

Eliminating the threat of malaria

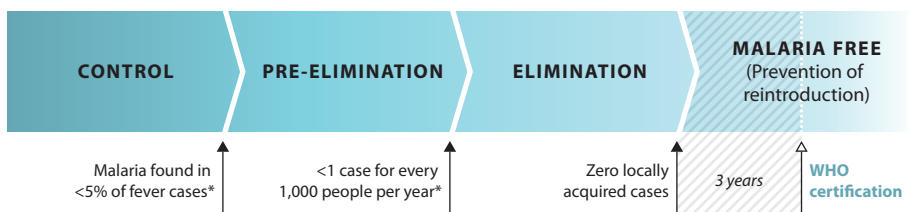
The Malaria Control and Evaluation Partnership in Africa (MACEPA), a program at PATH, is a leader in the fight against malaria, investing in national programs, refining existing tools and approaches and developing new ones, and building the data for decision-making that empowers national governments to pursue elimination.

MACEPA develops and documents approaches for reducing malaria illnesses and deaths, working toward the long-term goal of elimination. Malaria programs and tools are developed based on national experiences and then shared with country partners through trainings, meetings, and other shared learning platforms, ensuring broad uptake across Africa. MACEPA is a resource for both national governments and the Roll Back Malaria Partnership.

Strengthening malaria programs

In 2005, MACEPA began partnering with governments in sub-Saharan Africa to develop strategies and action plans to fight malaria. This initial effort focused on rapid, nationwide delivery of lifesaving tools like insecticide-treated bednets, indoor residual spraying of insecticides (IRS), new diagnostics, and effective medicines, while documenting progress and impact. The results were dramatic. Since 2000, child deaths dropped by 20 percent in countries that aggressively fought malaria. More than 300,000 child deaths from malaria were prevented in 2010 alone.

Figure 1. The malaria elimination continuum.



*Measures are indicative only.

Stepping up control, pushing toward elimination

Countries that have achieved major reductions in malaria illnesses and deaths have the potential to eliminate malaria altogether (see Figure 1). MACEPA is partnering with these African countries to develop an evidence-based, programmatic approach to eliminating the disease. Efforts must further drive down malaria infections through broad use of diagnostics and treatments, maintain high coverage of bednets and IRS, and use advanced surveillance methods to track and treat the remaining cases of the disease. Some countries are now pioneering the use of a three-step surveillance system to establish malaria-free zones—large areas where there is no malaria transmission at all.



Progress towards a malaria-free Zambia

Some countries that have reduced their malaria burden are implementing a three-step surveillance system to find and clear remaining pockets of infection. Using this approach, a rapid reporting system is first created to provide robust, timely malaria data. Next, malaria hotspots are visited by teams of health workers who test entire villages for malaria and treat positives cases, clearing parasites from the area. Once malaria burden is low, an active surveillance system is implemented to investigate any remaining infections, eventually bringing malaria transmission to zero.

Zambia is currently piloting all three steps of this system, with community health workers traveling to remote parts of the country to ensure that no case of malaria is left undetected. As malaria burden decreases, there is a visible effect on its communities: families are healthier and happier, health systems are able to focus on other illnesses, and people are missing fewer days from work and school. Zambia's goal is to permanently end malaria illnesses and deaths—and the country is making progress towards establishing five malaria-free zones by 2015.



Health care workers travel to a rural village to test families in all households for malaria.

Countries with strong data systems can better track malaria infections and prioritize program action while leveraging information about coverage gaps and impact to inform policymaking and secure continued funding. MACEPA is partnering with countries to strengthen these systems and build the evidence base for effective program planning and implementation.

Advocating to end malaria deaths

Working toward elimination requires continued political commitment, sustained and predictable financing, and a higher level of local ownership than ever before. We must continue to expand investments in the fight against malaria; failure to do so will result in a rapid reversal of progress and an immediate increase in illnesses and deaths. MACEPA is forging the evidence needed to inform global guidelines and mobilize the donor community and global partners to ensure long-term support for malaria control and elimination efforts. MACEPA advocates for evidence-based planning and policy development at all levels, and supports countries to embark on the pathway to elimination.

MACEPA is partnering with the global community to eliminate malaria in Africa.

An effective approach to ending malaria

Malaria is a devastating mosquito-borne disease that sickens millions of people and kills hundreds of thousands each year. Young children in sub-Saharan Africa face the greatest risk, but pregnant women, the elderly, and the chronically ill are also vulnerable.

In the last decade, remarkable progress has been made in the fight to control malaria. Major reductions in illness and death resulted from the expanded use of prevention and treatment tools. Now the world is striving for a more ambitious target—the end of malaria illness and deaths in Africa. Eliminating malaria is achievable, and the Malaria Control and Evaluation Partnership in Africa (MACEPA), a program at PATH, is charting the way forward for the global community.

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