Malaria is endemic in all parts of Malawi. The annual reported number of malaria cases in 2019 was 5,199,154 with 2,341 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 Malawi, it will be of vital importance to ensure that the planning for the universal coverage campaign for long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) campaign scheduled for 2021 and the indoor residual spraying campaign go ahead, whilst taking into account physical distancing, in accordance with the recent guidance and recommendations from WHO and the RBM Partnership to End Malaria. Without this campaign, coupled with the need to also sustain essential health services including malaria case management, it is estimated by WHO that there will be 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 17.1% increase in malaria cases, and a 95.7% increase in malaria deaths in Malawi. 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

Malawi secured sufficient resources to finance the ACTs, RDTs and LLINs required for 2021. Sufficient LLINs have been procured to achieve 100% operational coverage of the targeted at risk population. Malawi has scaled up iCCM. Malawi has carried out insecticide resistance monitoring since 2015 and has reported the results to WHO. The country has also developed an insecticide resistance monitoring and management plan. Malawi has recently launched the Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign.

In line with the legacy agenda of the ALMA chair, His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta, Malawi has significantly enhanced the tracking and accountability mechanisms for malaria with the development of the Malaria Control Scorecard and is planning to post the scorecard to the ALMA Scorecard Knowledge Hub.

Impact

The annual reported number of malaria cases in 2019 was 5,199,154 with 2,341 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.
Previous Key Recommended Action

<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>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></td>
<td>Malawi has adequate stocks of ACTs and RDTs. The country is planning for the IRS and LLIN campaigns in 2021 including for PPE and COVID-19 safe distribution. The malaria testing and treatment guidelines now recommend testing of all Covid-19 suspects for malaria to avoid missing out malaria patients. PPE is available for health workers providing care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RMNCAH and NTDs

Progress

High coverage has been obtained for the tracer RMNCAH interventions, skilled birth attendants and exclusive breastfeeding. The country has recently increased coverage of ARTs in the total population. Malawi has significantly enhanced the tracking and accountability mechanisms with the development and launch of the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Scorecard.

Progress in addressing Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) in Malawi is measured using a composite index calculated from preventive chemotherapy coverage achieved for lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis, soil transmitted helminths and trachoma. Preventive Coverage in Malawi is high for lymphatic filariasis (100%), trachoma (100%), schistosomiasis (94%), onchocerciasis (87%) and good for soil transmitted helminths (74%). Overall, the NTD preventive chemotherapy coverage index for Malawi in 2019 is 90, which represents a very substantial increase compared with the 2018 index value (22).

The country is commended for reducing Trachoma prevalence to less than 5%, and beginning the trachoma elimination dossier. Malawi has significantly enhanced the tracking and accountability mechanisms with the development and launch of the NTD Scorecard.
<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>RMNCAH¹ 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>Malawi has disseminated nationwide guidelines on sustaining essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic. PPEs have been distributed to health staff. The country, with support from partners, procured essential equipment, supplies and drugs. A national wide Emergency Obstetric and Newborn care (EmONC) supportive supervision was conducted in all tertiary and district facilities and health centres. The aim was to identify best practices and challenges that are encountered during implementation of MNCH services during COVID-19 Pandemic. The common challenges included inadequate equipment, incomplete assessment of newborns and mothers. Essential equipment, supplies and drugs were distributed to all hospitals. Rapid Response teams have been trained in Prevention of Sexual Violence and Exploitation and Abuse. Bi-weekly meetings of the SRHR sub-cluster are held</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></td>
<td>By respecting COVID-19 preventive measures, the country managed to resume key NTD interventions including Lymphatic Filariasis, Onchocerciasis and Schistosomiasis MDA preparation training and mapping and those MDAs were conducted in December 2020 for Schistosomiasis and in January 2021 for Onchocerciasis. The Onchocerciasis transmission assessment was completed; Conducting Trypanosomiasis case detection and a study on drugs to determine the replacement of those which were being used. With ALMA support, the country organized a refresher training of the central level on the use of NTD scorecard and also conducted the NTD scorecard indicator review to align it with the new country priorities. The country is also working on the new NTD Master plan for 2021-2025 and already completed the step of indicators. The country continues to maintain NTD interventions while respecting COVID-19 preventive measures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key**

¹ RMNCAH metrics, recommended actions and response tracked through WHO