Three more African nations roll out malaria vaccine

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Three more African countries have joined a rollout of malaria vaccines targeting millions of children in a continent that accounts for 95 percent of malaria deaths, the UN said Thursday.

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Africa accounts for approximately 94 percent of global malaria cases, according to the World Health Organization. Most of the deaths are of children.

Benin, Liberia and Sierra Leone joined other African countries offering the malaria vaccine as part of their childhood immunization programs, a statement by WHO and UNICEF said.

Since 2019, more than two million children have been vaccinated in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi, resulting in substantial reductions in severe malaria illness and hospitalizations.

"With the new, safe and efficacious malaria vaccine, we now have an additional tool to fight this disease," Sierra Leone Health Minister Austin Demby said.

"In combination with insecticide-treated nets, effective diagnosis and treatment, and indoor spraying, no child should die from malaria infection."

Benin received 215,900 doses while Liberia expects 45,000 children to benefit from its initial 112,000 doses.

Sierra Leone will start with 550,000 doses before delivering the vaccine to health facilities nationwide.

Two vaccines—RTS,S and R21—recommended by WHO have been seen as a breakthrough for child health and malaria control.

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