

# UNITAID AND

# MALARIA

There were **405,000 malaria-related deaths** and **228 million malaria cases in 2018**. Young children and pregnant women were by far the most frequent casualties of the mosquito-borne parasite. Unitaid is investing in new tools and strategies that the WHO's 2019 World Malaria Report deems indispensable to ending the epidemic by 2030.



## NEW IDEAS, NEW TOOLS

Unitaid identifies, funds and cultivates innovations with the greatest potential to reduce the global burden of malaria, then collaborates with partner organizations to ensure that they are widely introduced. Unitaid has been actively expanding its malaria portfolio, which has doubled in value since 2015. Future investments being explored include expanding integrated approaches, eliminating *Plasmodium vivax* malaria and increasing access to preventive treatments for infants.



## OUR PROJECTS

### PREVENTION

- **New insecticide treated nets (2018-2022):** One of the best ways to avoid malaria is to sleep under an insecticide-treated bed net. Co-financed with The Global Fund, and led by IVC, the US\$ 66 million **New Nets Project** is piloting bed nets treated with new insecticide formulations. The nets are designed to kill mosquitoes that have developed resistance to pyrethroids, a long-used insecticide.
- **Anti-parasitic drugs (2019-2023):** Studies suggest that mosquitoes may die sooner when they bite people or animals treated with ivermectin, potentially reducing the spread of malaria. The US\$ 25 million **BOHEMIA project** evaluates the impact of mass-drug administration of the drug in high malaria transmission areas. Led by the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal).
- **Innovative repellent (2019-2024):** Studies suggest that plastic sheets treated with slow-release insect repellents may drive mosquitoes away from houses and inhabited areas such as refugee camps. The US\$ 33.7 million **AEGIS project** led by the University of Notre Dame evaluates their effectiveness in reducing malaria incidence.
- **Long-acting technologies (2020-2024):** The **IMPACT project** led by MedinCell will develop long-acting injectable ivermectin to fight malaria transmission (US\$ 6.3 million). The **LONGEVITY project**, led by University of Liverpool, will develop long-acting versions of already available medicines to prevent malaria as well as latent TB and cure hepatitis C (US\$ 32 million). Both projects will aim to file for regulatory approval and set up the conditions for commercialization of long-acting products in most-affected countries.
- **Malaria prevention during pregnancy (2017-2022):** The US\$ 50 million project on **Transforming Intermittent Preventive Treatment for Optimal Pregnancy (TIPTOP)** implemented by Jhpiego aims to expand access to Intermittent preventive treatment in pregnancy (IPTp) through community-based platforms. So far, TIPTOP has already increased IPTp coverage in rural under-served communities across the four project countries, namely Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Mozambique and Nigeria.

- **Malaria vaccine (2017-2020):** Unitaid is contributing US\$ 9.6 million to the **World Health Organization's Malaria Vaccine Implementation Program (MVIP)**, a pilot implementation of the world's first malaria vaccine jointly funded by Gavi and The Global Fund. Vaccine implementation began in Malawi, Ghana and Kenya in 2019.

## TREATMENT

- **Quality assured and user-adopted formulations for severe malaria, IPTp and Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention (SMC) (2017-2020):** Our project with Medicines for Malaria Venture is increasing the number of quality- assured malaria medicines for severe malaria, IPTp and SMC globally, and with special focus on manufacturing in Africa. Currently, MMV is collaborating with three pharmaceutical companies based in Africa to support local manufacturing of sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine for IPTp.
- **Community access to quality assured rectal artesunate for malaria (2017-2020):** This project with Clinton Health Access Initiative aims to test and increase appropriate use of this pre-referral treatment for severe malaria at the community level. It aims to reduce malaria mortality among children by increasing access to quality-assured rectal artesunate (RAS). The project is being implemented in Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Uganda (US\$ 19 million).

## INTEGRATED APPROACHES

- **Identifying life-threatening illness (2019-2023):** Pulse oximeters are small, portable devices that can detect low oxygen in the blood, a sign of life-threatening illness. Unitaid is investing \$43.3 million in two projects to pilot the devices in primary care in low-income countries. Lead implementers are ALIMA, for the **AIRE project** and PATH, for the **TIMCI project**.



## MAJOR ADVANCES

In close collaboration with its partners, Unitaid has brought new solutions with the potential to accelerate malaria elimination at a global level.

The ACCESS-SMC project (2014-2018), led by Malaria Consortium, proved that large-scale administration of SMC is feasible and cost effective, with a strong public health impact. The intervention has been scaled up after project end protecting 19 million children in 12 countries in the Sahel in 2018 – a 19-fold increase on access levels in 2013. By 2022, SMC is expected to save more than 80,000 lives per year, helping to reduce child mortality from malaria by up to one third over current levels.

The NgenIRS project (2016- 2019) has ushered in affordable new-generation indoor sprays (IRS) to kill insecticide-resistant mosquitoes, reviving a key malaria-prevention tool that had been in decline. The project met price reduction targets for new IRS products, which has supported the increased demand for, and expanded use of, new-generation sprays across Africa.

The ISMO project (2013-2016) accelerated the adoption of quality-assured injectable artesunate in six countries, and to create a platform for wider scale-up. Today, the majority (80%) of malaria-endemic countries have adopted injectable artesunate as the preferred severe malaria treatment in their national guidelines. The project supported the development of one additional injectable artesunate product and two RAS products in collaboration with pharmaceutical manufacturers.

Unitaid's current main funders are France, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Norway, Chile, the Republic of Korea, Spain and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation  
Unitaid is a hosted partnership of the World Health Organization