In São Tomé and Príncipe, the annual reported number of malaria cases in 2020 was 1,944 with zero deaths.
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, Child and Adolescent health, Neglected Tropical Diseases and malaria.

For São Tomé and Príncipe, it was of vital importance that the indoor residual spraying (IRS) campaign went ahead, whilst taking into account physical distancing, in accordance with the guidance and recommendations from WHO. The country is commended on rolling out the IRS campaign as planned. Without this IRS, coupled with the need to sustain essential health services including malaria case management, there will be an increase in malaria cases and deaths.

WHO estimates that there were an additional 47,000 malaria deaths globally in 2020 due to service disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to an estimated 7.5% increase in deaths.

It is essential to ensure the continuity of malaria, RMNCAH and NTD services in 2022 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.

The country has been affected by the continent-wide restriction of access to COVID-19 vaccines, but have covered 29% of their population by the end of 2021.

Malaria

Progress
São Tomé and Príncipe secured sufficient resources to finance the ACTs, and LLINs/IRS required for 2021. The country has carried out insecticide resistance monitoring since 2015 and has reported the results to WHO and has recently completed the insecticide resistance monitoring and management plan. The country has decreased the estimated malaria mortality rate by more than 40% since 2010.

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

Impact
The annual reported number of malaria cases in 2020 was 1,944 with zero deaths.

Key Challenges
- Malaria upsurges observed.
- 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.
The country has responded positively to the recommended action addressing iCCM scale-up.

RMNCAH and NTDs

Progress
São Tomé and Príncipe has achieved high coverage in the tracer RMNCAH interventions DPT3 vaccination coverage, skilled birth attendants and exclusive breastfeeding and postnatal care.

Progress in addressing Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) in Sao Tomé and Principe is measured using a composite index calculated from preventive chemotherapy coverage achieved for lymphatic filariasis, schistosomiasis, and soil transmitted helminths. In 2020, preventive chemotherapy coverage was 72% for lymphatic filariasis, 60% for soil-transmitted helminths and 0% for schistosomiasis. Overall, the NTD preventive chemotherapy coverage index for Sao Tomé and Principe in 2020 is 8, which represents a very substantial decrease compared with the 2019 index value (66).

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>
</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</td>
<td>Q4 2020</td>
<td></td>
<td>The country reports there have been interruptions to routine immunization and there are verified stockouts of BCG and yellow fever vaccines. The surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases has also had disruptions, as surveillance focal points are dedicating much of their time to COVID-19. The country has adopted a framework to guide the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 RMNCAH metrics, recommended actions and response tracked through WHO
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NTDs</td>
<td>Recognising the negative impact of COVID-19 on the 2020 MDA coverage, ensure that NTD interventions including MDAs, vector control and Morbidity Management and Disability Prevention are sustained and implemented whilst using Covid-19 sensitive guidelines during the pandemic. This includes prioritizing key necessary catch up activities</td>
<td>Q4 2022</td>
<td>No progress reported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

São Tomé and Príncipe has responded positively to the RMNCAH recommended actions addressing the lack of data for ARTs and continues to track progress as these actions are implemented.

**Key**

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