There were 627,000 malaria-related deaths and 241 million malaria cases worldwide in 2020. Young children and pregnant women were by far the most frequent casualties of the mosquito-borne parasite that causes malaria.

Unitaid identifies, funds and nurtures innovations with the greatest potential to reduce the global burden of malaria, with a focus on those most vulnerable to infection. With more than US$330 million currently invested, Unitaid is working to develop and improve tools and strategies indispensable to ending the epidemic by 2030.

**MAJOR ADVANCES**

**PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM INFECTION:**

Unitaid introduced child formulations of key antimalarial drugs and provided critical evidence that seasonal delivery of these medicines is highly effective in averting infection and can be achieved at scale. Seasonal malaria chemoprevention has now been implemented in 13 countries in the Sahel region of Africa, reaching more than 33 million children in 2020 – a more than 33-fold increase from 2013.

**COMBATTING INSECTICIDE-RESISTANT MOSQUITOES:**

Next-generation indoor sprays effective against increasingly resistant mosquitoes have been added to the arsenal of malaria-fighting tools, thanks to Unitaid funding that revived this intervention that had been declining in efficacy. Unitaid is funding further work to advance new bed nets with additional protection against resistant mosquitoes.

**THE WORLD’S FIRST MALARIA VACCINE:**

The global health community welcomed the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation for the first-ever vaccine against malaria in 2021, based on evidence gathered through wide-scale pilots jointly funded by Unitaid and partners. The pilots have reached more than one million children with this new prevention method.

**IMPROVED DELIVERY OF PREVENTIVE TREATMENT DURING PREGNANCY:**

By working with community health workers to deliver antimalarial medicine to pregnant women where they live, Unitaid helped demonstrate a model that improved coverage of malaria preventive medicine in pregnancy by 2.5 to 5-fold in most settings. Community delivery of medicines was also critical to mitigating interruptions in antenatal care services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
Efforts against malaria have seen dwindling rates of return in recent years. These challenges were further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which contributed to a significant rise in malaria cases and deaths in 2020. Unitaid’s work over the past 15 years has optimized approaches and revitalized tools that were waning in efficacy.

Our current investments are supporting work to:

- Pilot new bed nets using a new class of insecticide that is effective against mosquitoes who have developed resistance to the long-used products
- Evaluate an innovative vector control strategy that aims to reduce the spread of malaria by administering a mosquito-killing medicine to humans and livestock
- Validate the use of new repellents, including slow-release spatial repellents that are easy to use and can ward off mosquitoes in diverse settings such as refugee camps
- Develop long-acting formulations of medicines to prevent malaria and stop transmission
- Optimize delivery models to enable antimalarial medicines to reach more children and provide protection for the first two years of life, when a child is at greatest risk from infection
- Increase supply and support local manufacturing of quality-assured medicines for preventive treatment for pregnant women, infants, and children
- Identify life-threatening childhood illness more quickly and easily by increasing access to pulse oximeters – small, portable devices that can detect low oxygen in the blood, a sign of serious illness
- Increase access to the screening and treatment tools to support the elimination of P. vivax malaria – a complex and persistent strain of relapsing malaria
- Provide evidence from Unitaid-funded projects and evaluations that is crucial in developing WHO guidance and advancing malaria control efforts worldwide

The innovative products and strategies demonstrated through Unitaid’s work enable partners like the Global Fund and the United States President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI) to scale up these tools and approaches globally.

This work is delivered in close collaboration with our partners and grantees, who include the Alliance for International Medical Action (ALIMA), Gavi, Innovative Vector Control Consortium (IVCC), ISGlobal, Jhpiego, Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV), MedinCell, PATH, Population Services International (PSI), The Global Fund, University of Notre Dame, University of Liverpool, the World Health Organization (WHO), and many additional partners who support implementation.

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Unitaid is a hosted partnership of the World Health Organization.