Bill Gates, the co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has said that artificial intelligence (AI) will be used in designing malaria drugs.

Gates, who spoke while delivering his opening address at an event in Lagos State, ‘Advancing Africa: Unleashing the Power of Youth in Science and Innovation, said malaria is a great example where there is not much market opportunity.”

He said, “Science and innovation can accelerate positive change and contribute to a brighter future for Nigeria and Africa.”

According to him, health and education need a lot of work. He said women’s education varies a lot in states where most women don’t have access to education.

Malaria is a major public health problem and can be life-threatening. Children under five die every minute, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

The disease, mostly found in tropical countries, is transmitted to humans by the female Anopheles mosquito.

In 2021 for instance, around 247 million malaria cases were reported and about 619,000 people died.

Four African countries accounted for just over half of all malaria deaths worldwide: Nigeria (31.3%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (12.6%), Tanzania (4.1%) and Niger (3.9%) being the countries with the highest rates on the continent.

Though, the global incidence of malaria has finally been slowed, thanks in large part to a massive rollout of mosquito nets, anti-malaria medicines and indoor residual insecticide spraying.

WHO says malaria mortality rates fell by 66% among all age groups. Among children under five, fatalities fell by 71%, from 694,000 to 292,000 deaths, during the same period.

Progress in mosquito net use has been impressive. WHO data shows that in 2000, just 2% of the 667 million people living in sub-Saharan Africa slept under mosquito nets.