

The World Health Organisation (WHO) on Monday recommended a new anti-malaria vaccine for children, a move that could offer countries a cheaper and more readily available option than the world's first shot against the parasitic disease.

The R21/Matrix-M vaccine, developed by Britain's Oxford University, can be used to curb the life-threatening illness spread to humans by mosquitoes, the WHO said, stating that "both vaccines are shown to be safe and effective in preventing malaria in children and, when implemented broadly, are expected to have high public health impact."

It is the second malaria vaccine recommended by WHO, following the RTS,S/AS01 vaccine, which received a WHO recommendation in 2021.

According to WHO, malaria "places a particularly high burden on children in the African Region", with nearly half a million children dying each year.

Tedros described it as "a vital additional tool to protect more children faster, and to bring us closer to our vision of a malaria-free future."

The vaccine will be rolled out in some African countries, including Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nigeria in early 2024, and will be available in mid-2024 in other countries, Tedros said.

WHO Regional Director for Africa, Dr Matshidiso Moeti said the shot "holds real potential to close the huge demand-and-supply gap. Delivered to scale and rolled out widely, the two vaccines can help bolster malaria prevention and control efforts and save hundreds of thousands of young lives in Africa from this deadly disease."