

A Malaria-Free Vanuatu, Contributing to the Good Health and Well-Being of the Population

This project seeks to support Vanuatu's Ministry of Health vision to reduce local transmission of malaria to zero in all provinces and achieve a 'malaria-free Vanuatu' by the end of 2023.

The project is co-financing a new, rigorous National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination 2021-2026, representing a final surge-effort to end malaria. It contributes to this approach through the provision of long-lasting insecticide treated bed nets, enhancing malaria case management and support to building a resilient and sustainable health system with a focus on health information management and human resource capacity.

The current phase of the project covers the period of 2021-2023, with funding from the Global fund through a US\$2,968,368 grant.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the Principal Recipient of the grant and the Ministry of Health is the Sub Recipient.



A young boy rests under a long-lasting insecticidal mosquito nets in his home in the Solway area of Sanma province, Vanuatu. (Photo: UNDP)

Context

In Vanuatu, malaria has historically been one of the leading causes of ill health. However, owing to significant efforts by the Ministry of Health's National Malaria Programme, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), UNDP and other partners such as the Australian Government, Rotarians Against Malaria and the Vanuatu Red Cross Society, there has been a consistent reduction in malaria prevalence over time.

The national annual parasite index (API) – a measure of confirmed new cases of malaria in a specific year, expressed per 1,000 people – has decreased from an estimated 198 in 1990, to 74 in 2003 and to just 1.7 in 2020. The southern-most province of Tafea was declared malaria-free in 2017, and there have been no confirmed deaths from malaria since 2011. Most cases are now reported in the provinces of Malampa and Sanma, and the island of Epi in Shefa province.

Vulnerable populations are primarily those living in close proximity to the coast. A majority of the 75 percent of the population defined as "rural" reside in these areas. The species of mosquito *Anopheles Farauti* s.s., which is known to be the only vector of malaria in Vanuatu, exists and breeds almost exclusively within a few kilometres of the coast. Based on their behaviour, including frequent indoor resting, the vector control strategy that employed is a combination of both long-lasting insecticidal mosquito nets and indoor residual spraying.

What we do

The project goals are fully aligned to the National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination 2021-2026, which is to:

1. Prevent re-establishment of transmission in all provinces where transmission has been interrupted.
2. Achieve zero indigenous malaria cases in all provinces of Vanuatu by the end of 2023.
3. Receive WHO certification of malaria-free status in 2026.

Specific project objectives are:

1. To maintain universal coverage with long-lasting insecticidal mosquito nets; and to rapidly reduce malaria transmission in selected high burden areas using indoor residual spraying.
2. To roll out case-based surveillance and response nationwide using the '1-7-60' approach.¹
3. To test all fever cases for malaria by rapid diagnostic test or microscopy and provide prompt radical treatment and care for all confirmed cases according to the National Malaria Diagnosis and Treatment Guidelines.
4. To mobilize communities through health promotion and leverage the support of all stakeholders in a multi-sectoral effort to accelerate the elimination of malaria.
5. To ensure that malaria and other vector-borne diseases prevention, surveillance and case management are well integrated into disaster preparedness and response activities.

¹ Under this approach, cases will be reported within 1 day of detection; investigation and classification of cases and suspected foci and any response actions must be taken within 7 days of detection; and follow-up assessments must be made within 60 days of detection to confirm completion of radical treatment and detect possible relapses of *Plasmodium vivax* (the parasite that causes malaria).

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