The annual reported number of malaria cases in 2020 was 75,756 with 3 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 lifesaving interventions during this difficult time including for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent health and malaria.

For Eritrea, it was of vital importance to ensure that the universal coverage campaign for long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) in 2020 and the Indoor Residual Spraying Campaign scheduled for 2021 went ahead, whilst taking into account physical distancing, in accordance with the guidance and recommendations from WHO and the RBM Partnership to End Malaria. Additionally, it is of vital importance that case management of malaria and other diseases is maintained through the health service during this difficult time. Without the LLIN campaign, coupled with the need to sustain essential health services including malaria case management, WHO estimate that there could be a 6.9% increase in malaria cases, and a 19.8% increase in malaria deaths in Eritrea. This scenario would represent a complete reversal in the substantial progress in malaria mortality reductions seen over the last 2 decades. 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.

Given the difficulties in securing essential health commodities in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is of vital importance that countries sign, ratify and deposit the African Medicines Agency (AMA) instrument with the AUC in order to improve access to quality, safe and efficacious medical products in Africa. The country is encouraged to do this.

The country has been affected by the continent-wide restriction of access to COVID-19 vaccines. The country, working with partners, should invest in education and behaviour change communication to increase the uptake of COVID vaccines and therapeutics.

Malaria Progress

Eritrea secured sufficient financing to maintain universal coverage of key anti-malarial interventions in 2022. The country has scaled up implementation of iCCM. Eritrea has recently increased coverage of vector control with 100% operational coverage of the targeted at risk population. Eritrea has recently reported the results of the insecticide resistance monitoring to WHO and has completed the national insecticide resistance monitoring and management plan. Eritrea has carried out drug resistance testing since 2018 and has reported the results to WHO. The national strategic plan includes activities targeting refugees.

In line with the legacy agenda of the ALMA chair, His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta, Eritrea has enhanced the tracking and accountability mechanisms for malaria
with the development of the Malaria Control Scorecard, however this scorecard is not yet publicly shared on the ALMA Scorecard Hub.

**Impact**
The annual reported number of malaria cases in 2020 was 75,756 with 3 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 NTDs.

**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>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 2022</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>The country has completed the universal coverage campaign, with nearly 2 million PBO nets distributed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**New Key Recommended Action**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Action Item</th>
<th>Suggested completion timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Sign, ratify and deposit the AMA instrument at the AUC</td>
<td>Q1 2023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RMNCAH and NTDs**

**Progress**

Eritrea has achieved good coverage of the tracer RMNCAH intervention of DPT3.

Progress in addressing Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) in Eritrea is measured using a composite index calculated from preventive chemotherapy coverage achieved for lymphatic filariasis, schistosomiasis, and trachoma. In 2020, preventive chemotherapy coverage was 72% for trachoma, 51% for lymphatic filariasis and 8% for schistosomiasis. Overall, the NTD preventive chemotherapy coverage index for Eritrea in 2020 is 31, which represents a decrease compared with the 2019 index value (57).
<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>No progress reported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<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>Deliverable not yet due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eritrea has responded positively to the RMNCAH recommended actions addressing low coverage of ARTs in children under 14 years of age (with a recent 5% increase in coverage), as well as lack of data on vitamin A coverage. The country continues to track progress as these actions are implemented.

**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