

Get malaria response 'back on track,' UN says, as progress stalls and funding flatlines

Marking World Malaria Day, the head of the United Nations health agency on Wednesday stressed the need to get the global response against the disease back on track while acknowledging progress that had helped avert millions of malaria deaths, especially among children, since 2000.

"The latest data from WHO [[World Health Organization](#)] show that the global malaria response is [at a crossroads](#)," the agency's Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said in his video message for the Day, explaining that the declining trend in malaria cases and deaths has stalled, and vital funding for malaria programmes has flatlined.

"If we continue along this path, we will lose the gains for which we have fought so hard," he added.

This year's theme of the Day is "Ready to Beat Malaria."

Although more and more countries have eliminated the disease, challenges remain.

In 2016, there were an estimated [216 million cases](#) of malaria in 91 countries, an increase of 5 million cases over 2015, and malaria deaths reached 445,000, a slight decrease from 446,000 in 2015 but still a significant number.

The UN health chief called on countries and the global health community to close the critical gaps in the malaria response, and urged all partners to unite around a common goal: accelerating the pace of progress.

"Together, we must ensure that no one is left behind in accessing life-saving services to prevent, diagnose and treat malaria," he said.

Key Facts

- Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes. It is preventable and curable.
- In 2016, there were an estimated 216 million cases of malaria in 91 countries, an increase of five million cases over 2015.
- Malaria deaths reached 445,000 in 2016, a similar number (446,000) to 2015.
- The WHO African Region carries a disproportionately high share of the global malaria burden. In 2016, the region was home to 90 per cent of malaria cases and 91 per cent of malaria deaths.
- Total funding for malaria control and elimination reached an estimated

\$2.7 billion in 2016. Contributions from governments of endemic countries amounted to \$800 million, representing 31 per cent of funding.