

Malaria top killer in Congo

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Health officials in the Democratic Republic of Congo say malaria is the primary cause of illness and death, despite prevention efforts.

Yacouba Zina, head of the malaria project of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, said 5 million cases of malaria are reported annually, resulting in 500,000 to 1 million people deaths, the United Nations' Integrated Regional Information Networks reported Tuesday.

While insecticide-treated mosquito nets have been distributed, anti-malaria drugs made available and awareness-raising campaigns conducted, the number of malaria cases seems to be rising, the report said.

Zina said many areas don't have access to new drugs and there are more cases of drug resistance.

"There has been an upward trend in the number of malaria cases and there are also many more of the serious cases because of resistance (to certain drugs used hitherto) owing, among other things, to self-medication," Zina told IRIN.

The report said the treated mosquito nets have been distributed to less than 10 percent of the region.

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