

Malaria—Protecting Mothers and Children



Photo by: Alisha Horowitz

Pregnant women at the Vavetenina clinic in Madagascar hold insecticide-treated bed nets they received at their first antenatal care appointments.

Malaria, an infectious disease transmitted by mosquitoes, is one of the most serious public health problems globally. Every year, there are 350–500 million cases of malaria worldwide and at least 1 million deaths; 90% of these cases occur in Africa.

Pregnant women and their newborn children are particularly vulnerable to the disease. Malaria in pregnancy contributes to severe maternal anemia, low birth weight and impaired child development. Each year, approximately 50 million women living in malaria-endemic countries throughout the world become pregnant. In Africa, around 10,000 of these women and 200,000 of their infants die as a result of malaria infection during pregnancy.

What Is Jhpiego Doing?

In response to this health crisis, Jhpiego's work in malaria focuses on effective, low-cost interventions to prevent malaria in pregnancy and manage the disease in women who become sick.

To this end, Jhpiego follows the World Health Organization (WHO) three-pronged approach:

- In areas of stable transmission, at least two doses of intermittent preventive treatment in pregnancy (IPTp) with an effective anti-malarial medication, currently sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine
- Promotion and use of insecticide-treated bed nets
- Prompt diagnosis and case management for pregnant women with malaria illness

Because studies have shown that women attending focused antenatal care (FANC)* have a much greater likelihood of remaining free of malaria and delivering a healthy baby, Jhpiego has pioneered the implementation of FANC services throughout Africa. This approach ensures that pregnant women receive the care they need for the prevention and control of malaria in pregnancy, along with other comprehensive health interventions. Community outreach is an essential element to Jhpiego's programs to ensure that women are linked with antenatal care services.

* Focused antenatal care emphasizes the quality of individualized care rather than quantity of visits. WHO recommends four antenatal visits for women experiencing normal pregnancies. Focused antenatal care includes: identification of pre-existing health conditions; early detection of complications arising during pregnancy; health promotion and disease prevention; and birth preparedness and complication readiness.

Jhpiego is also working to help develop and implement effective policies for promoting artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT) regimens as the first line of treatment against malaria infection—targeting children under five years of age, adults and pregnant women in their second and third trimesters. Jhpiego’s efforts have focused on ensuring the effective diagnosis and treatment for these groups.

Research to Practice

Jhpiego uses innovative approaches to put research into practice and applies creative solutions to improve the health of women and families throughout the world. With a goal to scale up and sustain effective malaria prevention and control programs, Jhpiego works with front-line health workers to strengthen their ability to deliver effective health care services. Jhpiego also works to strengthen the country’s health care delivery systems by fostering linkages between the communities and medical facilities, ensuring that a strong continuum of care exists throughout the system.

For nearly 10 years, Jhpiego has provided the following technical support to partnering countries:

- Revising and disseminating malaria policies
- Developing national standards and guidelines
- Developing training and supervision materials
- Strengthening pre-service education and in-service training
- Improving community awareness
- Improving services through quality improvement processes
- Establishing monitoring and evaluation systems

Jhpiego was among the first development partners to support the President's Malaria Initiative, and has since expanded its work under this initiative into several countries.

Through participation in strategic partnerships, Jhpiego has extended its ability to make an impact on malaria globally. Jhpiego participates as a technical representative in the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Malaria in Pregnancy Working Group. Jhpiego also helped to launch two regional coalitions, the Malaria in Pregnancy East and Southern Africa Coalition, as well as the West African Regional Coalition for Malaria in Pregnancy—both of which promote South-to-South cooperation and technical assistance. In addition, Jhpiego actively participates in the RBM regional networks for malaria. These global and regional efforts accelerate the prevention and control of malaria through the dissemination of best practices and development of global resources and regional capacity, as well as the provision of evidence-based technical guidance to country programs.

Additional Resources

Prevention and Control of Malaria in Pregnancy in the Africa Region: A Program Implementation Guide. This guide details a step-by-step process for implementing programs for malaria in pregnancy, targeting policymakers, program managers and health care providers.

Malaria in Pregnancy Resource Package (available on CD). The updated Malaria Resource Package is a compilation of tools and resources for countries to adapt to their context as they work toward the prevention and control of malaria in pregnancy.

Malaria Case Management Orientation Package for Service Providers This package is targeted to the front-line provider with information from Kenya’s national malaria policy guidelines about treatment of malaria using ACTs.

For more information on Jhpiego’s malaria programs and resources, visit: www.jhpiego.org/whatwedo/malaria.htm