

# Defeating malaria within reach



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Malaria claims 225 million cases every year worldwide, the vast majority of malaria-related deaths - 91 percent - occur in Africa  
Nairobi, 15 December 2010 (IRIN) - Over the past decade, malaria control programmes in Africa have resulted in 200,000 fewer deaths per year, down from 900,000 in 2000 to 709,000 in 2009, states the World Health Organization's [World Malaria Report 2010](#), released on 13 December 2010.

“We are saving 204,000 lives per year right now over the baseline in 2000. If we can achieve and sustain universal coverage in all countries, then the number of lives saved will be enormous,” Robert Newman, director of the Global Malaria Programme at WHO, told IRIN.

The number of estimated malaria cases globally in 2009 was 225 million and the vast majority of malaria-related deaths - 91 percent - occur in Africa, says WHO.

The report sees the strategic scale-up of malaria prevention and control as critical in the highest burden countries: Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tanzania experienced more than 40 percent of all malaria-related deaths in Africa.

The scale-up between 2008 and 2010, aimed at protecting 578 million people at risk in sub-Saharan Africa, included distributing long-lasting insecticide treated nets (LLINs), indoor residual spraying, universal diagnostic testing of suspected malaria and prompt treatment of confirmed cases with Artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT).

Household net ownership has reached more than 50 percent in 19 African countries, with more children under-five using one (35 percent) compared with previous years. An improvement from 5 percent in 2000 to 35 percent in 2009 in diagnostic testing and indoor residual spraying also protected 75 million people, or 10 percent of the population at risk in 2009.

## **Eradication success**

In 2010, 11 African countries witnessed a 50 percent reduction in confirmed malaria cases and

deaths over the decade, whereas in 32 out of 56 endemic countries outside Africa the decrease was even higher.

Morocco and Turkmenistan were certified by WHO as having eliminated malaria in 2009 and the European Region reported no cases of *Plasmodium falciparum* malaria for the first time.

However, experts say that while considerable progress has been made, coverage of interventions in African countries remains below the international targets for 2010.

Recent increases in funding for malaria control reached US\$1.8 billion in 2010, resulting in major scale-up of key interventions. WHO says the amounts committed to malaria still fall short of the resources required, estimated at more than \$6 billion for 2010.

“The greatest challenge facing Africa in the fight against malaria is maintaining political will and financial commitment. Malaria prevention and control works,” Newman told IRIN.

“If we can achieve and maintain universal coverage with vector control [LLIT or indoor residual spraying], diagnostic testing for suspected malaria cases, and treatment with Artemisinin-based combination therapies for confirmed cases - then we can not only reach international malaria targets by 2015, but also go a long way towards achieving the health-related Millennium Development Goals,” says Newman.