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Research Summary

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Abstract

Malaria disease burden in Vanuatu continues to decline over time, with great efforts and achievements. Since 2010, Vanuatu has achieved an impressive 95% reduction in malaria. In 2020, there were only 502 cases of confirmed malaria cases nationwide and there have been no deaths due to malaria since 2011. The southern province of Tafea has achieved zero malaria cases and was certified in 2017 as a malaria-free Province. There are a few remaining malaria hot spots in Vanuatu, which are on the islands of Malekula, Santo, and Epi. These are closely monitored with clear deliverables to achieve the elimination targets. Despite major damage and disruptions caused by TC Harold as well as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, malaria elimination is still within reach.

The new National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination for 2021-2026 shifts the goal of malaria elimination 2 years closer, with zero local monthly cases expected by the end of 2023 and WHO malaria-free certification anticipated in 2026. Achieving the elimination goals require key strategic objectives such as maintaining the very high levels of coverage with long-lasting insecticidal mosquito nets (LLINs); and to rapidly reduce malaria transmission in selected high incidence areas and foci using indoor residual spraying. Ensuring the roll out case-based surveillance and response nationwide using 1-7-60 approach is also essential in reducing malaria transmissions. All fever cases presented at any health facility will be appropriately tested using rapid diagnostic test (RDT) or microscopy, and provide prompt radical treatment and care for all confirmed cases according to the national Malaria Diagnosis and Treatment Guidelines. Communities are encouraged to mobilize themselves through health promotion activities, and to leverage the support of all stakeholders in a multi-sectoral effort to accelerate the elimination of malaria. As Vanuatu is prone to disaster it is therefore crucial that malaria and other VBD prevention, surveillance and case management are well integrated into disaster preparedness and response activities.

Other supportive elements are to maintain a high level of political commitment to malaria elimination and to continuously leverage technical partnerships in support of innovation by generating new knowledge and applying it to improve delivery and quality of malaria services.