



One of the biggest challenges facing the priority malaria-endemic countries of the Region is the limited coverage and poor quality of diagnostic testing, treatment and surveillance systems, which are the pillars of the existing global strategy to fight malaria. 22 April, 2013 – This week, countries across the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region are celebrating World Malaria Day under the slogan of “Invest in the future. Defeat malaria”.

Malaria remains a big challenge for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, as more than 50% of the regional population lives in areas in which there is a risk of contracting malaria. Based on 2010 estimates, about 10.4 million people are affected by, and 15 000 people die of, malaria in the Region every year.

Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, urged stronger and improved efforts in the fight against malaria. “We need to focus our efforts in areas of greatest need and protect every person living in areas at risk of malaria with effective prevention tools”.

Malaria control efforts continue to be restrained by low political commitment, weak infrastructure and lack of national capacities.

Malaria is not just a problem for the Eastern Mediterranean Region alone; the disease continues to kill an estimated 660 000 people worldwide (range 490 000–836 000), mainly children under five years of age in sub-Saharan Africa. Every year, more than 200 million cases occur; most of these are never tested or registered.

The WHO Global Malaria Programme’s new initiative – T3: Test. Treat. Track. – supports

malaria-endemic countries in their efforts to achieve universal coverage with diagnostic testing and antimalarial treatment, as well as in strengthening their malaria surveillance systems. The initiative seeks to focus the attention of policy-makers and donors on the importance of adopting WHO's latest evidence-based recommendations on diagnostic testing, treatment and surveillance, and on updating existing malaria control and elimination strategies, as well as country-specific operational plans.

### Related link



[Video: World Malaria Day \[wmv\]](#)

[Address by Dr Ala Alwan Regional Director, WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region on the occasion of the national celebration of World Malaria Day, Islamabad, Pakistan, 26 April 2013](#)

[Message of Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, on the occasion of World Malaria Day 2013 | Arabic](#)

[Press release: The Eastern Mediterranean Region celebrates World Malaria Day with calls to invest in the future by defeating malaria](#)

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