



Swiss Malaria Group Press Release On the World Malaria Day on 25 April 2021

Basel, 19 April 2021

Malaria control in times of COVID-19: Swiss commitment matters

A world without malaria is possible and within reach. At the same time, the fight against malaria is being jeopardised by the COVID-19 crisis – a threat that was partially mitigated last year, also thanks to the contribution of Switzerland.

Great progress has been made in the global fight against malaria with [over 20 countries being declared malaria-free since 2000](#). Most recently, [El Salvador](#) has announced its victory over one of the oldest and deadliest diseases in human history in February this year.

These historic successes show that a world without malaria is possible. At the same time, progress in the fight against malaria and other diseases such as tuberculosis or HIV/AIDS is being acutely threatened by the Corona pandemic. "COVID-19 has been in the spotlight for over a year now," says Christian Lengeler, epidemiologist at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute and president of the Swiss Malaria Group. "But other diseases have not ceased to exist. On the contrary, in many cases the situation is further aggravated by COVID-19."

The deadly side effects of the Corona pandemic

As has been shown over the past year, it is mainly the indirect consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic that pose a problem for the fight against malaria and other diseases:

- Sub-Saharan Africa's already fragile health systems are reaching their limits. For example, in September 2020, the World Health Organisation found an [average 50% decline in basic health services \(including malaria treatment\) compared to the previous year](#) in 14 African countries.
- The [Corona crisis and related lockdown measures](#) are making it difficult to implement prevention and treatment measures such as the distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets or malaria drugs.
- It is also feared that the economic consequences of the Corona crisis will be accompanied by [lower state contributions for malaria control](#), which would further exacerbate the existing funding gap of around USD 2.6 billion each year.

Support from members of the Swiss Malaria Group

Despite these challenges, there does not seem to be a massive increase in malaria deaths so far, [according to various reports](#). This is also due to the [commitment of the members of the Swiss Malaria Group](#), who have been at the forefront of efforts to mitigate the negative impact of the Corona virus on malaria control.

Among other things, steps have been taken to maintain access to health facilities and to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of malaria (specific examples of the activities of Swiss Malaria Group members can be found on our [website](#)).

Commitment is more important than ever

Over the past year, COVID-19 has raised awareness among Swiss people to the threats posed by communicable diseases. For many people, the scenario of losing someone close to a disease is an everyday reality. This shows that a coordinated, cross-border fight for global health is more important today than ever before.

About Swiss Malaria Group

Swiss Malaria Group is made up of research institutions, public bodies, private industries and members of civil society who work together to increase the commitment of Switzerland to the fight against malaria.

Further information can be obtained from: www.swissmaliargroup.ch

Member organisations: <https://www.swissmaliargroup.ch/de/ueber-uns/mitglieder/>