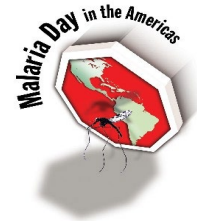


# MALARIA DAY IN THE AMERICAS 2021

## Guidelines for Commemoration, Communications, and Advocacy



### *I. Background*

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In September 2005, the 46th Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) adopted the Resolution [CD46.R13](#) which highlighted, among other things, the designation of a Malaria Control Day in the Americas on a selected annual date, to recognize past and current efforts to prevent and control malaria, promote awareness, and monitor progress. Similarly, in May 2007, the 60th World Health Assembly passed the resolution [WHA60.18](#): “Malaria, including a proposal for establishment of *World Malaria Day* which provides, among other things, that: “*World Malaria Day* shall be commemorated annually on 25 April or on such other day or days as individual members may decide” Guyana, which has been commemorating a *National Malaria Day* since 2003, proposed to celebrate *Malaria Day in the Americas* on November 6, which coincides with the day when the presence of malaria parasites in the blood of patients with febrile symptoms was first observed by Charles Louis Alphonse Lavéran in 1880. With these antecedents, the 27<sup>th</sup> Pan American Sanitary Conference held in Washington DC from 1-5 October 2007 resolved that **November 6** will henceforth be observed annually as **Malaria Day in the Americas**. ([CSP27.R11](#))

Currently, on its fifteenth year of commemoration, Malaria Day in the Americas is regarded as an important opportunity and mechanism for countries of the Region to engage various stakeholders in aggressively fighting malaria.

### *II. Malaria Day in the Americas: Concept and Objectives*

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The Region’s Plan of Action for Malaria Elimination 2021-2025 highlights strategic advocacy and communications as among the key issues in malaria that needs increased emphasis in the Region. An important element of these efforts is the commemoration of *Malaria Day* in the countries of the Americas which campaigns for increased advocacy and commitment among stakeholders and draws communities and the general population into concrete actions that contribute to the achievement of goals and targets in all levels – global, regional, country, and community.

The Region of the Americas continues to pursue its commitment to global targets including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the implementation of the [Global Technical Strategy for Malaria \(GTS\)](#) which emphasizes that “all countries can accelerate efforts towards elimination through combinations of interventions tailored to local contexts”

*Malaria Day in the Americas* which will be observed for the fifteenth time on **6 November 2021**, is envisioned to be the platform upon which countries of the Region can engage in a year-round dynamic campaign against the disease. Specifically, *Malaria Day in the Americas* seeks to attain the following objectives:

- Improve the communication process and extension of advocacy work to all stakeholders and target audiences.
- Enhance visibility/interest on Malaria in the Region of Americas and the global scourge that the disease brings to peoples of the world.
- Increase awareness and understanding of the key issues among target audience/population.
- Catalyze change of attitudes and modification of behaviors in the affected population.
- Generate advocacy/support from the decision-makers and populations in malaria affected communities, policy makers, private sector, strategic partners, and the general public.

- Encourage increased and enduring support to efforts against malaria, including the elimination of local transmission and prevention of re-establishment.

Partners and malaria stakeholders in the Region are encouraged to consider this concept and objectives in the commemoration of *Malaria Day in the Americas 2021*.

## Theme for Malaria Day in the Americas 2021: “Reaching the zero malaria target”

Following a sustained trend toward reduction of malaria from 2005 to 2014, since 2015 the Region of the Americas has experienced an increase in the total number of cases and deaths, mainly as an effect of the massive increase in transmission and outbreaks in areas with complex socio-political and economic challenges and recently compounded by other challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Much like the global trend, progress on the achievement of target reductions in malaria burden have stalled since 2015. In 2019, the Region reported a total of approximately 816 000 confirmed cases of malaria and 197 deaths compared to 453 000 cases and 159 deaths respectively in 2015.

Urgent action is needed to get the global response to malaria back on track – and ownership of the challenge lies in the hands of countries most affected by malaria. On the occasion of Malaria Day in the Americas 2021, and in keeping with this consolidated effort by the global malaria community to highlight the reported successes and the remaining challenges in malaria today, the Region is adapting the same theme used by WHO for the commemoration of World Malaria Day 2021: “**Reaching the zero malaria target**”. As in the previous year, PAHO highlights the importance of sustained malaria efforts while protecting health workers during COVID-19 pandemic.

Stakeholders in the Region have the option of using this theme to energize the commitment to fight malaria.

## Key Messages / Calls to Action

### A Focus on Elimination

- This year, PAHO/WHO and other partners are marking Malaria Day in the Americas by celebrating the achievements of countries that are approaching, and achieving, malaria elimination.
- They provide inspiration for all nations that are working to stamp out this deadly disease and improve the health and livelihoods of their populations.

