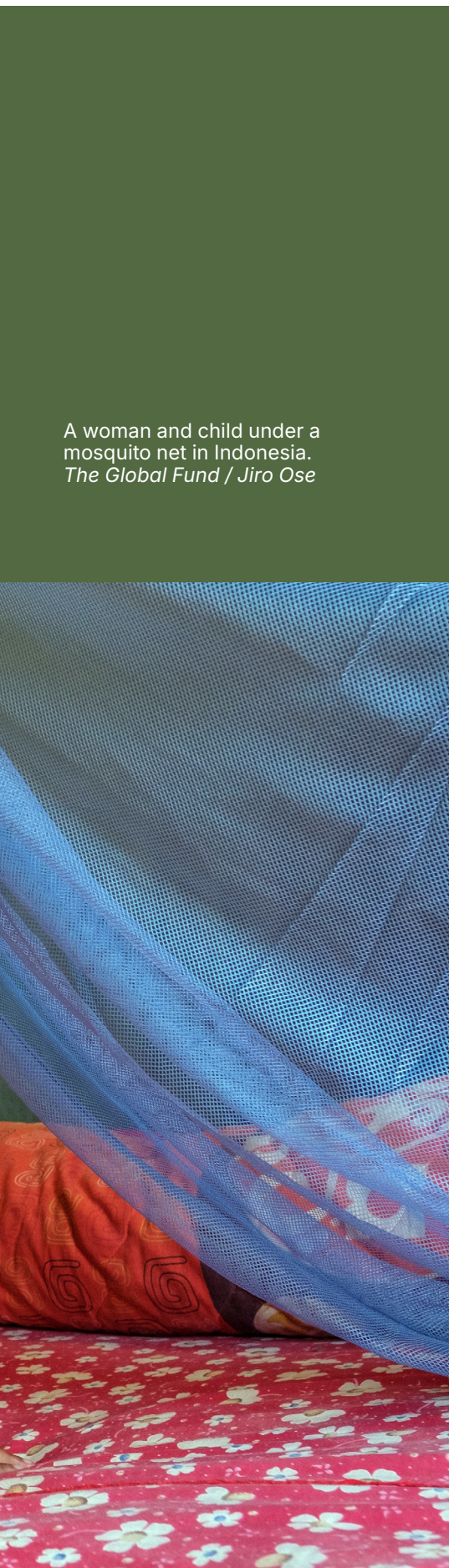


# Red alert: Malaria risks to the Indo-Pacific following US aid funding cuts





A photograph showing a woman and a child under a blue mosquito net. The net is draped over them, and the background is a solid green color. The woman is partially visible, and the child is also under the net. The net has a fine mesh texture. The background is a solid green color.

A woman and child under a mosquito net in Indonesia.  
*The Global Fund / Jiro Ose*

## The US government's decision to terminate the majority of its funding for global health programs will have severe consequences for Australian-backed efforts to eliminate malaria in the Indo-Pacific, and could result in a surge of cases across the region.

Over the past two decades, US, Australian and other donor countries' and private sector investment to the Global Fund has helped substantially reduce malaria incidence rates and deaths across the Indo-Pacific region. Several countries are now on the brink of eliminating the disease.

This progress on combating malaria has delivered significant benefits to Australia. It has lowered the risk of Australians contracting the disease while abroad and reduced the threat of domestic outbreaks. The recent [detection of locally acquired malaria cases in the United States](#) – the first in 20 years – demonstrates how quickly health security can be undermined when control efforts weaken.<sup>1</sup> Strengthening regional public health also supports economic growth and promotes stability, reducing the risk of regional conflict and boosting security and prosperity.

The sudden withdrawal of US funding threatens to reverse progress made to control malaria in

the Indo-Pacific and could lead to a sharp increase in cases throughout the region. Such a resurgence would strain health systems, increase mortality, undermine economic productivity, and drive up healthcare costs. It would disrupt trade and tourism, exacerbate poverty and displacement, and contribute to regional instability. In addition to the threats posed to Australians living, working and travelling in the region, a surge in malaria in the Indo-Pacific would significantly increase the likelihood of imported cases leading to a domestic outbreak.

