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# Malaria deaths decline by 66% in Zambia

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23 APRIL 2009 | GENEVA/BRAZZAVILLE - Malaria deaths reported from health facilities in Zambia have declined by 66%. This result along with other supporting data indicates that Zambia has reached the 2010 Roll Back Malaria target of a more than 50% reduction in malaria mortality compared to 2000. On World Malaria Day, celebrated on 25 April, Zambia's efforts will be promoted as a model for other countries to follow. Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, and Sao Tome and Principe are the other African countries who have achieved major reductions in malaria mortality through accelerated malaria control activities.

The decline in Zambia was especially steep after 3.6 million long-lasting insecticidal nets were distributed between 2006 and 2008. During this period malaria deaths declined 47% and nationwide surveys showed parasite prevalence declined 53% from 21.8% to 10.2% and the percentage of children with severe anaemia declined 68% from 13.3% to 4.3%. Most moderate and severe anaemia in children is caused by malaria.

"This is a remarkable achievement and a tribute to the hard work and commitment of the Ministry of Health of Zambia and its partners to combat malaria," said Dr Luís Gomes Sambo, WHO Regional Director for Africa. "As we celebrate World Malaria Day this week, I urge all countries affected by malaria to intensify and sustain malaria control and elimination efforts in order to meet the 2010 goal of 100% coverage."

WHO, with the support of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, has been collaborating with health ministries over the last two years to evaluate impact from accelerated malaria control activities.

### **Malaria control activities accelerated**

Accelerated malaria control activities started in Zambia in 2003 when approximately 500 000 insecticide-treated nets were distributed and artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT) started in seven pilot districts through a grant from the Global Fund.

Since then, the Ministry of Health of Zambia has further expanded malaria control activities with grants worth US\$ 120 million from the

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Global Fund and support from partners including the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), the Malaria Control and Evaluation Partnership in Africa (MACEPA) and the World Bank Booster Program for Malaria Control in Africa.

"The Global Fund is pleased to see proof that malaria control resources provided by the Ministry of Health, the Global Fund, and other partners are resulting in a dramatic reduction of preventable deaths," said Dr Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director of the Global Fund, which provides two thirds of all resources for malaria control worldwide. "Zambia stands as an example of what we can achieve throughout Africa through the combination of universal access to bednets and effective malaria medicines," he said.

### **Increasing coverage**

By 2006-2007, large amounts of insecticide-treated nets and ACT were distributed and indoor residual spraying was taking place in 15 of 72 districts in Zambia. During 2006 and 2007 insecticide-treated nets were distributed to the general population rather than only children and pregnant women, who were the primary beneficiaries in earlier campaigns.

Mr Kapembwa Simbao, Minister of Health for Zambia said the Government of Zambia is committed to increasing coverage of key malaria control interventions and reducing the burden of malaria throughout the country.

"We will endeavour to continue to build on progress made and ensure that malaria control is addressed as part of a health systems strengthening effort to ensure that ACTs will reach all persons with suspected malaria thereby ensuring universal coverage," he said.

In countries with moderate and low transmission malaria, it appears that the Roll Back Malaria target of a more than 75% reduction is within reach several years before 2015. Aggressive malaria control measures as in Zambia may enable African countries to make rapid progress towards the Millennium Development Goals target of reducing child mortality by two thirds by 2015.

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