

Mekong countries call for accelerated action to eliminate malaria before 2030

08 December 2017 | News

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Representatives from Cambodia, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam today called for accelerated action to eliminate malaria in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) by the year 2030.

The call comes amid concern over resistance of malaria parasites to antimalarial drugs, including artemisinin—the core compound of the best available antimalarial medicines. To date, resistance has been detected in five of the six GMS countries. The best way to address the threat posed by drug resistance is to eliminate malaria altogether from the countries of the Mekong.

At a high-level meeting convened by the Ministry of Health and Sports of Myanmar in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance (APLMA), representatives from the six GMS countries stressed that eliminating malaria in the Subregion requires urgent and coordinated action, with support from implementing agencies, funders and other partners.

Ministers from the six countries pledged to ensure activities to eliminate malaria in the subregion are fully funded, including with more domestic funds; improve cross-border collaboration and establish an independent oversight body, for which WHO will act as the secretariat; strengthen systems for the identification and timely reporting of malaria infections, including drug-resistant forms; provide the best possible prevention, diagnosis and care for all people at risk of malaria, including free services for ethnic minorities and mobile and migrant populations, as part of universal health coverage; ensure available antimalarial medicines are safe and effective for use; bring all concerned sectors together to translate policies into time-bound and results-oriented actions; and engage communities in malaria elimination using innovative communication tools.

Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia said, “Malaria is a disease that we can—and must—eliminate from the Greater Mekong Subregion. The drive to achieve this goal by 2030 demonstrates the joint commitment of health leaders from across the subregion to secure the health and well-being of vulnerable populations and ensure no one is left behind.”

Dr Shin Young-soo, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific said, “The malaria parasite doesn't need a passport or a visa to cross borders. You must work more closely together as one region, with one strategy to drive elimination. Accelerating malaria elimination in the Greater Mekong will not only improve lives today. It will also free future generations from the plague

of malaria, and set an example for the rest of the world.”

WHO helps governments achieve malaria elimination by setting and disseminating guidance and policies on malaria control and elimination; supporting countries as they adapt, adopt and implement WHO global norms and standards for malaria control and elimination; assisting countries in the implementation of national malaria strategic plans; helping countries develop robust malaria surveillance systems; and responding to requests from countries to address threats, operational emergencies and bottleneck issues.