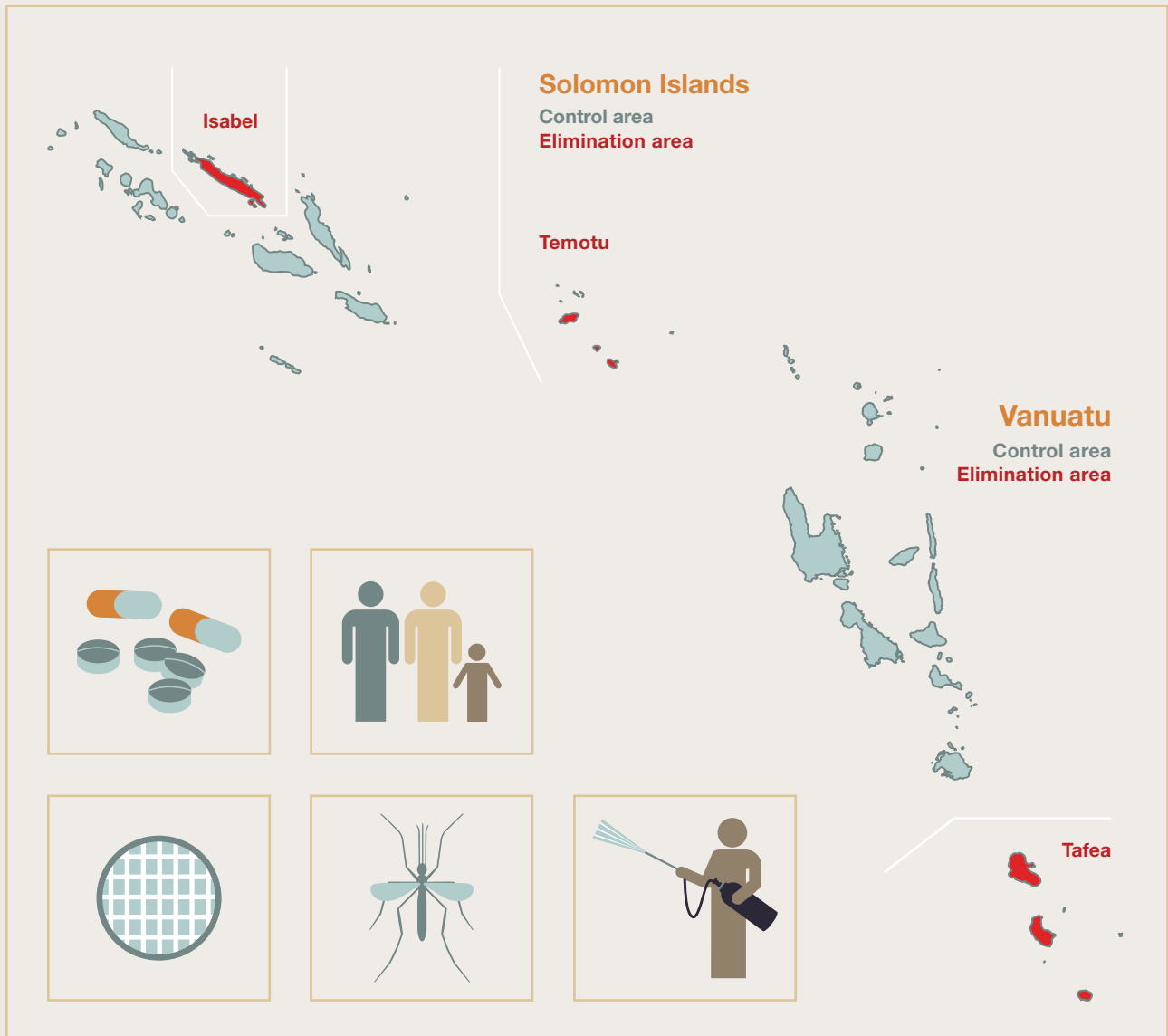


Progress in malaria control and moving towards elimination in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu





Progress in malaria control and moving towards elimination in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu

Solomon Islands with a population of 540 000 and Vanuatu with a population of 250 000 are two of the three Pacific island countries with malaria. Both have committed to an ambitious and aggressive control and elimination strategy. The intensified efforts include using improved means of diagnosing and treating people with fever, protecting people from contact with infective mosquitos by getting them to sleep inside bed nets treated with insecticide, and, in some places, spraying houses with insecticide.

