

## **Sharp malaria increase in Ethiopia raises fears of major epidemic, UN reports**

NEW YORK, 8 August 2005 (UN News Centre) – A sharp increase in malaria cases and deaths across Ethiopia is raising fears of a major epidemic in the June to October malaria transmission season, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported on Monday 8 august.

It noted that the Ethiopian Health Ministry has been receiving “the most worrying figures” from various districts throughout the country of some 73 million inhabitants. In one area data show over 20,000 cases with 21 deaths in June compared to around 5,000 and 2,000 cases in the same month for 2003 and 2004 respectively.

The quantities of CoArtem treatment and Insecticide Treated Nets currently in the country will fall short if there is a major epidemic, OCHA said.

Meanwhile the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is planning to work with the UN World Health Organization (WHO) to offer the Government logistical support in distributing the treatments already in the country.

WHO, in collaboration with the Health Ministry, has conducted a rapid assessment in the affected areas which is still continuing. Other areas of assistance will cover efforts to estimate the shortfall in treatments and treated nets, the procurement of quinine and ongoing work to improve epidemic surveillance.

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**Not an official record**