

Press on further to take the sting out of malaria

The steady decline in malaria admissions and deaths among children under five registered by hospitals across Uganda is a feat worth celebrating. Figures by the Health ministry across the last three financial years (FY) capture the deaths, for one, as being halved. This significant drop of deaths amongst hospitalised children from 2,321 to 1,249, as previously stated, is no mean feat.

Similarly, the drop in malaria admissions of the same—from 390,911 cases in FY 2022/23 to 302,949 cases in FY 2024/25—offers more proof, if any was needed, that the country's trajectory cannot be questioned. The testament to the good work being done, seen in prevention efforts like adoption of a malaria vaccine, regular use of mosquito nets, and positive reception of indoor residual spraying, speaks to science-based processes staking their pressing claim to relevance.

We cannot greet such strides taken in a muted manner as some would want us to. The hostility to scientists, scientific research, and scientific data that is commonplace in the Global

North where anti-vaxxers seem determined to spread misinformation and disinformation remains a few notches beyond terrifying. The spike in measles cases in the United States shows that the dismissive streak directed at science has threaded through with, perhaps unintended, sinister repercussions.

This is why the Health ministry should be applauded for the public information campaigns it has conducted to debunk myths around malaria prevention efforts. It was not so long ago that mosquito nets were lamentably repurposed for various farming practices, including fishing. Elsewhere, indoor residual spraying attempts crashed into one proverbial speed bump after another. Most of the refusals, typically on the part of rural folk—were occasioned by misinformation and disinformation.

It is fundamental that health authorities maintain the purple patch. Resisting the temptation to rest on their laurels could not be more important as the Health ministry readies itself to distribute, free of charge, just under 26 million mosquito nets this month. A government dataset shows that distribution

of insecticide-treated net coverage stood at 76 percent as of June 2025. As a result, and thanks to indoor residual spraying, malaria incidence dropped to 260 cases per 1,000 people from 280 cases from 1,000 people during FY 2023/24.

These are impressive numbers by any measure. While such a trajectory should be maintained, or better yet improved, the same cannot be said of malaria vaccine uptake. Whereas nearly all targeted children received the initial dose, the Health ministry reports that uptake of the second dose is languishing just above the 30 percent mark. The figures for the third dose are even worse. Since the vaccine was only introduced in April 2025, across 107 districts, it would not be a stretch to come to the conclusion that it is early days yet. But this could swing either way.

Evidently, there is a lot of work to be done despite the impressive 14 percent drop in malaria cases. To the Ministry of Health, all we can say is: remain grounded. Keep pushing for the best possible outcomes as the country looks to take the sting out of what is by all accounts a dreadful disease.

The issue:

Malaria fight.

Our view:

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