

World Malaria Day

Ready to beat malaria

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World Malaria Day is commemorated annually to recognise efforts taken globally to control the disease. The day is to be observed under the theme, "Ready to beat malaria".

The theme, according to World Health Organisation (WHO), underscores the collective energy and commitment of the global malaria community in uniting around the common goal of a world free of malaria.

According to WHO, urgent action is required to get the global fight against malaria back on track.

The health agency is now calling for greater investment and expanded coverage of proven tools that prevent, diagnose and treat malaria.

In Uganda, various interventions have been undertaken by the government and other partners such as distributing free long lasting insecticide treated mosquito nets and sensitising people. However, malaria remains one of the most dangerous diseases.

Malaria cases per 1,000 persons have increased from 408 in 2015/16 to 433 in 2016/17 way above the projected Health Sector Development Plan (HSDP) target of 329 per 1,000, according to a recent ministerial policy statement presented to Parliament.

The epidemic has been identified as the major cause of death of children and pregnant women.

"More males were affected at 516 cases per 1,000 compared to 354 per 1,000 among females. Malaria is still the top most cause of morbidity among all ages," the policy statement by the Health Minister, Dr Jane Aceng reads in part.

Dr Daniel Kyabayinze, the deputy manager of Malaria Control Programme at the Health ministry attributes the rise in the number of malaria cases to outbreaks in the then districts of greater Acholi region.

However, he says, the outbreak is being addressed through empowering the affected districts to conduct indoor residual spraying.

The policy document also indicates that inpatient malaria deaths stood at 20/100,000, representing a slight decline from 22/100,000 persons in 2015/16. But according to the policy statement, this remains far below the HSDP target of 5/100,000 for financial year 2016/17.

"More deaths occurred among males at 21.6/100,000 compared to 18.8/100,000 among females," the statement adds.

Malaria remains leading cause of death despite interventions



A health worker at Kisesya Health Centre IV fixes a treated mosquito net for a patient recently. The use of treated mosquito nets is one of the safest methods of preventing and controlling malaria.

FILE PHOTO

Interventions

Dr Kyabayinze says more than 26 million long lasting insecticide treated nets have been distributed achieving 94 per cent coverage nationwide, indoor residue spraying was undertaken in 11 districts of northern Uganda thereby achieving epidemic control and Artemisinin based Combination Therapy (ACT).

He says government has put more emphasis in sensitising communities on how to prevent the disease on their own.

"We are going to sensitise the communities on how to control and prevent malaria through their Members of Parliament, cultural and religious leaders," he adds.

Malaria vaccine for children, according to Dr Kyabayinze, is currently undergoing trials in three African countries of Ghana, Kenya and Malawi. Once the trials are successful, the malaria vaccine will boost other malaria interventions currently being used in Uganda.

Ms Vivian Nakalika Serwanja, the Health ministry public relations officer, says government recently launched an initiative known as Mass Action against Malaria (MAAM) to complement the ongoing interventions in the fight against malaria.

"Under MAAM, the fight against the disease is taken to household level in order to highlight everyone's responsibility in eliminating malaria from Uganda by 2020," she says.

Other malaria interventions, according to Ms Serwanja, include indoor residual spraying, integrated case management for malaria and larval source management.

She advises the population to sleep under insecticide treated mosquito nets, clear bushes, bro-

ken containers and stagnant water, which are breeding sites for mosquitoes, especially during the rainy season, test and treat malaria within 24 hours of onset of symptom.

Renewed focus in Africa needed

The African region continues to bear 90 per cent of malaria cases and 91 per cent of malaria deaths worldwide.

Nigeria, the continent's most populous country, according to WHO, accounted for 27 per cent

of malaria cases and 24 per cent of malaria deaths globally in 2016.

Prospects for new interventions

Boosting investments in the development and deployment of a new generation of malaria tools is key to achieving the 2030 global malaria targets.

For vector control, new interventions that target outdoor biting mosquitoes are being explored.

New chemical formulations to mitigate the threat of insecticide resistance are under development, as are new strategies to improve the delivery of treated nets and indoor spraying.

Widening the elimination net

As highlighted in the most recent World malaria report, more countries are advancing towards elimination. In 2016, 44 countries had less than 10,000 cases of malaria compared to 37 countries in 2010.

Malaria free

Since 2010, six countries have been certified malaria-free. These include Armenia, Maldives, Morocco, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka and Turkmenistan and several others are inching closer to obtaining this status.

MALARIA CASES IN AFRICA

According to Uganda National Malaria Control Programme, the country has the third highest number of deaths caused by malaria and also the highest reported malaria transmission rate.

Every year, Uganda registers more than 100,000 malaria deaths and about 46 million cases diagnosed positive of the disease both in public and private health facilities.

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According to the latest World Malaria Report, released in November 2017, there were 216 million cases of malaria in 2016, up from 211 million cases in 2015. The estimated number of malaria deaths stood at 445,000 in 2016, a similar number to the previous year (446,000).