

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

Focus: Dengue Fever

Three weeks ago, Malawi's Ministry of Health, issued a warning to all Malawians travelling to Tanzania especially Dar es Salaam to take extra care following an outbreak of Dengue Fever in that country.

According to a United Nations report that calls for an urgent review of the health dangers posed by climate change; global warming will put millions of people at risk of malaria and Dengue Fever.

The report further says that changes in weather patterns may also increase the number of people exposed to Dengue Fever to 3.5 billion from 1.5 billion by 2080. The disease which is transmitted by mosquitoes (just like malaria) depends on temperature and humidity.

More rainfall in certain areas and warmer temperatures overall provide ideal conditions for mosquitos that spread Dengue to breed and expand into new territories.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To discuss about the link between climate change and Dengue Fever.
- To clearly explain how climate change leads to the prevalence of Dengue Fever
- To encourage listeners to find solutions on how they can avoid Dengue Fever

The Problem: Dengue Fever

Dengue Fever transmission is mainly determined by climatic factors such as temperature, humidity, and rainfall.

Dengue is most commonly spread by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, a domestic, day-biting insect that favours human blood.

Dengue is a vector-borne infectious disease that spreads best in warm climates. The virus is transmitted between people by mosquitoes.

Like malaria, the mosquito gets infected when it bites an infected human. The virus must then hatch for eight to ten days inside the mosquito, at which point the mosquito becomes infectious and can transfer the disease to anyone it bites.

It is believed that global warming can have several harmful effects on human health, both directly and indirectly – and Dengue is one of those threats.

Approximately 2.5 billion people are at risk from Dengue transmission. About 50 million new Dengue infections and at least 12,000 deaths, mainly among children, occur worldwide every year – according to the World Health Organization.

Aedes aegypti is recognized by white stripes on its legs. It is particularly successful at spreading Dengue because it feeds almost exclusively on humans. It is active during the day, and it breeds in any container holding water, like planters, tires or waste drains.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand the link between climate change and Dengue Fever. You can use the following points to help your listeners better understand the risks associated with Dengue Fever.

According to the Ministry of Health's Public Relations officer, Henry Chimbali global incidences of Dengue Fever have grown in the recent past and Malawians need to be on high alert.

He said there was no specific treatment for Dengue, but early detection and access to proper medical care lowers fatality rates below one per cent.

Chimbali further said that Dengue Fever has threatened Tanzania, with more than 1,000 people affected and killing four in June 2014.

The situation is worrisome to Malawi because many people in the country travel to Tanzania for business.

Also remind your listeners that the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito which carries Dengue thrives in warmer temperatures. So with the rising temperatures due to climate change, it makes it easier for it to survive.

Let your listeners know that Dengue Fever symptoms last for seven days and the fever is accompanied by severe headache, pain behind the eyes, muscle and joint pains.

Talk with health officers and find out from them what they are doing to reduce the risk of Dengue Fever in your community. If nothing is being done, find out why.

Has Dengue Fever been reported in your community?

Have an interview with the Ministry of Health spokesperson, Henry Chimbali and find out what measures the Ministry has put in place to try to reduce the risk of Dengue Fever spreading from Tanzania to Malawi.

What should a person do if they get Dengue Fever?

Community Engagement

Ask your listeners to call or sms their thoughts on what a community can be done to prevent Dengue fever.

Useful Contacts

- PRB- Contact person; Sandra Mapemba: +265-99-921-9789
- Ministry of Health PRO; Henry Chimbali: + 265-99-989-0047
- WHO (2002) DengueNet: WHO's Internet-based System for the Global Surveillance of Dengue Fever and Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever (Dengue/DHF). *Wkly Epidemiol Rec* 77: 300-304.



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