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and Edward Kayiwa

The Government is considering administering an anti-malarial drug to all Ugandans to eliminate the mosquito-borne disease and save over sh500b spent on management of malaria cases each year.

If the health ministry plan goes through, it could save families sh30,000 spent on managing a single malaria attack on one individual in a household.

Health state minister (general duties) Sarah Opendi announced yesterday that Uganda was talking with Chinese partners to introduce mass drug administration to all people against the country's leading cause of sickness and deaths.

The mass drug administration is just part of a package of approaches Uganda has resolved to pursue against the disease said to be killing 15 Ugandans every day.

Govt considers mass treatment for malaria

"We have to beat malaria. It has been with us for long despite a number of interventions that we have been pursuing. And it remains a big burden in our country," Opendi said during an occasion to mark World Malaria Day at the Uganda Police grounds in Mpigi town yesterday.

In an interview, the manager of the National Malaria Control Programme, Dr Jimmy Opigo, said the Chinese government has agreed to donate the anti-malarial drug to Uganda.

If Uganda accepts the donation, the drug will be administered to all Ugandans without testing whether they have malaria or not. It is supposed to be administered to the people once a month in a period of three months, Opigo said.

"It means those who will be having malaria will be cured and they will not get infected with malaria again because of the drug in their body systems. Even the ones who will not be having malaria will not get it because of the drug in their bodies," Opigo stated.

Since mosquitoes are known to have a one-month lifespan, he explained, that the mosquitoes that will be available in Uganda after three months will not be carrying malaria because it will have been eliminated.

It is not clear exactly when Uganda and China will conclude "talks" on the antimalarial drug before it can be shipped into the country for mass administration.

Opendi explained that there are also interventions being discussed at the

East African regional level to rid the region of malaria

Mosquito repelling paint

The minister also revealed that Uganda is talking to Japanese business people to introduce a mosquito repelling paint in the country.

Opigo said the paint had already been developed by a Japanese company operating in Uganda and that the Government had signed a memorandum of understanding with the firm.

The minister also cited a recently invented mosquito repelling device by Julius Twine.

The solar-powered device crushes local herbs, letting off a smell (from herbs) said to repel mosquitoes.

Status

The Malaria prevalence rate reduced from 42% in 2009 to 19% in 2017. Currently, Uganda is pursuing a combination of interventions under mass action against malaria campaign – distribution of insecticide treated mosquito nets, indoor residual spraying and integrated case management. Millions of nets have been distributed to families and indoor residual spraying is being implemented in 14 districts in Uganda.

According to the health ministry, sh2.5b is needed to undertake indoor residual spraying per district.

The UN, in a statement yesterday, said it will continue to provide technical and financial support to Uganda to combat malaria.