
WORLD HEALTH DAY

"Malaria Eradication - a World Challenge"

7 APRIL, 1960

A Statement

Dr. M. G. Candau

Director-General, World Health Organization

WORLD Health Day this year is devoted to the world's most costly disease, malaria, and the world campaign for its eradication.

Never before in history have the nations concerted their efforts on such a scale against a single disease. Without a dissenting voice the ninety Members of the World Health Organization have resolved to pool their knowledge and resources to achieve nothing less than the complete elimination of this disease from our globe. This year's World Health Day will, I hope, serve to recall to all peoples the urgency of this great undertaking.

Malaria remains in 1960 a constant threat to more than 1000 million human beings. For the most part these are people who already have more than their share of sickness and poverty, and can least afford to be further weakened in their struggle against misfortune.

Malaria strikes first at a country's most precious resource, its young children. The disease is held responsible for 10% to 15% of infant mortality. It can also depopulate large territories.

The man who carries the malaria parasite in his blood is a man of blunted initiative. To him few things seem worth the trouble, he becomes fatalistic, and the physical deterioration that he suffers makes

him an easy prey to other dangerous diseases.

Today we know how malaria is transmitted, and by what mosquitoes. We know how the malaria parasite behaves within the human body, and how it causes a fever that may lead to death. We have found effective ways of destroying the mosquitoes and we possess drugs that successfully attack the parasites within the human body. The techniques for fighting malaria are continually becoming more powerful and precise.

But we know also that the deadly mosquitoes have found ways of fighting back—that is why speed is essential. The campaign against malaria must be carried through while the weapons still remain effective. There must be no slackening of effort until the disease has been entirely stamped out, and the last remaining case in the remotest corner of the earth has been tracked down and cured.

WHO's member countries have given the Organization a heavy responsibility—that of guiding a global campaign for the complete and unconditional liberation from malaria of twelve hundred million human beings in 148 countries and territories throughout the world.

The anti-malaria operations that are at present proceeding, at one stage or another, in 92 countries

and territories constitute the greatest co-ordinated public health programme ever undertaken in the world's history. In 13 of these countries, malaria cases have been reduced to a handful, occurring sporadically or introduced from outside. However, there are still 56 countries where no effort has yet been made to subdue the malaria monster.

The world anti-malaria campaign evidently calls for large numbers of trained workers of many kinds, quantities of equipment and supplies, considerable financial investment and efficient administrative machinery. It is even more important, however, that the governments engaged in the campaign should pursue it with conviction and with the determination to succeed.

The eradication of malaria is a challenge to all the world. In an era when man thinks he is about to set foot on the moon, he should on his own planet be capable of stamping out one of his oldest and most destructive enemies.

There is no doubt in my mind that the countries of the world are today in a position to accept this challenge. To do so is indeed a question of honour. What is needed more than anything else is the *will* to eradicate malaria, for today the way is there.