Encourage vulnerable groups to use impregnated mosquito nets more frequently
- Have a healthy and energetic community that work together on hygiene and sanitation to prevent mosquitoes that spread malaria
- Mainstream Scout values to mitigate spread of malaria. The strategy included -
- Identification and distribution of impregnated mosquito nets to vulnerable groups
- Civic education on proper use of ITNs



This intervention has been conducted without difficulties, though demand looks to be increasing each time of distribution, especially among the vulnerable like pregnant women, the children and the elderly people as the population of the is high.

*Scout leaders and District Health officer distributing ITN nets*

These campaigns has given Scout Association of Malawi another dimension to consider in giving service to community. Scouts are able to help educate civic communities about the dangers of mosquitos and how they can keep their surroundings clean to prevent further breeding of mosquitoes that transmit malaria. In addition, the Association has popularized the Scouts against Malaria intervention through the invitation of the Media houses that captured both TV News and national newspapers.

**SAM rollout, Entebbe, Uganda** Martin Takel reports .....



February 25<sup>th</sup> saw the Entebbe Scouts and leaders gathering in a deprived area near to the shores of Lake Victoria, Uganda.

The area and people chosen for the dissemination of the insecticide treated mosquito bed nets was decided by the local community leaders. This area is prone to flooding, especially during the rainy seasons, as water gathers in pools often leading to areas of swampy land, ideal for breeding grounds of the anopheles mosquitoes that carry the organisms that cause Malaria.

150 insecticide treated nets were distributed to the most vulnerable people that were the aged, those with young children and pregnant mothers to be.

### **Cyclone Freddy, Malawi**

This tropical cyclone was the longest lasting and most damaging in more than 100 years and has ravaged almost half the country. Malawi's President observed that this demonstrated that climate change was really happening and that Malawi happened to be right in the path of the cyclone.

To assist recovery, we have sent the sum of £1100 to the Scout Association of Malawi of which Kent County contributed £420. The Malawi Scouts will use these funds to buy insecticide treated bed nets and distribute them to those families who have lost their homes and are sleeping in the open air.

One of the more important side effects of this cyclone has been that vast quantities of water will have gathered in pools and fields enabling mosquitos to breed and so compounding the immediate loss of life, dwellings and crops.

The effect of climate change on health is therefore immediate and is likely to increase until such time as individuals and countries undertake actions to limit the emission of greenhouse gases responsible for global warming.

### **Joining the global partnership of Scouts for SDGs**

Scouts against Malaria is an activity which supports the World Organisation of Scouting Movements' (WOSM) global program, *Scouts for SDGs*(Sustainable Development Goals). If you or your Section/Group is willing to join the global partnership to fight malaria, visit our website [www.scoutsagainstmalaria.org.uk](http://www.scoutsagainstmalaria.org.uk) or email us at [info@scoutsagainstmalaria.org.uk](mailto: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.

Editor Rayner Mayer



SAM activities contribute towards Sustainable Development Goal #3 as described in this newsletter.