

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark skin and a headscarf, smiling warmly while holding a young child. The child, also with dark skin, is wearing a bright pink dress and looking towards the camera with a smile. The background is a blurred, light-colored tiled floor.

Achieving the Malaria MDG Target

Reversing the Incidence of Malaria 2000–2015



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Fifteen years ago, global leaders identified malaria as a serious public health challenge and one of the biggest impediments to global development, particularly in the world's poorest countries. At a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, they pledged to halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria by 2015 – a critical global target of the Millennium Development Goals.

Today, we can say with confidence – and great excitement – that the world has achieved this target. Between 2000 and 2015, the rate of new malaria infections declined globally by an estimated 37 per cent. Over the same period, the global malaria death rate fell by 60 per cent. Equally encouraging, an increasing number of countries have moved towards malaria elimination. Last year, 13 countries reported zero cases of malaria within their own borders and six countries reported fewer than 10 cases.

These figures translate into 6.2 million lives saved over the last 15 years – an enormous victory for families, communities, and countries.

This report highlights these and other key findings, as well lessons we have learned – and the challenges that remain.

Over the last 15 years, the delivery of core malaria interventions has undergone an unprecedented expansion. Since 2000, one billion insecticide-treated mosquito nets have been distributed in Africa. The introduction of rapid diagnostic tests has made it possible to distinguish more quickly between malarial and non-malarial fevers – enabling more timely and appropriate treatment. Artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs) have been highly effective against *Plasmodium falciparum*, the most prevalent and lethal malaria parasite affecting humans. And as we have reached more communities and people at risk for malaria with these core interventions, many more lives have been saved.

Progress in reaching children under the age of 5 – one of the most vulnerable groups affected by malaria – has been especially encouraging. By 2015, an estimated 68 per cent of under-fives in sub-Saharan Africa were sleeping under insecticide-treated nets, compared to less than 2 per cent in 2000. Over a 15-year period, the under-five global malaria death rate fell by 65 per cent.

Global malaria control is one of the first great public health success stories of this millennium – but our work is far from finished. Billions of people remain at risk for malaria. More than four hundred thousand people,

70 per cent of whom are children under five, still die from this preventable disease every year.

As this report shows, serious bottlenecks remain in providing full access to malaria prevention, diagnostic testing and treatment, especially for children under five and pregnant women. Progress has been uneven, with some countries carrying a disproportionately high share of the global burden. Fifteen countries – mainly in sub-Saharan Africa – account for 80 per cent of malaria cases and 78 per cent of deaths globally.

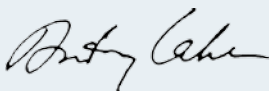
Eliminating malaria on a global scale is possible – but only if we overcome these barriers and accelerate progress in these high-burden countries. They – and we – have much to gain if we do: Not only lives saved, but also in more sustained economic growth.

As the global community commits to a new global development framework – the Sustainable Development Goals – we must strengthen our efforts to achieve universal access to malaria prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

Earlier this year, the World Health Assembly adopted the WHO *Global technical strategy for malaria 2016–2030*, a 15-year roadmap for malaria control. The strategy sets ambitious global targets, including a further 90 per cent reduction in malaria incidence and mortality by the year 2030.

Achieving these targets will require political will, country leadership, and significantly increased investment. To meet the first milestone of this strategy, a 40 per cent reduction in malaria incidence and mortality rates, an annual investment of approximately US\$ 6.4 billion per year by 2020 will be needed – far more funding than is currently available.

But if we secure the required resources and expand access to the core interventions we know are working, we will not only save millions of lives, though this goal is reason enough to act. We will accelerate progress towards a malaria-free world – and transform our common goal into a shared reality.



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