

Rollout of world's first malaria jab gathers pace

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The world's first malaria vaccine will soon be available across sub-Saharan Africa, according to PATH, partners of the vaccine developers, as positive results from the pioneering jab pile up.

The vaccine, known as RTS,S/AS01E and commercialized under the brand name Mosquirix, targets children as over three quarters of [malaria](#) deaths occur in under-five-year olds, according to the [latest report](#) from the WHO.

Findings from a WHO pilot held in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi, showed that the pioneering vaccine caused a significant reduction in severe malaria and hospitalization among vaccinated children.

It means more countries in sub-Saharan Africa will soon receive the vaccine, says John Bawa, Africa lead for vaccine implementation at Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH).

These findings pave the way for an expanded distribution scheme that will see countries like Mozambique, Nigeria and Zambia receive the vaccines, said Bawa during a webinar held in

commemoration of World Malaria Day.

"The next is to deploy the vaccine to other endemic countries. Countries that are interested in the vaccine are expected to apply to GAVI from June to September," he said at the webinar organized by the African Media and Malaria Research Network (AMMREN), PATH and Kintampo Health Research Centre (KHRC).

"Countries like Mozambique, Uganda, Zambia and Nigeria have already written officially to express interest for the vaccine," Bawa said.

He said malaria vaccine coverage in Malawi was at 88% in 2020 and 93% in 2021. In Ghana, it was 71% in 2020 and 76% in 2021 and in Kenya, it was 69% in 2020 and 83% in 2021.

"These numbers indicate strong community demand and capacity of childhood vaccination platforms to effectively deliver the vaccine to children," said Bawa.

Currently, 1 million children in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi have received at least one dose of the first malaria vaccine.

These vaccines were distributed in a pilot scheme organized by WHO. The organization has now recommended the vaccine for use among children in areas with moderate to high transmission rate of malaria.

"This vaccine is not just a scientific breakthrough, it is life-changing for families across Africa. It demonstrates the power of science and innovation for health," WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

Vaccine procurement

In an arrangement to boost vaccine supply and coverage, GlaxoSmithKline, producers of the

RTS,S vaccine, will transfer technology and patent to Bharat Biotech in India to manufacture the vaccines.

The WHO, in a press release, said more than US\$155 million has been secured from to support the introduction, procurement and delivery of the malaria vaccine for Gavi-eligible countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

The organization said it would provide guidance for countries that are considering the use of vaccines for the reduction childhood illnesses and deaths from malaria.

"For some countries, Gavi is paying about 80% [of the] cost of the vaccine, while it is expected that the country's government would pay the [remaining] 20%," Bawa said.

Wellington Oyibo, director of the Centre for Malaria Diagnosis, Research, Capacity Building and Policy at the University of Lagos, urged African leaders to ensure that their counterpart funds are available to purchase the vaccine.

He said the Nigerian government and the Prince Ned Nwoko Foundation malaria eradication project have applied to purchase the vaccine for Nigerian children.

Oyibo said while the initial rollout of the [vaccine](#) may not go around the country, the Nigerian government selected states with the highest malaria burden to begin with.

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