Newsletter #25 December 2022

The World Health Organisation issued its annual World Malaria Report on 8 December and we discuss its main findings and how Scouts could make a difference. Cleopatra John reports on how Ugandan Scouts have been educated about malaria and how insecticide treated bed nets (ITN) can prevent families being bitten by mosquitos when asleep at night. We have produced a slide set to enable leaders to discuss with their Scouts how they can help to limit this disease and save lives.

World Malaria report 2022

The main conclusion of this Annual Report is that the number of infected persons globally remained stable (247 million) of which 619,000 persons died, almost all under the age of 5 years old. The number of people infected by this tropical disease remains incredibly high in spite of the very large number of ITN nets manufactured during the year (171 million) and global collaboration to find a vaccine.

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.

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.

Distribution campaign, Kaazi, Uganda

Cleopatra John reports …….

This year's National Scout Camp was the first camp held after the Covid 19 pandemic from 12th to 17th August, 2022 at Kaazi in which Scouts were engaged and assessed in a number of activities under the theme; ‘*'Youth Embracing Covid-19 Challenges for Steady Progress"*. There was a lot of excitement and expectations from all the campers, 1388 males, 2206 females& 365 leaders giving a total of 3959 campers.

Malaria information campaign.

During the camp, talks were held with different sections of Scouts and these included -

- What is Malaria?
- Is it true that Malaria is the biggest contributor to infant mortality?
- How is Malaria spread?
- How can Malaria be prevented?
- What should you do if you feel like you have contracted Malaria?

After these Group discussions, some of the campers then visited the nearby Kaazi Community and distributed insecticide treated bednets to sensitized people, expectant mothers and to mothers with children below the age of5 years.

Achievements of the Campaign

- All the campers had the opportunity to learn about malaria and pledged to disseminate the information when they got back home.
- 100 treated nets were distributed to the local community.
- Scouts were glad to be able to contribute to reducing malaria in their communities.

- Also to show their communities how to set up an insecticide treated mosquito net on a bed.

After training, some Scouts reached out to the local market where they found many mothers with children under the age of 5. They sensitized them and demonstrated how to use the net and explained the dangers of not sleeping under a treated net.

They also came across many grandparents who had been left with young kids as grandmothers often take care of their grandchildren.

One particular grandparent had 4 grand children who were aged 1,2,3,4 years to look after, who should also be to be protected from malaria. She also mentioned that these children had contracted malaria in the previous month, but they had been treated and were now much better. So they also encouraged the older mothers and vulnerable mothers to sleep under the treated bed nets.

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The challenges:

- Due to heavy rains there is a lot of stagnant water around the local homes because they were built in a swampy area and it is in these areas that mosquitos can lay their eggs and the larvae will hatch.
- Some of the stagnant water is however used by the community as a source of water for home use because there are few clean water sources available.
- Some of community members reported that there are many teenage mothers who don't know what to do in case they get malaria. So they can lose their babies and the mother might also die because they are not aware of the need to seek immediate help from the nearest clinic .
- Some vulnerable members of the Kaazi community did not get the nets because there was insufficient funds to buy sufficient nets.

Further distribution of ITN treated nets, Kaazi community

New slide set and leaflet

This new slide set will enable leaders to discuss with their Scouts, Cubs or Beavers why malaria affects so many people and how UK Scouts can help African Scouts to reduce the incidence of such a deadly disease by fund raising which can be used to buy and distribute ITN bed nets.

We have also updated the SAM leaflet which describes what Scouts are doing to reduce the incidence of this deadly disease. Like the slide set, this leaflet can be downloaded from our web site or copies obtained by emailing us at the address below .

New vaccine

The first trial of a new vaccine, developed by the University of Oxford, has been very successful and could provide the most effective protection yet against malaria by offering up to 80% protection. The first vaccine, approved by the World Health Organisation last year, provides a lower level of protection and requires a booster each year for 5 years. However sleeping under insecticide treated bed nets remains the safest form of protection against being bitten while sleeping.

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 or email us at info@scoutsagainstmalaria.org.uk.

We have developed a wide range of activities suitable for all sections which together with 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.

I attach a copy of the news release which accompanied publication of 2022 World Malaria report as this provides further information about how malaria is being fought on a world wide scale

Editor Rayner Mayer

WHO World Malaria report 2022 News release 8 December 2022

Despite continued impact of COVID-19, malaria cases and deaths remained stable in 2021. New data released today by the World Health Organization (WHO) show that countries around the world largely held the line against further setbacks to malaria prevention, testing and treatment services in 2021.

According to this year's *World malaria report*, there were an estimated 619 000 malaria deaths globally in 2021 compared to 625 000 in the first year of the pandemic. In 2019, before the pandemic struck, the number of deaths stood at 568 000.

