

Global technical strategy and targets for malaria 2016–2030

Report by the Director-General

1. In May 2015, the Sixty-eighth World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA68.2 on the global technical strategy for malaria 2016–2030. The strategy, with its associated milestones for 2020 and 2025, set ambitious but achievable goals to reduce malaria case incidence and mortality rates globally by at least 90% by 2030, to eliminate malaria transmission in at least 35 additional countries compared with 2015, and to prevent its re-establishment in countries that were free of malaria in 2015.
2. This update describes the progress made towards the 2020 milestones, incorporates lessons learned, and serves as a recommitment to meeting the burden reduction milestones for 2025.
3. After the first five years of implementation, the milestones for elimination and prevention of re-establishment were both achieved, with 10 countries achieving interruption of malaria transmission and no country that was malaria free in 2015 reporting transmission. However, progress in reducing malaria mortality and morbidity slowed, stalled or reversed in many moderate- and high-burden countries. Globally, malaria mortality was estimated to have decreased by 22% in 2020, and case incidence reduced by only 3% compared with 2015 baseline levels, falling far short of the 2020 milestones for morbidity and mortality reductions of at least 40%.
4. A consultative process engaging the WHO regional offices, partners and countries was launched in 2020, including two information sessions for Members States. The proposed areas of update were presented and discussed in an open virtual webinar attended by over 300 partners and country participants in January 2021. The input from those sessions, together with updated impact and costing analyses, were incorporated into the updated strategy,¹ which is due to be published in June 2021.
5. Despite a modest expansion in the availability of prevention measures as well as diagnosis and treatment options, not all those in need have appropriate access. Millions of cases and deaths go unregistered and unreported each year. No new transformative tools to fight malaria have reached the market, and the world continues to rely on moderately effective prevention tools, further threatened by the risk of parasite and insecticide resistance. In 2019, global funding for malaria totalled US\$ 3 billion, falling far short of the strategy's US\$ 5.6 billion target. While funding has remained stable, it has declined per capita population at risk.

¹ Draft WHO Global technical strategy for malaria (2016–2030) update. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021 (<https://www.who.int/teams/global-malaria-programme/global-technical-strategy-for-malaria-2016-2030#>, accessed 24 March 2021).

6. The COVID-19 pandemic has further impacted the delivery of malaria services and has highlighted the unexpected consequences of major disruptive events on global population health. It has also exposed the fragility of health systems across the globe. In malaria-endemic countries, the consequences of health service disruptions are likely to last for years as the ability of countries to recover is impaired by the economic devastation related to the pandemic. The updated strategy thus reflects the stalled progress and takes into account the impact and lessons learned from COVID-19.

7. The strategy has similarly been updated to align more closely with the priority of universal health coverage and the integration of essential health services. The guiding principles and the supporting elements have been updated to re-emphasize the need for sustainable, resilient health systems based on primary health care; the shifting of decision-making power to national programmes and subnational decision-makers; and the acceleration of research and development. The strategy relies upon the adoption and adaptation of the consolidated *WHO Guidelines for malaria*,¹ which contain evidence-based recommendations and promote a problem-solving approach. This approach moves away from the concept of core interventions, which leads to a one-size-fits-all approach, and calls instead for subnational data collection and analyses to define the most effective mix of interventions according to the local context.

8. The updated strategy provides a framework for the development of tailored programmes to accelerate progress towards malaria elimination. It does not back down from the ambitious targets set but rather recommits to the acceleration of programmes to achieve them. It defines a clear path for the next 10 years for malaria-endemic countries and their global partners. It emphasizes the need for access to malaria prevention, diagnosis and treatment as part of universal health coverage for all populations at risk, and highlights the importance of using high-quality surveillance data for decision-making to drive tailored responses consistent with national or subnational goals.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

9. The Health Assembly is invited to note the report.

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¹ WHO Guidelines for malaria. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021 (<https://www.who.int/teams/global-malaria-programme/guidelines-for-malaria>, accessed 24 February 2021).