#### 1. Elimination: A Viable Goal for All Countries

- Many countries that have eliminated malaria carried, at one time, a very high burden of malaria. Together, they have shown the world that malaria elimination is a viable goal for all countries, no matter how near or far they may be from the target today

- In 1980, El Salvador recorded the highest malaria burden in Central America, with 95 835 cases. Following a more than 50-year commitment by the Salvadoran government and its people, the country became the first in the subregion to eliminate the disease. El Salvador reported its last malaria-related death in 1984 and has maintained domestic investments for malaria to this day. El Salvador was certified malaria free by WHO in February 2021.

## 2. Five Key Drivers of Success

Although each country's elimination journey is unique, common drivers of success have been seen across all regions:

- **Robust political commitment.** Successful malaria elimination efforts are owned and led by countries. Political commitment to ending the disease often transcends any one government and is maintained over many decades.
- **Sustained funding.** Most countries that succeed in eliminating malaria cover the cost through domestic funding that is sustained over a period of many decades.
- **Health systems that leave no one behind.** In countries with zero malaria, all people at risk of the disease, regardless of their citizenship or ability to pay, have been reached with the services they need to prevent, detect, and treat the disease.
- **Strong health information systems.** Countries that succeed in eliminating malaria have invested in robust surveillance systems that can generate reliable and timely data.
- **Community ownership and engagement.** Many countries that reach the zero malaria target have relied on dedicated networks of community-based health workers to prevent, detect and treat the disease, even among vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations.

## 3. E-2020 / E-2025 Initiative

- Since 2017, WHO has supported a group of 21 countries in reaching their elimination goals through the E-2020 initiative. A report released on April 21, 2021, "[Zeroing in on malaria elimination](#)", summarizes progress and lessons learned over the last three years.
- By the end of 2020, eight E-2020 member countries reported zero indigenous cases of malaria: Algeria, Belize, Cabo Verde, China, El Salvador, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, and Paraguay.
- Building on the success of the E-2020 initiative, WHO has identified a new group of countries that have the potential to interrupt malaria transmission within a five-year timeline.
- Launched on 21 April 2021, the E-2025 initiative will support countries as they walk the last mile to towards elimination.
- Nine new countries and territories have been included in the E-2025 initiative: Dominican Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Sao Tome and Principe, Thailand and Vanuatu; including French Guiana which was also invited to participate.

- Seventeen E-2020 member countries have automatically been nominated as E-2025 member countries: Belize, Bhutan, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Eswatini, Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Suriname, Timor Leste. This includes countries that have reached zero indigenous cases of malaria but have not officially requested a malaria-free certification from WHO.

#### 4. Eliminating Malaria During a Pandemic

- Since the early days of COVID-19, national malaria programs have encountered several challenges – notably a diversion of human and financial resources to tackle the pandemic.
- In some countries, lockdowns, and restrictions on the movement of people and goods led to delays in the delivery of malaria preventive measures, such as insecticide-treated nets.
- Malaria diagnosis and treatment services were also interrupted during the pandemic as many people were unable – or unwilling – to seek care in health facilities.
- According to the preliminary results of a recent WHO survey, one third of countries globally have experienced at least partial disruptions in the delivery of malaria services during the pandemic.
- The survey shows that many people are not seeking care due to the fear of contracting COVID-19.
- Best practices and sustained efforts in malaria diagnosis, treatment, and surveillance, including the protection of health workers and communities as aligned with national COVID-19 guidelines, are important in moving forward with malaria elimination amidst the ongoing pandemic.
- Interventions must continue to consider the importance of lowering disease and death caused by malaria, while ensuring the safety of communities and health workers, as outlined at PAHO/WHO’s guidance on how to conduct malaria activities in various scenarios, given the changing context of the COVID-19 situation in the Americas.

#### 5. Reaching the Zero Malaria Target in the Americas with intensified efforts in high-burden municipalities

- Countries close to elimination, particularly those who are part of the E2020 and E2025, should be steadfast in their progress but efforts in high burden municipalities and vulnerable populations must also be intensified.
- For the past three years, data indicate that 25 municipalities in the Region account for between 45% to 50% of all reported malaria cases in the Americas; while between 25% to 70% of all malaria cases at country level are usually concentrated within no more than three municipalities per country. The countries where these high-burden municipalities are located include Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela.
- Advancing against malaria in high burden areas is possible even amidst COVID-19
- Many of the municipalities and areas with the highest malaria burden in the Region are now participating in the [Municipalities for Zero Malaria](#) Initiative, bringing together key

partner organizations, relevant government agencies, and municipalities affected by malaria in order to support local efforts to take effective action against the disease.

