

As the sun rises over the lush, rolling hills of Kayonza district, Aimable Ntawukuriryayo, a smallholder farmer, begins his daily routine. But before he can tend to his crops, he must first ensure his workers are healthy and ready for the day's labor. Malaria, a persistent scourge in this East African nation, is never far from his mind.

"When my workers fall ill with malaria, it disrupts our planting and harvesting schedules," Aimable explains, his brow furrowed with worry. "We lose valuable time in the fields, which means lower yields and less income for my family."

Ntawukuriryayo's story is all too common in Rwanda, where malaria has long been a major public health challenge, accounting for up to 40 per cent of outpatient visits in hospitals nationwide. The total cost of malaria towards its elimination is estimated to be US\$173 per household.

However, Rwanda is fighting back. The government has made combating malaria a top priority, recently introducing new antimalarial drugs to combat growing drug resistance.

Two new anti-malaria drugs recommended by the World Health Organizations (WHO): dihydroartemisinin-piperaquine (DHAP), and artesunate-pyronaridine (ASPY) will be introduced, according to RBC.

Dr. Aimable Mbituyumuremyi, Malaria and Other Parasitic Diseases Division Manager at RBC said that the new anti-malaria drugs serve as alternatives to the commonly used Coartem in the treatment of the mosquito-borne disease that - in some instances - has put up resistance both in Rwanda and other countries like Uganda.

"The first batch of the drugs was imported into the country in last week, and will be used at hospitals based on doctors' prescription to patients in need," he added

For Ntawukuriryayo, this move could yield significant economic dividends, while unlocking the country's full potential for growth and prosperity.

"If we could eliminate malaria cases in Rwanda, that would make a huge difference," says Ntawukuriryayo, his eyes shining with hope. "I could invest that money into improving my farm and supporting my community. The economic impact would be transformative."

Numerous campaigns against Malaria have been organized to create awareness about the disease in rural communities. In 2018, the country launched the Zero Malaria campaign, which included the use of high tech drones to spray larvicides, targeting mosquito breeding sites and reducing adult mosquito population.



As a result of such initiatives, Rwanda is among a select group of countries globally that succeeded in driving down malaria cases in recent years. One key success factor is the increased use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets, which went from 17 per cent to 75 per cent in just over a decade among pregnant women, contributing to a maternal mortality reduction of 72 per cent. By joining broader campaigns and exchanging best practices with other nations, has given Rwanda a better avenue to confront Malaria.

While specific percentages of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) dedicated to malaria treatment and prevention in recent years are not readily available, the country has received substantial international aid to support its malaria control efforts, including \$32 million in funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria between 2018-2020 and \$10 million from the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative in 2021.

However, Rwanda still faces significant resource gaps in fully implementing its national malaria control strategy. Additional domestic and international investments will be critical to sustaining progress and unlocking the economic benefits of reduced malaria burden.