The World Health Organization (WHO) and its partners launched Tuesday, September 28 the very first global roadmap to “defeat meningitis by 2030”.

This disease, most often of viral or bacterial origin, kills nearly 250,000 each year, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

A meningitis outbreak in Rwanda is threatening the lives of some 2 million people amid fears that the disease may spread close to Kigali, the capital, endangering another 1 million residents, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) warned today.

The last epidemic outbreak in early September 2002 in Rwanda was threatening the lives of some 2 million people amid fears that the disease may spread close to Kigali, the capital, endangering another 1 million residents, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) warned that year.

By relying on the deployment of effective vaccines already available or in development, the WHO aims to eliminate by 2030, these epidemics of meningitis of bacterial origin, to halve the number of cases and reduce deaths by 70%.

WHO’s strategy is to tackle acute bacterial meningitis – the most dangerous – which is caused by four bacteria first. These pathogens alone were responsible in 2019 for more than half of the deaths from meningitis recorded worldwide. But vaccination cannot solve everything.

The international agency insists on the need for strengthening rapid diagnosis and access to treatment for patients, better epidemiological surveillance to detect cases and guide prevention and control efforts, as well as better monitoring of patients and their sequelae, the disease leading in 20% of cases to long-term disability.

The fifth and last pillar of the strategy relates to raising public awareness, empowering actors in the implementation of national plans and affirming the right to prevention, care and follow-up services.