Malaria cases continued to rise between 2020 and 2021, but at a slower rate than in the period 2019 to 2020. The global tally of malaria cases reached 247 million in 2021, compared to 245 million in 2020 and 232 million in 2019.

"Following a marked increase in malaria cases and deaths in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, malaria-affected countries redoubled their efforts and were able to mitigate the worst impacts of Covid-related disruptions to malaria services," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "We face many challenges, but there are many reasons for hope. By strengthening the response, understanding and mitigating the risks, building resilience and accelerating research, there is every reason to dream of a malaria-free future."

Strong national-level commitment key to success

Insecticide treated bednets (ITNs) are the primary vector control tool used in most malaria-endemic countries and, in 2020, countries distributed more ITNs than in any year on record. In 2021, ITN distributions were strong overall and at similar levels to pre-pandemic years: of the 171 million ITNs planned for distribution, 128 million (75%) were distributed.

However, eight countries (Benin, Eritrea, Indonesia, Nigeria, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Uganda and Vanuatu) distributed less than 60% of their ITNs, and seven countries (Botswana, Central African Republic, Chad, Haiti, India, Pakistan and Sierra Leone) did not distribute any ITNs.

Seasonal malaria chemoprevention (SMC) is recommended to prevent the disease among children living in areas with highly seasonal malaria transmission in Africa. In 2021, further expansion of this intervention reached nearly 45 million children per SMC cycle in 15 African countries, a major increase from 33.4 million in 2020 and 22.1 million in 2019.

At the same time, most countries succeeded in maintaining malaria testing and treatment during the pandemic. Despite supply chain and logistical challenges during the pandemic, malaria-endemic countries distributed a record number of rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) to health facilities in 2020. In 2021, countries distributed 223 million RDTs, a similar level reported before the pandemic.
Artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs) are the most effective treatment for *P. falciparum* malaria. Malaria-endemic countries delivered an estimated 242 million ACTs worldwide in 2021 compared to 239 million ACTs in 2019.

A convergence of threats undermining efforts

Despite successes, our efforts face many challenges, particularly in the African Region, which shouldered about 95% of cases and 96% of deaths globally in 2021.

Disruptions during the pandemic and converging humanitarian crises, health system challenges, restricted funding, rising biological threats and a decline in the effectiveness of core disease-cutting tools threaten the global response to malaria.

“Despite progress, the African region continues to be hardest hit by this deadly disease,” said Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa. “New tools—and the funding to deploy these—are urgently needed to help us defeat malaria.”

Total funding for malaria in 2021 was US$ 3.5 billion, an increase from the two previous years but well below the estimated US$ 7.3 billion required globally to stay on track to defeat malaria.

At the same time, a decline in the effectiveness of core malaria control tools, most crucially ITNs, is impeding further progress against malaria. Threats to this key prevention tool include insecticide resistance; insufficient access; loss of ITNs due to the stresses of day-to-day use outpacing replacement; and changing behaviour of mosquitoes, which appear to be biting early before people go to bed, and resting outdoors, thereby evading exposure to insecticides.

Other risks are also rising, including parasite mutations affecting the performance of rapid diagnostic tests; growing parasite resistance to the drugs used to treat malaria; and the invasion in Africa of an urban-adapted mosquito that is resistant to many of the insecticides used today.

Key opportunities to accelerate progress

WHO recently launched 2 strategies to support countries in the African continent as they work to build a more resilient response to malaria: a strategy to curb antimalarial drug resistance and an initiative to stop the spread of the *Anopheles stephensi* malaria vector.

Additionally, a new global framework to respond to malaria in urban areas, developed jointly by WHO and UN-Habitat, provides guidance for city leaders and malaria stakeholders.

Meanwhile, a robust research and development pipeline is set to bring a new generation of malaria control tools that could help accelerate progress towards global targets.

Key opportunities include long-lasting bed nets with new insecticide combinations and other innovations in vector control, including targeted baits that attract mosquitoes, spatial repellents and genetic engineering of mosquitoes. New diagnostic tests are also under development, as are next-generation life-saving medicines to respond to antimalarial drug resistance.

From late 2023 onwards, millions of children living in areas of highest risk of illness and death from malaria are also expected to benefit from the life-saving impact of the world’s first malaria vaccine, RTS,S. Other malaria vaccines are in the product development pipeline.

According to the report, these opportunities cannot be fully exploited without intensified efforts to ensure that nobody is left behind. Malaria-endemic countries should continue to strengthen their health systems, using a primary health care approach, to ensure access to quality services and interventions for all in need.

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Note

WHO’s work on malaria is guided by the *Global technical strategy for malaria 2016-2030 (GTS*), approved by the World Health Assembly in May 2015, and updated in 2021 to reflect the lessons learned in the global malaria response during the period 2016 to 2020.