Substantial progress has been achieved through the collaborative efforts of the national governments, international technical partners and donors, nongovernmental organisations, and the private sector. Since 2003, the two countries have received grants from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which made it possible to start the intensified strategies, in collaboration with World Health Organization and the

Acknowledgments

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- Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Malaria and Vector Borne Disease Control Program, Solomon Islands
- Ministry of Health, Malaria and Vector Borne Disease Control Program, Vanuatu
- Solomon Islands National Statistics Office
- Vanuatu National Statistics Office
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)
- AusAID's Pacific Malaria Initiative Support Center (PacMISC)
- Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM)
- Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)

Photo credits: WHO, October 2012

Microscopist reading a malaria slide in Isabel Province, Solomons Islands.



Bed nets in a school dormitory in Solomon Islands.



Secretariat of the Pacific Community. In 2007, AusAID significantly increased the funding and support available, allowing a greatly expanded effort.

Both countries are implementing intensive malaria control nationally, while elimination is being pursued progressively, starting in Isabel and Temotu provinces in Solomon Islands and Tafea province in Vanuatu.

One of the most important components of the control and elimination interventions is the use of **treated nets**. The nets are essential for control and elimination of malaria. In selected areas, the insecticide treated nets are supplemented with **indoor insecticide spraying** in houses.

These preventive measures are combined with **rapid diagnosis** and **appropriate treatment** of confirmed malaria cases. Diagnosis is done by either microscopic

examination of blood slides or using a rapid diagnostic test. The first-line drug used for malaria treatment in both countries is an **artemisinin-based combination drug** that is available in all health facilities at all levels.

A key to the success of malaria control and elimination in both Solomon Islands and Vanuatu has been widespread **community engagement and support** through involvement of local leaders, women groups, church groups etc. Key channels of information have been community health workers, radio, television, and a variety of print media, some of which has been targeted to school children.

Another important element is to **track cases** and to **measure intervention outcomes and impact**. The impact of control and elimination efforts are being measured through the annual number of malaria cases and the number of malaria-related deaths.

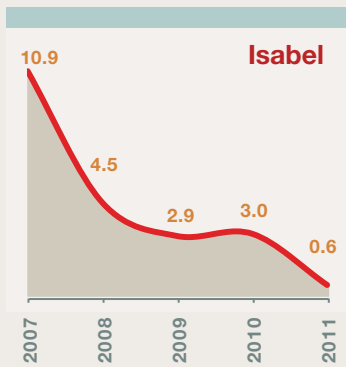
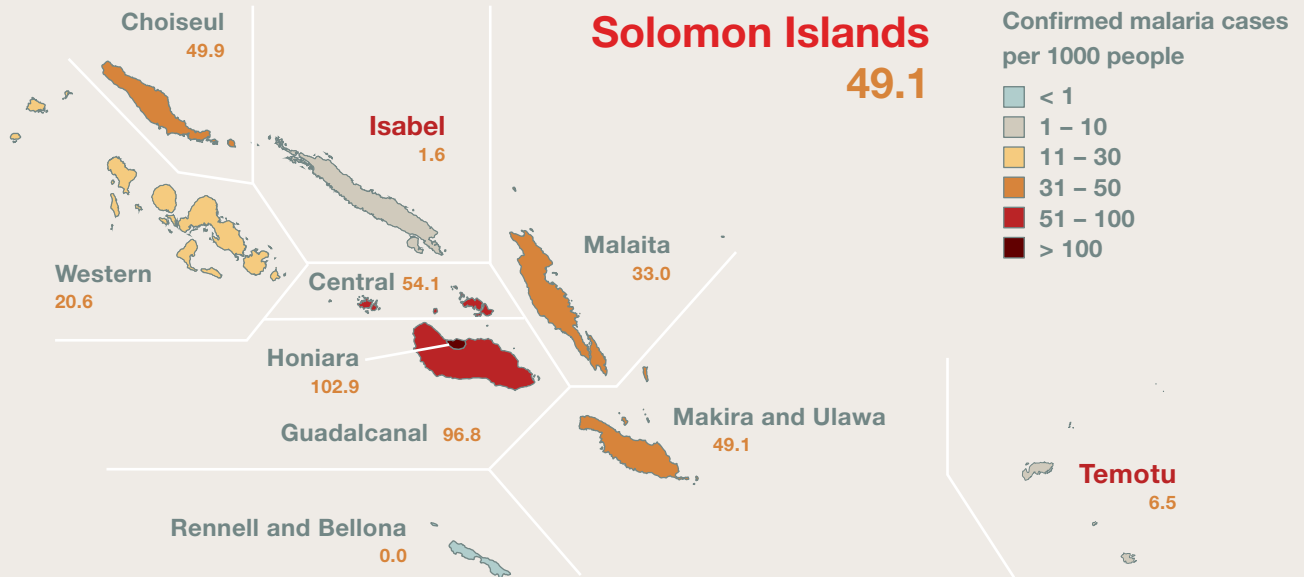


