



# World Malaria Day 2019

*Message from WHO Representative to India*

## A world free from malaria

As we mark this year's World Malaria Day on Thursday, 25 April 2019, World Health Organization (WHO) joins its partner organizations in promoting "Zero malaria starts with me", a grassroots campaign that aims to empower individuals and communities to protect themselves from malaria. The World Malaria Day was instituted by WHO Member States during the 2007 World Health Assembly. It is an occasion for WHO and global health partners to highlight the need for continued investment and sustained commitment for malaria control and elimination.

## Global scenario

The World Malaria Report 2018 estimates that there were 219 million cases and 435 000 deaths in 2017 globally. Nearly half of the world's population is at risk of malaria. In 2017, nearly 70% of all malaria cases and deaths were concentrated in 11 countries: 10 in Africa and India. Children aged under 5 years are the most vulnerable group and they accounted for 61% of all malaria deaths worldwide.

Malaria is preventable and curable, and increased efforts are reducing the malaria burden in many places. In May 2015, the World Health Assembly endorsed the Global Technical Strategy for Malaria Elimination 2016-2030, which lays down clear global goals, milestones and targets till 2030.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General has said, "Globally, the world has made incredible progress against malaria. But we are still too far from the end point we seek: a world free of malaria. The damage inflicted extends far beyond loss of life: malaria takes a heavy toll on health systems, sapping productivity and eroding economic growth."

## High Burden High Impact

In November 2018, WHO and the Roll Back Malaria partnership launched a new effort to get back on track for the Global Technical Strategy milestones: the High Burden High Impact (HBHI) approach. India is the only country, outside Africa, being provided special focus for accelerating malaria burden reduction and building capacities across various aspects of the malaria strategy. The new response is a flagship initiative of WHO.

## Country ownership key to success

Changing the trajectory of current malaria trends requires stepped-up and coordinated action by all stakeholders. However, progress can only be achieved through country-owned malaria responses.

According to Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia, "As the theme of this year's World Malaria Day - 'zero malaria starts with me' - underscores, to sustain our gains, accelerate progress and make full use of emerging innovations, we must ensure malaria remains a core political issue. Doing so is particularly important to overcome present funding gaps and mobilize additional resources to drive life-changing progress."

## Country scenario

India has the fourth highest malaria burden in the world. The good news is that the World Malaria Report 2018 has documented the remarkable decline in malaria cases and deaths in India. As per the report, 24% reduction in cases of malaria was recorded in 2017 compared to 2016. In 2018, there has been a 52% decline in cases compared to 2017. High endemic states of Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Meghalaya, which accounted for nearly 77% cases of malaria, have shown a sharp decline.

## Our commitment

India is accelerating progress towards the attainment of malaria free status by 2027 and eliminating the disease by 2030. WHO has assisted the government in the development of the National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination 2017-2022, which adopts a two-pronged strategy at the subnational (state) level: 1) to continue disease reduction in high burden states and 2) target malaria elimination in low endemic states.

The critical factors contributing to success will combine: reliable case-detection through robust surveillance; filling backlog of vacancies of multipurpose workers to strengthen surveillance; sustained investments for better case management through testing, treating and tracking. Ensuring early and rapid diagnostic tests in conjunction with universally available and accessible treatment services will be extremely important. Scaling-up prevention and control measures in addition to increased access to long lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) will also yield positive results.

## 'Zero malaria starts with me'

This World Malaria Day is an opportunity to synergize efforts to mobilize resources and action to beat malaria by covering the last mile to the most vulnerable people. It's time to act to end malaria—in our homes and communities, our countries and around the world. Join this fight to beat malaria.



**Henk Bekedam**

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