THE GLOBAL FUND

Thematic Report

State of the Fight: Malaria

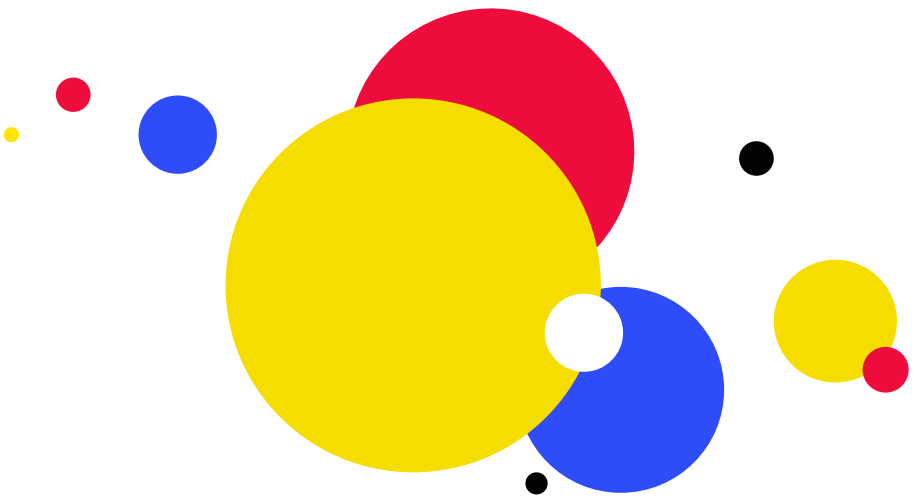
UNICEF/Mark Naftalin

The challenge

The fight against malaria is one of humanity's most significant public health successes. Great progress has been made in malaria control over the last two decades, resulting in a reduction in overall cases and deaths. But that progress stalled around 2018, and the COVID-19 pandemic has knocked us further off track.

Funding has plateaued, drug and insecticide resistance are increasing, and climate change threatens to push malaria transmission into new regions. Disruptions to malaria services caused by COVID-19 led to an increase in malaria deaths and cases. In 2021, there were 247 million cases of malaria and 619,000 deaths worldwide; compared to 2019, there were about 15 million more cases and 51,000 more deaths.

More than ever before, the Global Fund needs to support countries in their efforts to revitalize and sustain the fight against malaria. We must strive to provide better and more equitable access to all health services, vastly increase funding for malaria programs, invest in new approaches and innovations and improve use of existing tools. If we do not increase investment in fighting malaria, we must accept that we are effectively abandoning the 2030 goal to end the disease as a public health threat.



Malaria by the numbers

Funding

63%
of all international financing for malaria control programs is provided by the Global Fund.

US$16.4 billion
is the total amount invested by the Global Fund to support malaria control programs as of June 2022.

23%
is the average increase in funding since January 2021 for the Global Fund's malaria grants.

Prevention

133.3 million
insecticide-treated nets distributed to protect families from malaria in 2021.

10.1 million
structures covered by indoor residual spraying in 2021.

34 million
children covered by seasonal malaria chemoprevention in 2021.

12.5 million
pregnant women received preventive therapy for malaria in 2021.

Testing and treatment

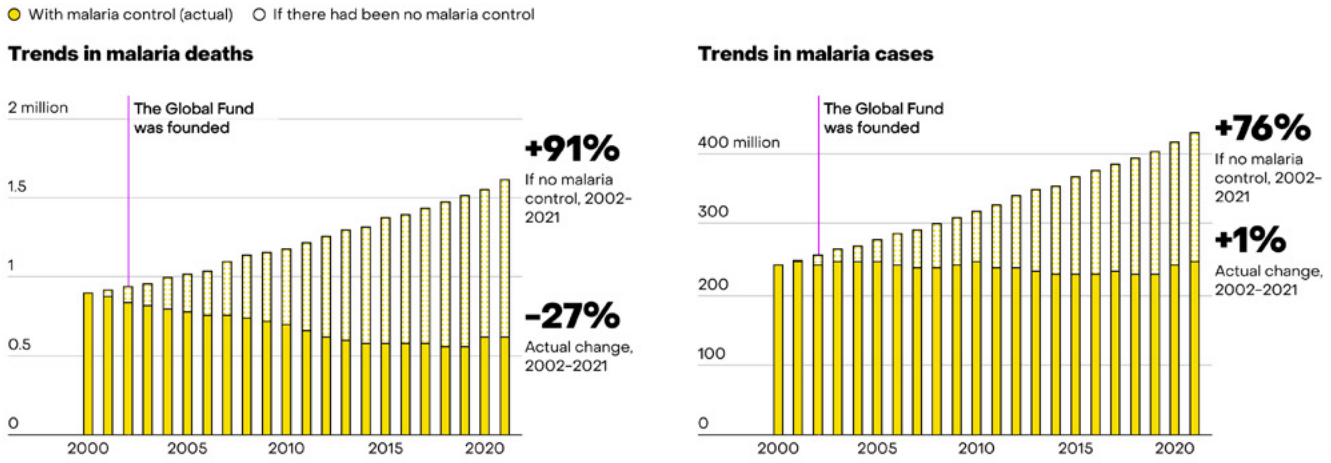
280 million
suspected cases of malaria tested in 2021.

