

India's Fight Against Malaria Elimination: The 2030 Deadline

January 25, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



Malaria Elimination Latest News

- Under the National Framework for Malaria Elimination (2016–2030), India aims to eliminate malaria by 2030, with an interim goal of stopping indigenous transmission nationwide by 2027.
- By the end of 2025, sustained surveillance and interventions had yielded major gains, with 160 districts across 23 States and Union Territories reporting zero indigenous malaria cases between 2022 and 2024—marking a significant step toward nationwide elimination.

How Malaria Prevalence and Elimination Are Assessed

- The World Health Organization (WHO) measures malaria elimination by assessing whether local transmission of all human malaria parasites has been interrupted nationwide for **at least three consecutive years**, supported by a robust surveillance and response system.
- Based on this criterion, **47 countries** or territories had been officially certified malaria-free by the WHO as of mid-2025.

India's Current Status in the Fight Against Malaria

- India has made substantial progress in reducing malaria burden over the past decade.
- According to the World Malaria Report 2025, the country officially exited the WHO's **"High Burden to High Impact"** (HBHI) group in 2024, reflecting sustained improvements in high-endemic States.
- Malaria cases **declined by about 80%** between 2015 and 2023, and India is on track to meet the **WHO Global Technical Strategy** (2016–2030) target of a **75% reduction** in incidence by 2025, having already achieved over 70% reduction by 2024.
- Despite this progress, India still accounted for 73.3% of the estimated 2.7 million malaria cases in the WHO South-East Asia Region in 2024.
- Localised transmission, population movement, and cross-border importation continue to pose challenges.

India's Strategy for Eliminating Malaria

- India is pursuing malaria elimination through a structured national strategy guided by two key policy frameworks:
 - the **National Framework for Malaria Elimination** (2016–2030), which sets the long-term vision and phased targets, and
 - the **National Strategic Plan** (NSP) for Malaria Elimination (2023–2027), which operationalises these goals.
- The NSP prioritises transforming malaria surveillance into a core intervention, ensuring universal access to timely diagnosis and treatment through a "test, treat, and track" approach, and strengthening prevention via effective vector control.

Key Challenges in India's Malaria Elimination Drive

- One major challenge is **migration** from malaria-endemic neighbouring States, which raises the risk of reintroduction in areas that have achieved low or zero transmission.
- Urban settings present a distinct set of difficulties due to population density, mobility, and complex living conditions.
- According to India's National Strategic Plan, malaria elimination requires special focus on urban, forest, tribal, border, hard-to-reach areas, large infrastructure project zones, and migrant populations.

Regional and Cross-Border Transmission Risks

- The World Malaria Report 2025 acknowledges significant progress in the WHO South-East Asia Region but notes that challenges persist.
- **Plasmodium vivax**, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of regional malaria cases, continues to hinder elimination due to its relapse potential.
- Localised transmission in India and Nepal, driven by cross-border movement, underscores the need for targeted sub-national and regional coordination.

Rising Drug and Insecticide Resistance

- A growing concern is antimalarial drug resistance.
- The WHO has warned of partial resistance to **artemisinin derivatives**—the backbone of current malaria treatment, along with signs of declining efficacy of partner drugs.
- In response, India is strengthening drug and insecticide resistance monitoring and emphasising strict compliance with the 14-day radical treatment for Plasmodium vivax cases.

The Road Ahead for Malaria Elimination in India

- India has reached an advanced stage in its malaria elimination journey, with 34 States and Union Territories recording an Annual Parasite Incidence of less than one in 2023, according to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- Only **Tripura** and **Mizoram** remain above this threshold, highlighting that the challenge is now geographically concentrated.
- Experts emphasise that the next phase hinges on **data accuracy** and **robust surveillance**. They stressed the need for mandatory reporting of even suspected malaria cases, particularly by private healthcare practitioners.
- **Urban malaria** remains a key concern. Rapid urbanisation, expanding infrastructure, and water storage practices in cities like Chennai create breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- Addressing this will require not only government action but also strong community and household-level participation to prevent mosquito breeding in clean water sources.
- As India targets **zero indigenous malaria cases** by **2027** and prevention of re-establishment thereafter, strengthening surveillance systems, improving diagnostic capacity, and intensifying control measures in high-burden districts will be crucial to overcoming these challenges and sustaining elimination gains.

Source: **TH**

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/indias-fight-against-malaria-elimination-the-2030-deadline/>

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