Larval survey during malaria outbreak investigation on Gaua Island, Vanuatu.

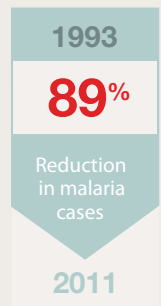
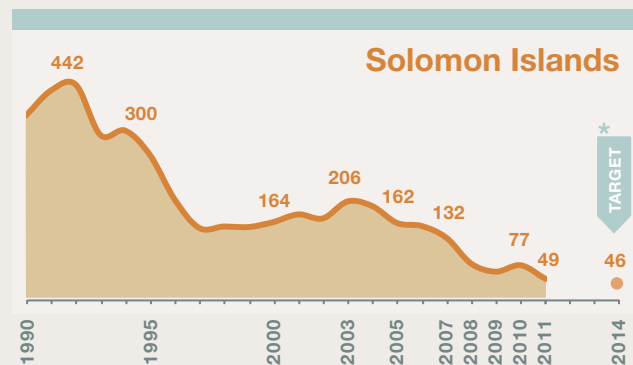
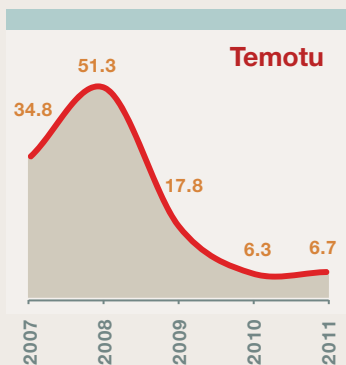


Insecticide spraying operation on Tanna Island, Vanuatu.

Confirmed malaria cases per 1000 people by province in 2011



Confirmed malaria cases – Number of cases per 1000 people



* Malaria Action Plan 2008 - 2014.

Solomon Islands

The burden of malaria, as measured by number of confirmed cases per 1000 people, has been dramatically reduced in the last 20 years, from 421 per 1000 people in 1993 to 49 in 2011. In the nation's capital, Honiara, cases dropped from very high levels of 1072 per 1000 population in 1992 to 103 in 2011. Despite these high case numbers, malaria rarely results in death. In 2011 there were 19 malaria-related deaths reported in Solomon Islands.

In 2011, more than 91% of households in rural areas had long-lasting insecticide-treated nets, and 84% of those had more than one of these special-treated nets designed to prevent malaria for three years. On average, 69% of children aged less than five years slept under a treated net; in Honiara it was 83%, and 71% of all young children in rural areas slept under a treated net. All pregnant women in Honiara slept under a treated net, but only 53% of pregnant women living outside Honiara slept under a treated net.

Most women knew about the dangers of malaria, how to prevent it and the importance of prompt treatment. More than 65% recognized fever as a symptom of malaria, nearly all (98%) knew that malaria can kill, more than 80% knew that mosquito bites were the cause of malaria and that bed nets were an effective method of prevention. The importance of seeking treatment at a health facility



Malaria prevalence

0.3%

Temotu

0.4%

Other Provinces

for children or other family members with fever within 24 hours was understood by about three quarters of the women surveyed. In general, women were confident that the medicines available are effective in treating malaria.

