

655,000 malaria deaths in 2010: WHO

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Malaria caused the death of an estimated 655,000 people last year, with 86 percent of victims children aged under five, World Health Organisation figures showed on Tuesday.

The figure marked a five percent drop in deaths from 2009.

Africa accounted for 91 percent of deaths and 81 percent of the 216 million cases worldwide in 2010.

In its annual World [Malaria](#) Report for 2011, the WHO hailed as a "major achievement" a 26 percent fall in [mortality rates](#) since 2000 despite being well short of its 50 percent target.

The UN health agency aims to eradicate malaria deaths altogether by the end of 2015 and reduce the number of cases by 75 percent on 2000 levels.

International funding for the fight against malaria peaked at \$2 billion (1.5 billion euros) this year but the WHO estimates \$5 billion will be needed each year until 2015 if its targets are to be reached.

The cash has funded an big increase in the number of households with insecticide-treated [mosquito nets](#), particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where 50 percent now have the nets compared with just three percent in 2000.

To finance the fight, the WHO suggested a tax on financial transactions

or the rolling out of a tax on airline journeys which it said, if extended to other countries, could generate significant extra funds.

"Other country-specific schemes, such as tourist taxes, may offer opportunities to raise funds for control programmes in malaria endemic countries," the report said.

WHO director general Margaret Chan welcomed the "significant and durable" progress in the fight against malaria but said parasite resistance to drugs was causing concern in parts of South-east Asia.

"Parasite resistance to antimalarial medicines remains a real and ever-present danger to our continued success," said Chan.

"There is an urgent need to develop an Asia-wide framework to ensure sustained and coordinated action against this [public health threat](#)."

According to the WHO, malaria is endemic in 106 countries and is currently transmitted in 99 of them.

Of the 99, 43 recorded a fall in reported cases of more than 50 percent between 2000 and 2010.

Six countries account for 60 percent of deaths from Malaria: Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burkino Faso, Mozambique, Ivory Coast and Mali.

Europe had an estimated 176 cases of malaria in 2010 with no reported deaths.

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