

World Malaria Day 2021

The fight against malaria needs sustainable domestic funding and more meaningful engagement of malaria-affected communities

The declaration of malaria-affected communities and civil society

Long-term investment in the health sector is now recognised as one of the key drivers of economic development.¹ It is essential to keep humanity at the heart of development and to adopt a people-centred approach, particularly in the fight against diseases such as malaria. Despite the remarkable progress made over the past 20 years in the fight against this disease, malaria continues to kill several hundred thousand people each year. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that **409,000** people died of malaria in 2019. The vast majority (**94%**) of these people are on the African continent.²

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic added to the challenges faced in the world's fight against malaria at a critical time in our struggle. The pandemic and the actions required to mitigate its consequences are having a devastating impact on health systems, population health and the world economy. The prejudices caused by COVID-19 have dramatically increased the rate of stigmatization among the population, resulting in low attendance at health facilities even for uncomplicated malaria cases. It threatens the progress we have made fighting against malaria and undermines our efforts to defeat the disease, including by disrupting access to effective antimalarial treatment. By 2020, according to WHO, there could be **a potentially dramatic increase in the number of malaria deaths worldwide, with 382,000 more deaths than in 2018. Malaria deaths would return to near 2000 levels, undoing two decades of progress.**³ We know that communities, especially children and pregnant women, pay the highest price for this disease. Indeed, 67% of malaria deaths are among children aged under 5 years.

On World Malaria Day, 25 April 2021, we “**Civil Society for Malaria Elimination (CS4ME)**”⁴ carry the demands of malaria-affected communities and civil society and ask leaders to **implement stronger action to end malaria. There is an urgent need to:**

I. Increase the allocation of domestic funds for the fight against malaria: As well as increasing the government budget for health, including for the fight against malaria, it is important to mobilize the private sector its financial contribution to the fight against malaria. **In addition, it is essential that recipient states of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria meet their co-financing commitments to mobilise the resources needed to eliminate malaria.** Increased spending on health, and on malaria in particular, will allow a gradual shift away from international donor funding towards nationally funded health systems.

In addition, the engagement of the private sector would help to reduce gaps in the fight against malaria. The private sector can engage civil society and community-based organizations in case finding, surveying, rapid diagnostic testing, treatment of uncomplicated malaria cases, and referral of severe cases to health facilities.

¹ Ulmann, Philippe. " 5. La santé, facteur de croissance économique", Pierre-Louis Bras ed. in "Traité d'économie et de gestion de la santé". Presses de Sciences Po, 2009, pp. 53-61.

² World Health Organization (WHO), World Malaria Report 2020, 30 November 2020

³ Global Fund, Mitigating the impact of COVID-19 in countries affected by HIV, TB and malaria, June 2020

⁴ CS4ME is the first global platform of civil society organisations committed to malaria elimination, bringing together over 330 organisations from 48 countries in Africa and South East Asia.

2. Prioritise high impact and community-led interventions: It is now recognised that communities have the capacity to dramatically improve their health when they have the knowledge, tools, skills and technical support to implement sustainable, low-cost interventions.⁵ In order to end malaria, it is essential that community and civil society actors are supported and involved in a meaningful way at all levels:

- **In public decision-making and policy-making processes**, to enable communities to more effectively participate in and implement decisions that affect them.
- **In the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of malaria control and elimination activities**, including the deployment of high-quality tools and products for the fight against malaria.
- **In the capacity strengthening of civil society organizations** so that they can strategically represent and advocate on behalf of malaria-affected communities.

3. Promote a strong partnership between communities, civil society and state institutions: This requires the establishment of a relationship based on trust and recognition of the unique roles and complementarity of each actor. A strengthened partnership will make it possible to improve coordination and communication between these various actors, and to establish a culture of mutual accountability.

According to WHO, over the past 20 years, **twenty-one countries have managed to maintain zero malaria cases** for at least three consecutive years, and 10 of these countries have been certified malaria-free.⁶ These countries demonstrate the power of collective and collaborative action and lead the way for other countries in the fight against malaria. With the right political commitment and investment, the prospect of ending malaria once and for all is within reach.

⁵ World Health Organization (WHO), Framework for the design of integrated pilot community interventions to promote health and support WHO priority programmes, 2009.
<https://afrolib.afro.who.int/documents/2009/fr/CadreIntervention.pdf>

⁶ World Health Organization (WHO), World Malaria Report 2020, 30 November 2020