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"Each year, more people are being reached with core malaria interventions, and as a result, more lives are being saved."

# Foreword



#### Dr Margaret Chan Director-General World Health Organization

The findings in this year's *World Malaria Report* demonstrate that the world is continuing to make impressive progress in reducing

malaria cases and deaths. Each year, more people are being reached with core malaria interventions, and as a result, more lives are being saved. The malaria target under Millennium Development Goal 6 has been met, and 55 countries are on track to reduce their malaria burden by 75%, in line with the World Health Assembly's target for 2015.

In 2013, we saw a major expansion in the use of diagnostic testing and the deployment of artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs). For the first time, more diagnostic tests were provided at public health facilities in Africa than ACTs distributed, indicating a prominent shift away from presumptive treatment. Major progress has been documented in vector control as well: in 2014, a record number of long-lasting insecticidal nets were delivered to endemic countries in Africa.

The report shows that malaria mortality rates decreased by an impressive 47% between 2000 and 2013 globally, and by 54% in the WHO African Region. It also reveals that these trends are accompanied by a gradual and substantial reduction in parasite prevalence rates across Africa. This means that every year, fewer people get infected or carry asymptomatic infections – a sign that malaria interventions have an even larger impact than previously thought.

These tremendous achievements are the result of improved tools, increased political commitment, the burgeoning of regional initiatives, and a major increase in international and domestic financing. WHO is grateful for the engagement and long-standing commitment of the global health community, and inspired by the growing desire to accelerate efforts towards malaria elimination.

But we must not be complacent. Most malaria-endemic countries are still far from achieving universal coverage with life-saving malaria interventions; many biological and systemic challenges threaten to slow us down.

Available funding is far less than what is required to protect everyone at risk. An estimated 278 million people in Africa still live in households without a single insecticide-treated bed net, and about 15 million pregnant women remain without access to preventive treatment for malaria. Malaria is still responsible for over 430000 child deaths in Africa every year. Emerging drug- and insecticide-resistance continues to pose a major threat, and if left unaddressed, could trigger an upsurge in deaths.

The Ebola outbreak has had a devastating impact on basic health service delivery in the most severely affected countries, including the ability to control malaria. In Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, the collapse of health systems has affected all core malaria interventions and is threatening to reverse recent gains. WHO is working closely with countries and partners to prevent a worsening of the malaria situation and reduce the pool of fever cases.

This Ebola outbreak is a global tragedy that is rewriting the history of public health. It has served as a wake-up call for governments and the global development community, urging a major global rethink about the importance of strengthening health systems and building resilience.

All global health efforts will benefit from a strengthening of health systems, including efforts to control and eliminate malaria. Such investments will help us close the coverage gap, strengthen disease surveillance and research, and support the development and roll-out of new tools and approaches. They will make malaria and other public health responses more effective and more sustainable.

Recent progress in reducing the human suffering caused by malaria has shown us that, with adequate investments and the right mix of strategies, we can indeed make remarkable strides against this complicated enemy. We should act with urgency and resolve, and remain focused on our shared goal: to create a world in which no one dies of malaria, a world entirely clear of this scourge.

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