



Media Release

Health Journalists and Editors

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SADC Health Ministers commemorate Malaria Day 2017, 10 November 2017

South Africa joins Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to commemorate SADC Malaria Day, which is observed on the 10th November 2017 in Giyani, Limpopo.

The key objectives of SADC malaria day commemoration is to highlight the plight of malaria among communities at risk and to advocate for support from key decision makers and stakeholders for malaria control efforts in the region.

This year's theme for SADC Malaria Day is "**Strong Cross border collaboration is key to Malaria Elimination**" and the slogan is "SADC Unite to End Malaria." SADC is calling for member states to strengthen cross border collaborations which is a key strategy for ensuring elimination of malaria.

In this regard, the South Africa is working with Mozambique and Swaziland, through the MOSASWA (Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland) Cross Border Malaria Initiative. The goal of the MOSASWA initiative is to accelerate the transition from pre-elimination to elimination of malaria in Swaziland and South-Africa, and accelerate from control to pre-elimination in southern Mozambique, so as to achieve zero local transmission in Swaziland, South Africa and Maputo province by 2020 and achieve pre-elimination status in southern Mozambique (Gaza and Inhambane provinces) by 2025.

The 2016 malaria data released by the World Health Organisation (WHO) states that globally 212 million cases of malaria occurred worldwide, with most of the cases being in the WHO African region (90%). Encouragingly, the incidence rate of malaria is estimated to have decreased by 41% globally between 2000 and 2015 and by 21% between 2010 and 2015.

In the SADC sub-region, the WHO estimates that three-quarters of the population is at risk of contracting malaria, with 35 million of these being children under five years of age and approximately 8.5 million being pregnant women. Malaria transmission varies considerably in the SADC region and spans a wide spectrum from highly endemic, stable, all year-round malaria in the north to a reduction of the disease in the furthest southern and eastern island countries. The burden of disease can range from zero to 20% of childhood deaths and in excess of 30% and 40% of outpatient visits and hospitalisations, respectively.

Whilst many parts of Africa have a high burden of malaria, some Southern African countries including South Africa have managed to bring the disease under control.

South Africa has made huge strides in reducing malaria morbidity and mortality over the past decade. Malaria cases have decreased by 91%: from 64,622 cases in the year 2000 compared to 5777 cases in the year 2016, and malaria deaths have also decreased by 89%, from 406 to 42 deaths between 2000 and 2016. However, in 2017 malaria cases in South Africa and rest of the Southern African region have increased due to several factors- which were exacerbated by favourable climatical conditions for transmission. The Department of Health is ensuring universal coverage of key interventions such as: Indoor Residual Spraying, effective case management and ensuring that health promotion messaging reach communities at risk of contracting the disease.

South Africa is one of four countries in the SADC region targeting malaria elimination (zero local malaria transmission). The key challenge that South Africa will face are imported cases from travelers and workers entering the country from neighbouring high burden malaria endemic countries.

It is important to remind communities at risk and travelers to malaria endemic areas to remember that **signs and symptoms** of malaria are: fever, severe headache, shivering, chills, sweating, weakness, body pains, vomiting, nausea, and diarrhoea. Should they encounter any of these symptoms whilst in or returning from a malaria affected area they should present themselves to a health facility for a malaria test.

Prevention is better than cure, hence the following **preventative measures** should be taken into account for travelers entering malaria endemic regions of the country (or travelling to other malaria affected countries): remain indoors between dusk and dawn as much as possible, use mosquito repellants containing DEET (Diethyltoluamide) for protection outdoors, use insecticidal sprays and coils to eliminate mosquitoes indoors and take malaria preventive medication (prophylaxis).

For further information please refer to the DOH website for the prevention and treatment guidelines (<http://www.doh.gov.za> to learn more about malaria).

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