

Malawi: Winning the fight against malaria

A decline in the incidence of malaria in Swaziland is being attributed to a devastating drought in the country's malaria belt.

MANZINI, 1 December 2008 (IRIN) - In recent years the government and international donors have embarked on a coordinated response to the mosquito-borne disease and there now is confident talk of making Swaziland malaria-free. Malarial eradication is defined as no new clinically confirmed cases.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, a US-sponsored international public/private partnership, the UN World Health Organisation (WHO), the UN children's fund, UNICEF, have all assisted the country's malaria eradication programmes.

"There has been good progress in bringing down the number of new malaria cases as well as mortalities, and now our goal is eradication," Simon Kunene, director of the health ministry's Malaria Control Unit, told IRIN. "The gains of the past few years have given us confidence that eradication is within reach."

The unit is based in Swaziland's commercial hub of Manzini, which used to be the capital city before British colonial administrators relocated it to Mbabane to escape the malaria.

The number of confirmed malaria cases has dropped 75 percent since 2000, when 4,000 new patients were diagnosed with the disease, to 1,000 confirmed cases in 2008. Malaria fatalities have also dropped from 40 deaths in 2000 to between 10 and 15 deaths annually in the past three years.

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