The entire population of Sierra Leone is at high risk of malaria. The annual reported number of malaria cases in 2019 was 4,849,696 with 2,771 deaths.
Malaria

Sustaining Essential Health Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is putting an incredible strain on health systems across Africa. Health systems are required to maintain routine health services for other illnesses even as they handle the additional burden. In order to prevent widespread morbidity and mortality, it is of vital importance that we work to sustain the delivery of essential life-saving interventions during this difficult time including for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Adolescent and Child health, Neglected Tropical Diseases and malaria.

For Sierra Leone, we commend the Ministry of Health, in the decision to go ahead with the universal coverage campaign for LLINs, in accordance with the recent guidance and recommendations from WHO and the RBM Partnership to End Malaria. It is of particular note that this guidance was developed based upon the experiences of distributing LLINs in Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak. Based on WHO modeling, this decision, allied with sustained malaria case management through the health system will prevent a significant increase in malaria cases and deaths. Under the worst-case scenario, in which all ITN campaigns are suspended and there is a 75% reduction in access to effective antimalarial medicines, WHO estimate that there could be a 29.3% increase in malaria cases, and a 99.6% increase in malaria deaths in Sierra Leone. This scenario would represent a complete reversal in the substantial progress in malaria mortality reductions seen over the last 2 decades.

It is essential to ensure the continuity of malaria, RMNCAH and NTD services in 2021 as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our continent. This may include the implementation of any necessary catch-up activities and ensuring timely planning to account for potential delays in procurement and delivery. Any intervention must ensure the safety of communities and health workers given the ease of transmission of COVID-19.

Progress

Sierra Leone secured sufficient resources to achieve universal coverage of LLINs, RDTs and ACTs in 2021 and has distributed sufficient LLINs to achieve 100% operational coverage of the targeted at risk population. The country has carried out insecticide resistance monitoring since 2015 and has reported the results to WHO, and has recently finalised the insecticide resistance monitoring and management plan. Sierra Leone has launched the Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign.

In line with the legacy agenda of the ALMA chair, His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta, Sierra Leone has significantly enhanced the tracking and accountability mechanisms for malaria with the development of a Malaria Control and Elimination Scorecard, although the scorecard has not yet been posted to the ALMA Scorecard Knowledge Hub.

Impact

The annual reported number of malaria cases in 2019 was 4,849,696 with 2,771 deaths.

Key Challenge

- Sustaining the delivery of essential life-saving interventions during the COVID-19 pandemic including for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Adolescent and Child health, malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases.
### RMNCAH and NTDs

**Progress**
Sierra Leone has achieved high coverage of the tracer RMNCAH intervention of DPT3 and has recently increased coverage of ARTs in the total population and skilled birth attendants. The country enhanced the tracking and accountability mechanisms with the development of the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Scorecard.

Progress in addressing Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) in Sierra Leone is measured using a composite index calculated from preventive chemotherapy coverage achieved for lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis, and soil transmitted helminths. Preventive chemotherapy coverage in Sierra Leone is good for schistosomiasis (84%), for lymphatic filariasis (76%) and onchocerciasis (76%) and below WHO targets for soil transmitted helminths (58%). Overall, the NTD preventive chemotherapy coverage index for Sierra Leone in 2019 is 73, which represents a very substantial increase compared with the 2018 index value (14).

### Previous Key Recommended Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Action Item</th>
<th>Suggested completion timeframe</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Comments - key activities/accomplishments since last quarterly report</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Ensure that malaria services including case management and vector control are sustained and implemented whilst using COVID-19 sensitive guidelines during the pandemic</td>
<td>Q4 2020</td>
<td>Sierra Leone has completed the LLIN universal coverage campaign and has worked to sustain case management during the COVID-19 pandemic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMNCAH: Impact</td>
<td>Ensure that essential RMNCAH services are sustained and implemented whilst using Covid-19 sensitive guidelines during the pandemic. Address any stock-outs of essential RMNCAH commodities</td>
<td>Q4 2020</td>
<td>Training of health workers on continuity of essential services in the context of COIVID-19 has been conducted for health workers. Mother Support Groups from different districts have been trained on maternal, infant and young child feeding in the context of COVID-19. Health workers in Primary Health care facilities have been supervised and mentored on Integrated Case Management of Newborn and Childhood Illnesses (IMNCI) skills. Special Care Baby Units remained fully functional.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTDs</td>
<td>Ensure that NTD interventions including Mass Drug Administration, vector control and Morbidity Management and Disability Prevention are sustained and implemented whilst using Covid-19 sensitive guidelines during the pandemic. This includes prioritising key necessary catch up activities</td>
<td>Q4 2021</td>
<td>Deliverable not yet due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sierra Leone has responded positively to the RMNCAH recommended action addressing low coverage of ARTs in children, and continues to track progress as this action is implemented, with increases in coverage recently observed.

**Key**
- Action achieved
- Some progress
- No progress
- Deliverable not yet due

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1 RMNCAH metrics, recommended actions and response tracked through WHO