



A team engages in insecticide residual spraying as a core interruption measure in response to the malaria outbreak in Burtinle, in Puntland, Somalia. Photo credit: WHO
25 April 2024, Mogadishu, Somalia – Somalia managed to reduce the prevalence rate of malaria from 20.1% in 2015 to 4.1% in 2023 in the most affected Somalia/A. Mukhtar areas by adopting an integrated disease response. The Federal Ministry of Health in Somalia led this work, with technical support from WHO and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and financial support from the Global Fund.

Applying prevention, interruption and supplementary measures, Somalia’s malaria programme reduced disease incidence to as low as 3.4% in 2022, as documented by the country’s National Malaria Control Programme. The slight increase in incidence in 2023, to 4%, was due to the impact of drought and floods in the country.

Marking World Malaria Day 2024, Dr Sagal Roble of the Federal Ministry of Health thanked the partners and donors for helping Somalia to achieve this tangible progress. She also urged the continued support of the partners to address the new strains of malaria emerging in the country and to sustain gains made in the fight against malaria across Somalia. Such an approach supports this year’s World Malaria Day theme of “Accelerating the fight against malaria for a more equitable world”.

During 2023, Somalia increasingly detected a new strain of the parasite *Plasmodium falciparum*, which is hard to detect with the usual rapid diagnostic test, as well as a new urban invasive vector for malaria, the mosquito *Anopheles stephensi*, in several districts.

A prolonged drought affected Somalia from 2022 to 2023, and the country has since been hit by heavy rainfalls due to the El Niño phenomenon. Such rapid changes to climate, including temperature, rainfall patterns and humidity, could easily lead to further geographic expansion of malaria transmission or new variation.

Somalia also has a large number of people on the move: nomadic communities, internally displaced people, and people entering from the neighbouring countries of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Yemen. This tends to increase the disease prevalence, including malaria, owing to contributing factors such as overcrowded environments, limited access to health care, and lack of awareness.

Dr Jamal Amran, WHO Somalia's focal person for malaria control, highlighted: "Detection of new malaria strains, compounded by persistent insecurity and health impacts of climate change, may exacerbate the malaria situation in the country."

Malaria directly endangers health and costs lives. The disease also continues the vicious cycle of inequity, as it disproportionately affects the most vulnerable groups, including pregnant women, children aged under 5 years, refugees, migrants and internally displaced people.

The WHO Country Office in Somalia, in partnership with UNICEF, continues to support the Federal Ministry of Health to implement Somalia's National Malaria Strategic Plan 2021–2026.

For more information, please contact:

Fouzia Bano, Communications Officer, WHO Somalia
Email: banof@who.int

Saeed Ahmed, Donor Reporting Officer, WHO Somalia
Email: saeahmed@who.int

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