

Mosquito net campaign is back

As we continue to invest hard towards a middle-income status country, health challenges keep pulling our efforts down the drainage.

One of the biggest health burdens that the country faces comes from a very preventable disease – malaria.

The last Malaria Indicator Survey done in 2024 showed the national malaria prevalence at

12.2%, still far away from the elimination target of zero malaria cases by 2035.

One of the gains to protect in the new era; the Government has heavily invested resources in a number of interventions to drive us towards a malaria-free Uganda. There is continuous stock of malaria drugs and testing kits in all government facilities to prevent death and disabilities due to malaria.

Last year, the Government introduced the malaria vaccine into the routine immunisation schedule in high and moderate malaria burdened districts as one of the tools to reduce severe malaria and death among children aged below five.

In high burden districts in West Nile, Busoga and Bukedi, we continue to undertake one of the high impact interventions of indoor residual spraying, which has tremendously reduced malaria in the sub-regions.

One of the most recent advancements is seasonal malaria chemoprevention. Previously implemented only in the Sahel region of West Africa, this intervention involves administering antimalarial drugs to children aged under five every month during peak malaria seasons. In Uganda, this approach has been adopted in sub-regions such as Karamoja, where malaria follows a seasonal pattern, hence bringing the malaria burden down.

This year, as we work towards sustaining the national gains so far achieved, we, yet again, undertake the fifth Universal Coverage Campaign for the distribution of mosquito nets throughout the country. This campaign is intended to contribute to the reduction of malaria morbidity and mortality through consistent use of mosquito nets. By the end of the campaign, at least 85% of the targeted population will have access to a mosquito net and using it effectively.

It is unfortunate to report that according to the 2024 World Malaria Report, Uganda contributed 5% of the total global cases, ranking number three. The report further showed that Uganda contributed 2.7% global deaths, ranking ninth globally. So, the campaign is a timely intervention to further bring down the malaria cases in the country.

Under this campaign, one mosquito net will be given per two people in the household as per the World Health Organisation universal coverage definition. The number of people in your household will determine the number of mosquito nets that you will get. The distribution process is being guided by government structures majorly at the local governments.

This time around, the campaign has been divided into five waves; starting this January and stretching to August. The waving has been structured depending on the current malaria prevalence, proximity and operational arrangements for the 130 districts apart from where those where the indoor residual spraying is being conducted.

With the mosquito nets now available in the community, it is the responsibility of the general public, as confirmed by other countries, to ensure that the nets are used correctively and effectively in order to benefit.

It is very disappointing that though the mosquito nets have been availed, there is a lot of misuse from the community. Some people use them for protecting their crops, chicken or even as wedding gowns. Once we take full responsibility of chasing malaria by taking all the precautionary measures, it will be long gone.

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