

WHO hails big gains in anti-malaria fight

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The World Health Organisation heralded major gains Tuesday in the fight against malaria, one of the developing world's biggest killers, but warned universal access to treatment remains elusive.

"In the past 10 years, increased investment in [malaria prevention](#) and control has saved more than a million lives," the UN organisation's chief Margaret Chan said in a statement.

"But we are still far from achieving universal access to life-saving malaria interventions."

The assessment came on the eve of World Malaria Day, designed to shine the light on the mosquito-borne parasite that killed 655,000 people in 2010, including 560,000 children under five.

The WHO says the disease is the fifth-biggest killer in low-income countries.

But cheaper, easier testing, increased funding and growing use of insecticide-treated [mosquito nets](#) that protect people while they sleep have saved more than a million lives in the past decade, the WHO said.

Malaria has been eliminated in Armenia, Morocco and Turkmenistan, while Georgia and Iraq had no new cases in 2010, Richard Cibulskis, a doctor with the WHO's Global Malaria Programme, told a press conference in Geneva.

Of the 99 countries where malaria currently exists, eradicating the disease is feasible in 34, said Andrea Bossman, another doctor with the WHO's malaria programme.

In others, though, the picture is less rosy.

"For the hard-to-reach areas, especially the central areas of Africa with stable [malaria transmission](#), we don't have yet the tools available today to completely interrupt transmission," Bossman said.

The WHO announced a new programme called T3 -- test, treat, track -- whose goal is to test every suspected malaria case worldwide, treat every confirmed case with multi-drug therapies centred on the drug [artemisinin](#), and closely monitor the disease to improve health officials' response.

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