

# Resurgence of a killer

Two a minute. One million a year. That many people die from malaria, a mosquito-borne disease that has dramatically increased in the last twenty years.

Malaria is devastating and debilitating. Forty percent of the world's people live with the risk of contracting it. Estimated cases range from 300 to 500 million. Ninety percent of the deaths occur in Africa south of the Sahara, where one in five young children who die, die from malaria.

In the first half of the 20th century, malaria was even more widespread, extending into Europe and the United States. The Global Malaria Eradication Campaign began after World War II, making widespread use of DDT to kill or repel the mosquitoes that carry the malaria parasite, and new drugs to treat the disease. The results were extraordinary. Malaria was eradicated in the US in the 1950s. It was gone from all developed countries as well as large areas of tropical Asia and Latin America by the mid-1960s. Only in Africa, where eradication efforts were limited, did the disease maintain its sway.

But malaria has now rebounded in many areas of the developing world. Important factors behind this rebound include population growth and movement, deteriorating public health systems, poor housing conditions, and altered land use. Other elements have been the reduction in the use of DDT and the increase in resistance of some malaria strains to current antimalarial drugs.

Research at Harvard and elsewhere has

shown that malaria so debilitates its victims that it severely limits economic growth. Some countries may never be able to advance unless they can control this disease.

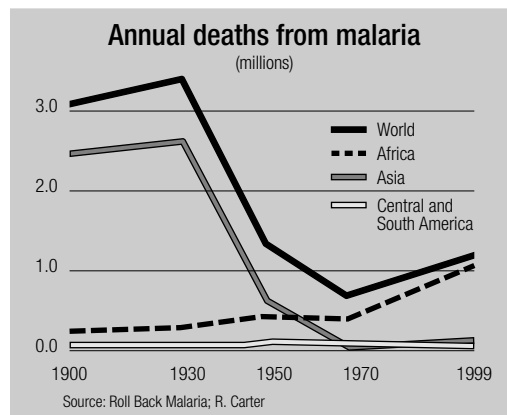
The resurgence of malaria, the knowledge that it is preventable and curable, and the huge costs and suffering it imposes have galvanized several organizations to take action. The spearhead for the fight is the **Roll Back Malaria** movement, launched by the World

Health Organization together with the governments of several malaria-affected countries, the UN Development Program, UNICEF (UN Children's Fund), and the World Bank. Through country and local community partnerships it promotes such measures as the use of insecti-

cide-impregnated bed nets and new technologies and medicines to control and treat malaria.

Private groups are also playing a role. ExxonMobil is supporting Roll Back Malaria. We will work with governments and others on an enhanced control program in at-risk regions where we operate such as Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. We will also help fund leading efforts such as the **Harvard Malaria Initiative** and the **Medicines for Malaria Venture**, which hopes to develop new antimalarial drugs through private-public research partnerships.

The scourge of malaria will not be easily eliminated. But progress can be and will be made as long as the determination to fight this most widespread of killers can be sustained.



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