In the two elimination provinces, Isabel and Temotu, the number of malaria cases confirms the success of the interventions. Isabel province has a population of 28 666 and there were only 44 confirmed malaria cases, or 1.6 cases per 1000 people, in 2011. In Temotu, with a population of 24 946, the number of confirmed cases was a bit higher with 6.5 cases per 1000 people.



84%

Knowledge on preventive measures for eligible women



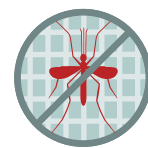
97%

Health facilities able to diagnose malaria with confirmatory testing



75%

Women who would seek treatment within 48 hours of fever onset

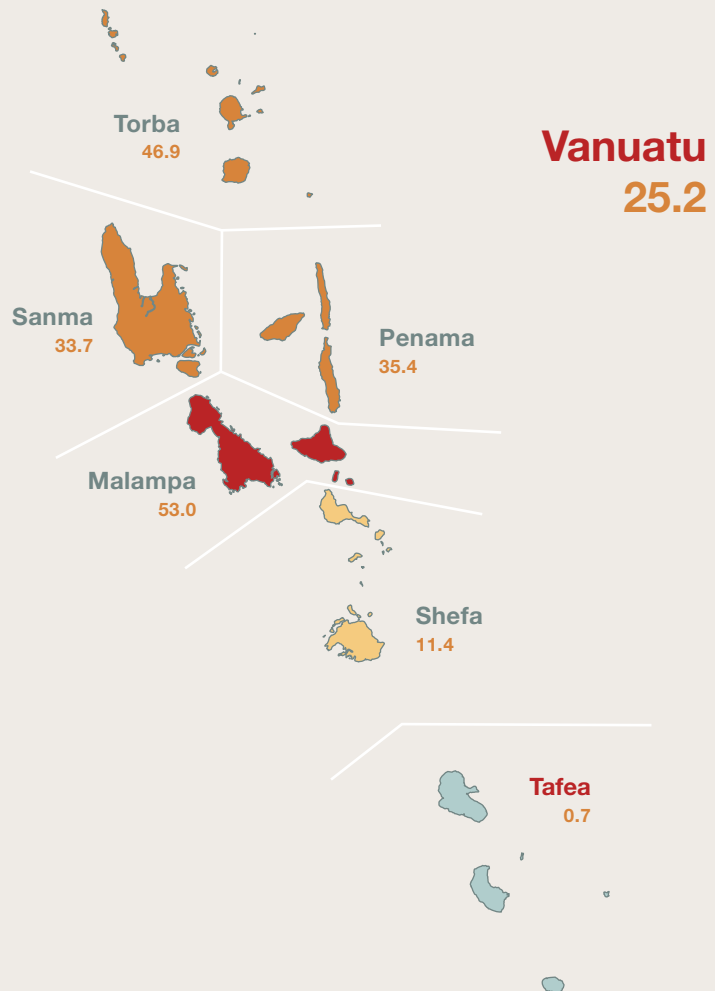


91%

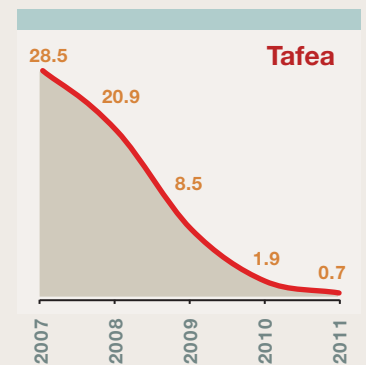
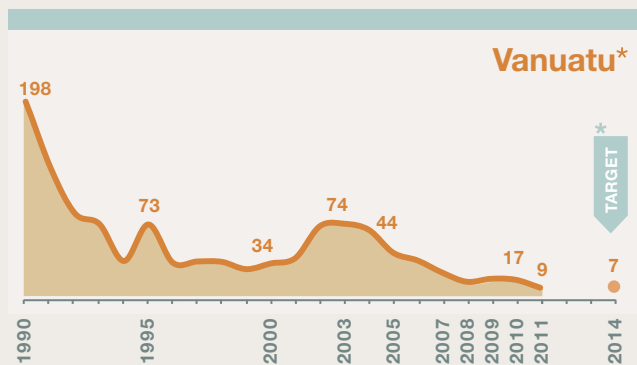
Availability of long-lasting insecticide treated bednets

Confirmed malaria cases per 1000 people by province in 2011

Confirmed malaria cases per 1000 people



Confirmed malaria cases – Number of cases per 1000 people



* Malaria Action Plan 2008 - 2014.
* Based on microscopy results only.

