

[Nigeria and DRC have highest malaria burden in Africa says WHO](#)

Posted on Thursday April 25th, 2013 **By Onche Odeh** *Head Education & Science*

A **country-level** burden estimates from the World Health Organisation (WHO) has shown that the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria collectively account for over 40 per cent of the estimated total of malaria deaths globally.

This detail is, contained in a WHO statement prior to the World Malaria Day marked on April 25 of every year, which holds today.

It said the world has witnessed a reduction of mortality rates from malaria by more than 25 per cent, since 2000.

Also, it noted that 50 of the 99 countries with ongoing transmission are now on track to meet the 2015 World Health Assembly target of reducing incidence rates by more than 75 per cent.

WHO fears that the remarkable progress made by the world in the fight against malaria could be punctured by field challenges and systemic gaps.

Although malaria mortality rates have fallen by 33 per cent in the WHO African Region, half of the world's population remains vulnerable.

According to the WHO estimates, there were about 219 million cases of malaria in 2010, with an uncertainty range of 154 million to 289 million; and an estimated 660 000 deaths, with an uncertainty range of 490 000 to 836 000.

Also, a team of scientists from West Africa, United States of America and the United Kingdom, have discovered that the world may be drawn back on achievements made so far in malaria control by the complex nature of the mosquito and the malaria causing parasite.

Malaria mortality rates have fallen by more than 25 per cent globally since 2000, and by 33 per cent in the WHO African Region.

Most deaths occur among children living in Africa, where a child dies every minute from malaria.

The WHO said despite the progress made so far, malaria has remained a major health concern.

It still kills an estimated 660 000 people worldwide(2011), mainly children under five years of age in sub-Saharan Africa

In their research on mosquitoes described as 'surprising', the researchers, including Chief Research Fellow at Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR), Dr. Samson Awolola, found that the mosquito, *Anopheles gambiae*, which was thought to be splitting into two completely new species, may actually have a more complex range of forms.

This, according to them, may be due to frequent inter-mating among them. The resulting hybrids, they say, may have implications for insecticide resistance and malaria parasite infectivity.

The study published in the April 2013 issue of the journal, *Genetic*, documents substantial amounts of hybridisation among two separate mosquito types in a large area spanning four countries in sub-Saharan West Africa.

“Our research shows that *Anopheles gambiae* mosquitoes, which are responsible for most cases of malaria in Africa, are more genetically complex than we thought due to interbreeding,” said Dr. David J. Conway, one of the researchers from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in the United Kingdom, and the Medical Research Council Unit in The Gambia, who was quoted on eurekaalert.

Conway said, “Mosquitoes are very good at evolving quickly and this information will help us use existing control methods appropriately and consider possible new tools that will further malaria control efforts in Africa.”

The scientists collected mosquitoes from houses located within 100 kilometers of the Atlantic coast in Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, and Republic of Guinea. They characterised the mosquitoes’ DNA to identify the proportions of each major type, “M”, “S”, and hybrid “M/S” forms. Pools of each of the forms of mosquitoes from representative sites were analysed for genome-wide genetic profiles revealing that the genomes, which are known to be different between the forms, are not different in these areas.

That is, the genetic variation that exists is shared between the forms, as if they were a single species.