

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Wednesday endorsed the use of the RTS,S/AS01 (RTS,S) , the new malaria vaccine among children in sub-Saharan Africa and in other regions with moderate to high *P. falciparum* malaria transmission.

Malaria kills about half a million people each year, nearly all of them in sub-Saharan Africa — including 260,000 children under 5.

The new vaccine, made by GlaxoSmithKline, rouses a child's immune system to thwart *Plasmodium falciparum*, the deadliest of five malaria pathogens and the most prevalent in Africa.

The recommendation is based on results from an ongoing pilot programme in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi that has reached more than 800 000 children since 2019.

“This is a historic moment. The long-awaited malaria vaccine for children is a breakthrough for science, child health and malaria control,” said WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. “Using this vaccine on top of existing tools to prevent malaria could save tens of thousands of young lives each year.”

Malaria remains a primary cause of childhood illness and death in sub-Saharan Africa. More than 260 000 African children under the age of five die from malaria annually.

In recent years, WHO and its partners have been reporting stagnation in progress against the deadly disease.

“For centuries, malaria has stalked sub-Saharan Africa, causing immense personal suffering,” said Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa.

“We have long hoped for an effective malaria vaccine and now for the first time ever, we have such a vaccine recommended for widespread use. Today's recommendation offers a glimmer of hope for the continent which shouldered the heaviest burden of the disease and we expect many more African children to be protected from malaria and grow into healthy adults.” He explains.