Vanuatu

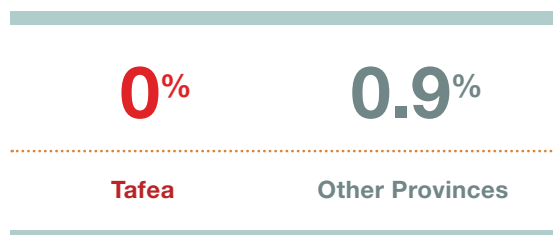
Malaria is a major health concern in Vanuatu, and most of the 250 000 population are at risk of malaria. A range of interventions has decreased the number of malaria cases from 198 per 1000 people in 1990 to only 25 cases per 1000 people (nine cases per 1000 people based on microscopy results only) in 2011. The policy goals are to control malaria throughout the country, and, at the same time, implement the elimination program among the 33 000 people of Tafea province.

Nationwide, 71% of households owned at least one long-lasting insecticide treated net. In Tafea province, the elimination area, 93% of households owned at least one treated net. On average, 66% of children aged less than five years slept under a treated net, and in Tafea as many as 83% of under-fives did so. In Tafea, 85% of pregnant women slept under a treated net, but nationwide this number is only 51%.

Almost all women knew about the dangers of malaria, how to prevent it and the importance of prompt treatment. More than 93% recognized fever as a symptom of malaria; nearly all (99%) knew that malaria can kill and that mosquito bites cause malaria, and that bed nets were an effective method of prevention. All (100%) women said that it was very important to seek treatment for malaria immediately in case their children had fever. In general, women were confident that the medicines available are effective in treating malaria.



Malaria prevalence



Vanuatu has increased the coverage of laboratory diagnosis of malaria and nearly all health facilities (98%), including community aid posts, can now diagnose malaria using either microscopy or rapid blood tests, and most have artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT) available. Among household members in the 2011 survey, who were diagnosed with malaria at the nearest health facility within two weeks prior to the survey, 100% received the correct first-line malaria treatment.

In the elimination province of Tafea, the current few malaria cases confirms the success of the interventions, showing a 98% reduction of confirmed malaria cases in 2011 compared to 2007. Malaria elimination activities have also recently started in Torres Islands, Torba province.



99%

Knowledge on preventive measures for eligible women



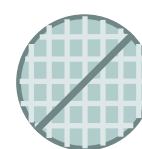
98%

Health facilities able to diagnose malaria with confirmatory testing



95%

Women who would seek treatment within 48 hours of fever onset



93%
Tafea

71%
Vanuatu

Availability of long-lasting insecticide treated bednets

Conclusion



After only a few years of implementing the intensified national control and elimination strategies, the results are excellent in both countries and have established the foundation for the next stages of the programmes with universal access to treated nets, diagnosis, and treatment.

Malaria elimination can only be achieved if we sustain existing control efforts and scale up activities in strategic areas. Behaviour change interventions need to be even more effective. Knowledge about malaria prevention must be translated into safe behavioural practises.

As strategies move forward, different approaches will be needed as systems and effort move from conditions for control and elimination to those for surveillance and containment. Robust surveillance systems must

be maintained to monitor the incidence of the disease and confine outbreaks if malaria occurs.

Both countries have made impressive progress. Malaria is quickly approaching levels not even dreamed to be possible 10 years ago. Elimination is now in sight. Experiences in three provinces where the elimination strategy is being tested have demonstrated that the implemented mix of strategies is working. Whether or not the goal is eventually attained now depends on the continued availability of funding. After the end of 2014 when the current round of Global Fund money comes to an end there is a real risk that the needed funds might not be available. Continued funding commitment by governments and donors is needed to ensure that the amazing gains already made by both countries are not lost and the ultimate goal of malaria elimination remains attainable.



Health centre with solar power in Sanma Province, Vanuatu.

Advocacy for World Malaria Day in Efate, Vanuatu.



Malaria prevalence survey on Aneytium Island, Vanuatu.