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GHANA HEALTH SERVICE
PRIVATE MAIL BAG
MINISTRIES
ACCRA. GHANA.

GPS Address: GA-143-4609

Tel: 662014

Fax: 666808

Email: dg@ghsmai.org

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

WORLD MALARIA DAY 2020

World Malaria Day (WMD) is commemorated every year on 25th April to recognize global efforts to control malaria. Globally, 3.3 billion people in 106 countries are at risk of malaria. Since 2008, this day has been commemorated with emphasis on various themes assigned by the Roll Back Malaria Partnership to End Malaria (RBM) & The World Health Organization (WHO). These themes have typically centered on global efforts and challenges in malaria. The World Malaria Day theme provides a common platform for countries to showcase their successes in malaria control and unify diverse initiatives in the changing global context.

1. The Theme for this year is “Zero Malaria Starts with Me “

The theme of World Malaria Day 2020 — Zero Malaria Starts with Me — is a movement dedicated to driving action and making change, and this starts with each and every one of us.

- In 2020, World Malaria Day highlights, recognizes and revitalizes the involvement of high-burden countries in Africa, Ghana inclusive, which collectively account for approximately 70% of the global malaria burden.

With the involvement and commitment of political decision-makers, the private sector, civil society, the academic community and the public, World Malaria Day 2020 rejuvenates malaria control and elimination efforts across the globe.

“Zero Malaria Starts with Me” was officially launched in Ghana last year by the First Lady, Mrs. Rebecca Akuffo Addo. In Ghana, we are working to build political will, ensure efficient use of existing resources, increase private sector support and boost media engagement in order to kick start the decade that will end malaria in Africa.

2. Marking our Progress

Over the years, Ghana has made considerable gains in the fight against malaria. Using the targets set in the National Strategic Plan (2014-2020) of reducing morbidity and mortality by 75% by 2020 with 2012 as baseline, the following represent some notable achievements:

- Malaria related deaths all ages, has reduced by 88% from 2,799 in 2012 to 333 by end of 2019
- In 2012, the country recorded 8 malaria deaths every day but this has reduced to 1 malaria death every day in 2019.
- Between 2012 and 2019, malaria related admissions (all ages), reduced by 8%
- Malaria parasite prevalence rate in children under five years reduced from 21 out of 100 children being positive in 2016 to 14 children out of 100 being positive in 2019 reduced. This represents a 32% reduction in malaria prevalence between 2016 and 2019.
- Since 2012, the proportion of OPD malaria cases, tested by microscopy or RDT, has steadily increased 40 out of 100 suspected cases being tested in 2012, to 94 out of 100 suspected cases being tested in 2019. So almost every suspected case seen at the health facilities are tested to confirm it is malaria before being treated.
- Millions of Ghanaians have been reached with effective life-saving tools such as long lasting insecticide treated Nets, Indoor Residual Spraying and Preventive antimalarials. Working together with funding and implementing partners, civil society organizations and communities has led to increased access to malaria prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

3. Malaria and COVID-19

Over the past few months, the world has been hit with the COVID-19 pandemic, including Ghana which reported its first two cases on 12th March 2020. Since then, the country has recorded 1,279 cases, with over 134 recoveries and 10 deaths as at the last update. This is an infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered SAR-COV-2. Until its outbreak in Wuhan China in December 2019, this strain of the virus was unknown. The COVID-19 pandemic as reported by WHO, is testing the resilience of our health systems; adding to the heavy toll malaria exacts on the population. Additionally, COVID-19 underscores the critical importance of having strong surveillance and health care systems to effectively address existing infectious disease like malaria.

Between January and March, 2020, of the 95% of 2,346,677 suspected malaria cases tested, 1,001,070 (21,201 -children under five years and 28,764 pregnant women) were confirmed positive for malaria. Furthermore, 42% of the 58,775 admissions due to malaria were among children under five years while malaria deaths between January and March 2020 stand at 54 (16 deaths of which occurred among children under five years).

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible to lose sight of the deadly malaria disease and the gains made over the years both individually and collectively to protect ourselves and risk reversing hard-won progress in the malaria fight. However, it is equally important to sustain the efforts made by the Ghana Health Service and its partners to advance efforts made to prevent, detect and treat malaria.

4. Stepping up the Fight/ Call to Action

Now more than ever, it is imperative that we actualize the theme of this year's World Malaria Day "Zero Malaria Starts with Me" and take action to ensure that we are protected from malaria and COVID-19. Just as we ought to wear masks, sanitize our hands, practice social distancing and wash our hands with soap under running water, so must we take charge of our own health and that of our families and practice the "precautionary measures of malaria":

- a. Sleep under an insecticide treated net
- b. Test to confirm malaria before you take any ACTs
- c. Pregnant women are to take all recommended doses of SP to keep themselves and unborn babies safe from malaria
- d. Comply with malaria treatment as prescribed

For further information, please call Eunice Mintah-Agyemang (0207224206) or Jacob Acquah Andoh 0240786263

Thank you.



DR. PATRICK KUMA -ABOAGYE
DIRECTOR GENERAL