148 million
cases of malaria treated in 2021.

Our response

The Global Fund provides 63% of all international financing for malaria programs and has invested more than US$16.4 billion in malaria control programs as of June 2022. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, thanks to the generous support of donors, the Global Fund awarded over US$4.2 billion to 108 low- and middle-income countries and 21 multicountry programs to fight COVID-19 and protect lifesaving malaria, HIV and TB programs.

These investments are making an impact. In countries where the Global Fund invests, malaria deaths have dropped by 26% since the Global Fund was founded in 2002. Without these interventions, malaria deaths would have increased by 84% over the same period.



Malaria burden estimates and estimation of "no malaria control" from WHO Global Malaria Program, 2022 release. Global Fund portfolio indicates countries where the Global Fund invests. Impact is assumed to be zero if the actual estimates exceed the counterfactual.

Timely testing and treatment of malaria is fundamental to preventing deaths.

The Global Fund works with partners to support the delivery of good quality, people-centered health services at public and private facilities and at the community level. Our partners also work with communities in malaria-endemic areas to provide information about what malaria is, how it is transmitted, how to prevent it, and, most importantly, what actions to take if malaria is suspected.

The more than 2 million community health workers in the countries where the Global Fund invests are a critical force in the fight to eliminate malaria, particularly in hard-to-reach rural villages. With the outbreak of COVID-19, community health workers – trusted members of the community – have been key in ensuring continued access to health care, especially for the differential diagnosis of fever and delivering appropriate health messages to the population.

Prevention

Malaria prevention underpins malaria control efforts and is the most effective way to dramatically reduce cases and deaths. The Global Fund invests in multiple new and existing tools to prevent malaria. These include insecticide-treated nets, indoor residual spraying, and seasonal malaria chemoprevention (SMC) for children under 5, all of which are most often distributed through large-scale campaigns.

The Global Fund and Unitaid are each investing US$33 million from 2018 through 2022, and the Global Fund will invest an additional US$50 million through the end of 2024, to support evidence gathering and market entry of new types of insecticide-treated nets to fight malaria-carrying mosquitoes. The nets are treated with two insecticides and can kill mosquitos that are resistant to one of the two insecticides. Children under 5, who are most vulnerable to illness and death from malaria, will experience the most direct health benefits.

Image: The Global Fund/Andrew Esiebo/Panos

In October 2021, WHO issued a recommendation on the use of the RTS,S malaria vaccine. Building on the existing clinical evidence, the Global Fund, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and Unitaid funded pilots of the introduction of the vaccine through routine immunization programs in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi. The pilots demonstrated a 30% reduction in severe malaria when introduced in areas with wide use of insecticide-treated nets and good access to malaria diagnosis and treatment.

Image: WHO Malawi

In the hardest-hit countries across the Sahel, the Global Fund supports the rollout of SMC campaigns, a cost-effective and targeted intervention for young children that can reduce malaria cases by more than 50%.

Despite the difficulties in implementation related to COVID-19, the countries we support increased the number of children covered through SMC in 2021 to a total of over 34 million, largely in West Africa, an increase of 7.8 million compared to 2020.

Image: The Global Fund/Olympia de Maismont

Successes in fighting drug-resistant malaria in the Greater Mekong region show that a well-funded joint effort works. The Regional Artemisinin-resistance Initiative (RAI) – the Global Fund's largest regional grant – was launched in 2013 in response to the emergence of drug-resistant malaria in the Greater Mekong region. The Global Fund is investing more than US$680 million through this initiative to accelerate malaria elimination as a bulwark against drug resistance. It is working: Malaria cases have dropped from 650,000 in 2012 to 82,000 in 2020.

Image: The Global Fund/Quinn Ryan Mattingly

About the Global Fund

The Global Fund invests more than US$4 billion a year to defeat HIV, TB and malaria and ensure a healthier, safer, equitable future for all. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have invested an additional US$4.4 billion to fight the new pandemic and reinforce systems for health. We unite the world to find solutions that have the most impact, and we take them to scale worldwide. It's working. Together, we have saved 50 million lives. We won't stop until the job is finished.

May 2023 | www.theglobalfund.org