Malaria is present in the three northern provinces of South Africa bordering Mozambique and Eswatini. The annual reported number of malaria cases in 2019 was 13,833 with 79 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 of COVID-19. 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, Child and Adolescent health, Neglected Tropical Diseases and malaria.

WHO underlines the critical importance of sustaining efforts to prevent, detect and treat malaria during the COVID-19 pandemic. The country is congratulated for rolling out IRS in a timely manner. Without this IRS, coupled with the need to sustain essential health services including malaria case management, there could have been an increase in malaria cases and deaths. Under the worst-case scenario, in which there is a 75% reduction in access to effective antimalarial medicines, WHO estimate that there could be a 20.6% increase in malaria cases, and a 135% increase in malaria deaths in South Africa. 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
South Africa secured sufficient resources for the insecticides required for IRS in 2021 and enough RDTs and ACTs. WHO has identified South Africa as being a country with the potential to eliminate local transmission of malaria by 2025. The country has finalised the insecticide resistance monitoring and management plan and has reported insecticide resistance data to WHO.

In line with the legacy agenda of the ALMA chair, His Excellency President Uhurru Kenyatta, South Africa has enhanced the tracking and accountability mechanisms for malaria with the development of the Malaria Elimination Scorecard, although it is not yet shared on the ALMA Scorecard Knowledge Hub. The country is also planning to launch and End Malaria and NTD Council and Fund in quarter 2 2021.

Impact
The annual reported number of malaria cases in 2019 was 13,833 with 79 deaths.

Key Challenges
- Risk of re-introduction of malaria from neighbouring countries.
- There is a need to strengthen cross border collaboration with neighbouring countries.
- 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
The country has made significant progress in scaling-up the tracer RMNCAH interventions of skilled birth attendants and postnatal care.

Progress in addressing Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) in South Africa is shown using a composite index calculated from preventive chemotherapy coverage achieved for schistosomiasis and soil transmitted helminths. Preventive chemotherapy coverage in South Africa is very low for soil transmitted helminths (14%) and for schistosomiasis (0%). Overall, the NTD preventive chemotherapy coverage index for South Africa in 2019 is 1, which represents a slight decrease compared with the 2018 index value (2).

Previous 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NTDs</td>
<td>Identify the reasons for the decrease in Preventive Chemotherapy (PC) coverage of Soil Transmitted Helminths (STH) and the continued low coverage of PC for Schistosomiasis, and work to enhance coverage to reach the WHO targets</td>
<td>Q4 2020</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>South Africa is still in the process of initiating implementation of PC for schistosomiasis. The plan was to call all stakeholders into a workshop for supply chain management, data management, investment case and stakeholder coordination. However, Covid-19 emerged and resources were diverted to fighting the pandemic</td>
</tr>
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<td>Objective</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMNCAH(^1): 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></td>
<td>RMNCAH services, especially preventive and promotive services which are provided at clinics and community health centres, have been disrupted by the Covid-19 lockdown especially in April. All Primary Health Care services should now be providing all essential services, and each of the nine provinces has been requested to ensure that catch-up plans for RMNCAH as well as HIV/TB services are in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTDs</td>
<td>Finalise the baseline data to inform the implementation plan and complete the development of the NTD Master Plan and Investment Case to support buy-in from the provinces whilst continuing to follow up on drug approval for Schistosomiasis. 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>

**Key**
- Green: Action achieved
- Yellow: Some progress
- Red: No progress
- Gray: Deliverable not yet due

\(^1\) RMNCAH metrics, recommended actions and response tracked through WHO