

WHO's World Malaria Report 2020

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In news

AS per WHO report India recorded largest reduction in malaria cases in South-East Asia between 2000-2019

Global perspective

- According to WHO's latest World malaria report, progress against malaria continues to plateau, particularly in high burden countries in Africa.
- In the WHO South-East Asia Region, malaria deaths reduced by 74 per cent, from about 35,000 in 2000 to 9,000 in 2019.
- Gaps in access to life-saving tools are undermining global efforts to curb the disease, and the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to set back the fight even further.
- In 2000, African leaders signed the landmark Abuja Declaration pledging to reduce malaria deaths on the continent by 50% over a 10-year period.
- Robust political commitment, together with innovations in new tools and a steep increase in funding, catalyzed an unprecedented period of success in global malaria control.
- According to the report, 1.5 billion malaria cases and 7.6 million deaths have been averted since 2000.
- The report states that, In 2019, the global tally of malaria cases was 229 million, an annual estimate that has remained virtually unchanged over the last 4 years. The disease claimed some 409 000 lives in 2019 compared to 411 000 in 2018.
- As in past years, the African Region shouldered more than 90% of the overall disease burden. Since 2000, the

region has reduced its malaria death toll by 44%, from an estimated 680 000 to 384 000 annually. However, progress has slowed in recent years, particularly in countries with a high burden of the disease.

- A funding shortfall at both the international and domestic levels poses a significant threat to future gains. In 2019, total funding reached US \$3 billion against a global target of \$5.6 billion.
- Funding shortages have led to critical gaps in access to proven malaria control tools.
- The WHO malaria report noted that the 11 highest burden countries – Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, India, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania – account for 70% of the global estimated case burden and 71% of global estimated deaths from malaria.

COVID-19 an added challenge

- In 2020, COVID-19 emerged as an additional challenge to the provision of essential health services worldwide.
- According to the report, most malaria prevention campaigns were able to move forward this year without major delays.
- Ensuring access to malaria prevention – such as insecticide-treated nets and preventive medicines for children – has supported the COVID-19 response strategy by reducing the number of malaria infections and, in turn, easing the strain on health systems.
- WHO worked swiftly to provide countries with guidance to adapt their responses and ensure the safe delivery of malaria services during the pandemic.
- However, WHO is concerned that even moderate disruptions in access to treatment could lead to a considerable loss of life.
- The report finds, for example, that a 10% disruption in access to effective antimalarial treatment in sub-

Saharan Africa could lead to 19 000 additional deaths.

- Disruptions of 25% and 50% in the region could result in an additional 46 000 and 100 000 deaths, respectively.

WHO response

A key strategy to reignite progress is the “High burden to high impact” (HBHI) response, catalyzed in 2018 by WHO and the RBM Partnership to End Malaria. The response is led by 11 countries – including 10 in sub-Saharan Africa – that account for approximately 70% of the world’s malaria burden.

Global technical strategy for malaria 2016-2030 (GTS)

- WHO’s work on malaria is guided by the Global technical strategy for malaria 2016-2030 (GTS), approved by the World Health Assembly in May 2015.
- The strategy includes four global targets for 2030, with milestones along the way to track progress. The 2030 targets are:
 1. reducing malaria case incidence by at least 90%
 2. reducing malaria mortality rates by at least 90%
 3. eliminating malaria in at least 35 countries; and
 4. preventing a resurgence of malaria in all countries that are malaria-free.

Key suggestions

- The WHO is calling on countries and global health partners to step up the fight against malaria, a preventable and treatable disease that continues to claim hundreds of thousands of lives each year.
- A better targeting of interventions, new tools and increased funding are needed to change the global trajectory of the disease and reach internationally-agreed targets.

India’s progress

- According to WHO report, India made impressive gains in

the global fight against malaria, recording the largest reduction in cases in South-East Asia from 20 million in 2000 to about 5.6 million last year

- India contributed to the largest drop in cases region-wide – from approximately 20 million to about 6 million
- The report noted the impressive gains made by India in the fight against malaria, with reductions in cases and deaths of 18% and 20%, respectively, over the last two years.
- As per the report, India also recorded a decrease in the number of deaths from malaria between 2000 and 2019.
- It states that, Malaria deaths in India declined from about 29,500 in 2000 to about 7,700 last year
- The report mentions that India accounted for 88 per cent of malaria cases and 86 percent of malaria deaths in the WHO South-East Asia Region in 2019 which is a cause of concern.