



MEDIA STATEMENT

To: Editors & Health Journalists
Issued by: Department of Health
Date: Thursday, 05 November 2020

SADC MALARIA DAY 6 NOVEMBER 2020 COMMEMORATION

Pretoria: South Africa joins the Southern African Development Community to commemorate SADC Malaria Day, which will be observed on the 06 November 2020.

The 2019 World Malaria Report, released by the WHO, states that malaria cases decreased globally from an estimated 251 million in 2010, to 228 million in 2018, a decline of 9%. Most cases (213 million) in 2018 were estimated to have occurred in the WHO African Region (92%), followed by the WHO South-East Asia Region (3.4%) and the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region (2.1%).

In the SADC (Southern African Development Community) region, the WHO estimates that three-quarters of the population is at risk of contracting malaria, with 35 million of these being children under five years of age and approximately 8.5 million being pregnant women. The level of Malaria transmission varies from highly endemic to stable all year-round.

Whilst many parts of Africa have a high burden of malaria, some Southern African countries including South Africa report relatively lower transmission. South Africa has made steady progress in reducing malaria morbidity and mortality over the past decades. Malaria cases have decreased by 78% from 64,622 cases in the year 2000 compared to 13,833 cases in the year 2019, and malaria deaths have also decreased by 82%, from 459 to 79 deaths between 2000 and 2019.

South Africa is one of four countries in the SADC region targeting malaria elimination (zero local malaria transmission) by 2023. The key challenge that South Africa faces is a high number of imported cases from travellers and workers entering the country from neighbouring high burden malaria endemic countries.

The theme for SADC Malaria Day 2020 is, "Community Involvement is Key to Achieving Zero Malaria" and Slogan - "Together We Defeat Malaria."

The South African National Department of Health is therefore urging communities that are affected by malaria and travellers to malaria endemic areas to take the necessary precautions to prevent contracting the disease and seeking treatment when they experience signs and symptoms. Malaria is a preventable and curable disease - when detected early and treatment is started promptly.

It is therefore important to remind communities at risk and travellers to malaria endemic areas that:

1. Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected Anopheles mosquitoes, which generally bite at night.
2. Malaria is preventable, treatable and curable.
3. Everyone in malarious areas are at risk of contracting malaria, but there are some higher risk groups including, children under five years of age, pregnant women, people with compromised immune systems, travellers from non-endemic areas and immigrant workers.
4. If not diagnosed and treated within 24 hours, malaria can progress to severe illness and death.
5. Malaria symptoms appear within 10-15 days after the infective mosquito bite.
6. The symptoms include: fever, headache, chills and vomiting.
7. If persons suspect that they have malaria, they should immediately consult their health care provider to be tested and treated.
8. Early malaria diagnosis and treatment reduces disease severity and prevents deaths.
9. Travelers from non-endemic areas to malaria endemic areas and countries are vulnerable to the disease and need to take preventative measures.
10. Individuals are therefore advised to take personal protection methods when visiting malaria endemic areas within and outside South Africa.

For further information please refer to the DOH website for the prevention and treatment guidelines (<http://www.health.gov.za> to learn more about malaria).

For media queries, please contact:

Mr Popo Maja
National Health Department Spokesperson
Cell: 0725853219
E-mail: Popo.maja@health.gov.za