- Six municipalities with high malaria burden in the Americas were recognized as Malaria Champions for 2020 for their progress amidst COVID-19: Atalaia do Norte and Oeiras do Para in Brazil; Quibdo in Colombia; Les Anglais and Les Iriois in Haiti; and Puerto Lempira in Honduras
- 6. Empower communities to take ownership of malaria prevention and elimination and leverage on multi-sectoral engagement**
- Organizations, citizens, and local government authorities must be engaged in developing key interventions for malaria elimination at the municipality level if we are to ensure that no one gets left behind
- 7. Be part of the solution; be an advocate for malaria elimination.**
- Learn about the disease and know if you're at risk
  - Sustain malaria interventions while protecting yourself, health workers and communities from COVID-19
  - Share these messages with your family and friends and support the cause to eliminate malaria

### *III. Key Facts and Figures*

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#### **Globally and in the Americas:**

- Effective malaria control and elimination is inextricably linked to the strength of health systems. Strong health systems can deliver effective safe, high-quality interventions when and where they are needed and assure access to reliable health information and effective disease surveillance. At the same time, integrating malaria treatment, prevention and surveillance into existing health programs and activities in endemic countries will ensure that funding earmarked for malaria control and elimination contributes to the development, expansion, and continuous improvement of national health systems.
- In the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, adaptation of malaria surveillance and control operations according to local COVID-19 situation scenarios, algorithms and attention flows is key to ensure essential actions and enable the battle against COVID-19.

**Success stories and opportunities in the Americas, resulting from the implementation of best practices and collaboration include:**

- In 2021, El Salvador was certified as malaria-free, duplicating Argentina and Paraguay's achievement in 2019 and 2018 respectively.
- Many other countries across the Region are scaling up their efforts to control and eliminate malaria with support from PAHO, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), non-profit partners and other global development institutions.
  - Since 2018, the IDB, in collaboration with the Global Fund, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, PAHO, Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), and other partners, has been working in a new financial and technical assistance mechanism – the Regional Malaria Elimination Initiative in Mesoamerica and the Dominican Republic (RMEI) – to help the Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico<sup>1</sup>, Nicaragua, y Panama, to scale up effective surveillance, prevention and treatment on the road to elimination by 2022
- Since 2009, forty-two Malaria Champions of the Americas have been recognized as best practices in the Region, particularly from Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Suriname.
- This year, high burden municipalities which managed to effectively reduce malaria cases despite challenges of the current pandemic are showcasing the progress of their efforts and are being honored as Malaria Champions.

#### IV. Social Media Messages

Handles and Hashtags	
<b>Handles:</b> @ASTMH @nothingbutnets @malarianomore @endmalaria @unfoundation @pahowho @JohnsHopkinsSPH @JohnsHopkinsCCP @Gwpublichealth	<b>Hashtags:</b> #zeromalariastartswithme #MalariaDayAmericas #endmalaria #MalariaChampions #HealthForAll #zeromalaria #DíaMalariaAméricas #Malaria #MunicipalitiesforZeroMalaria

#### Suggested tweets (Maximum: 280 characters)

1. On #MalariaDayAmericas, @PAHO calls to keep malaria high in the political agenda to keep #malaria back on track. Sustain malaria efforts while protecting yourself, your community and health workers during COVID-19. #zeromalaria
2. 5 things are needed to move towards malaria elimination: 1 political commitment, 2 financial resources, 3 accessible health systems, 4 robust surveillance, 5 empowered communities

<sup>1</sup> Operation under negotiation.

# zeromalaria #HealthForAll

3. This #MalariaDayAmericas and with COVID-19, interventions must consider the importance of lowering disease and death caused by malaria, while ensuring the safety of communities and health workers. #HealthForAll # zeromalaria
4. Be part of the solution to #EndMalaria, & be an advocate for malaria elimination #MalariaDayAmericas# zeromalaria
5. Universal coverage of proven #malaria prevention tools will improve health & save lives #MalariaDayAmericas # zeromalaria
6. #MalariaDayAmericas is an opportunity to learn about the disease and know if you're at risk. #zeromalaria
7. Continue affirming that municipalities with challenging situations can be on the path towards # zeromalaria. #[MunicipalitiesforZeroMalaria](#)
8. During #MalariaDayAmericas! we want to congratulate El Salvador for being certified by WHO this year as #malariafree, 🎉 congratulations!

**Note: Specific tweets regarding 2021 Malaria Champions awardees to follow**

**Website:** [www.paho.org/en/topics/malaria/](http://www.paho.org/en/topics/malaria/)

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