To avoid these outcomes, Australia must maintain its commitment to regional malaria control and work with international partners to fill funding gaps. Sustained investment will help prevent a resurgence, protect vulnerable communities, and support regional stability. Strengthening malaria programs now will save lives and reduce the long-term economic and health costs of future outbreaks.

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1 ['New malaria case in Florida brings national total to 8, the first U.S. acquired cases in 20 years.'](#) NBC News, July 18 2023.



The Indo-Pacific region includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Cook Islands, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Niue, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

# Progress on fighting malaria in the Indo-Pacific region

Since 2002, the Global Fund partnership has supported people affected by malaria, as well as HIV and tuberculosis, in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>2</sup>

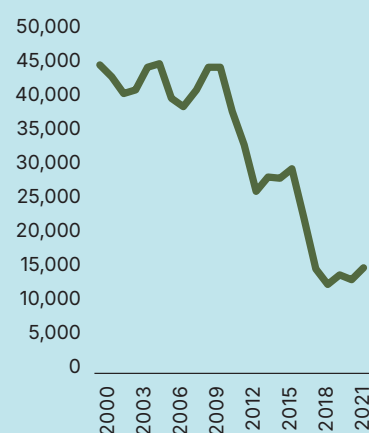
Approximately US\$12.6 billion has been invested in programs to fight the three diseases in the region and build resilient and sustainable health and community systems. Of this investment, approximately US\$558 million has been dedicated to the Pacific region.<sup>3</sup> The Global Fund's Seventh Replenishment Allocation commits US\$335.7 million to combat malaria in the Indo-Pacific during the 2024 - 2026 Implementation Period, of which US\$47 million is invested for the Pacific region.

These investments have delivered steady progress towards elimination of the disease. Incidence rates across the region have fallen from 18 per 1000 people in 2000 to less than 5 per 1000 people in 2020, and elimination of the disease is now within reach for several countries, including Timor-Leste and the Philippines.

More than  
**\$12 billion**  
invested in the  
region (\$US)



## Deaths from malaria in the Indo-Pacific region



Source: WHO World Malaria Report 2023

<sup>2</sup> [Regional Impact Report: Indo-Pacific](#), The Global Fund, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the 11 Pacific Island countries covered in the Western Pacific multicountry grant.





# Eliminating malaria in the Mekong

The Global Fund established a multi-country grant, the Regional Artemisinin-resistance Initiative (RAI) in 2014 in response to the emergence of drug resistance to malaria treatment in the Greater Mekong Sub-region.

Over the past decade, the initiative has made remarkable progress in eliminating *P. falciparum*, the deadliest malaria parasite. Through RAI in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, the number of malaria cases have been reduced from nearly half a million in 2010 to

247,769 confirmed cases in 2023, 228,567 of which were reported in Myanmar. Additionally, efforts made in the region to provide access to quality drugs, early diagnosis and treatment of malaria and appropriate surveillance of drug efficacy have helped reverse antimalarial resistance.

## Key malaria results for 2021-2023 in RAI countries

**6.1 million**

mosquito nets distributed



**18 million**

suspected malaria cases that received a parasitological test



**357,000 cases**

of malaria treated



With the support of RAI, many sub-national areas have already reduced their malaria burden drastically, even to zero.



Malaria testing at a local health centre in Vietnam.  
*The Global Fund*



# Australian investment and support is crucial

In the Indo-Pacific region, successive Australian governments have contributed almost \$AUD1.2 billion to the Global Fund to fight infectious diseases and strengthen health systems since 2003, recognising the importance of such investment in preparing for emerging

health threats in the region. These investments have helped deliver a significant reduction in rates of malaria incidence and deaths across the region, and elimination of the disease is now in reach for several countries.



**\$1.2 billion**

Australian government investment since 2003 to the Global Fund (\$AU)



A malaria control program underway in Sumatra, Indonesia. *The Global Fund / Jiro Ose*

# Malaria control delivers economic advantages

Investment in programs to tackle malaria also brings economic advantages, offering opportunities for trade and investment for nations that are supporting gains in global health through their funding.

[Recent analysis commissioned by Malaria No More UK](#), for example, found that achieving the Sustainable Development Goal target on malaria, which requires a 90% reduction in case incidence and mortality rates by 2030, would increase global trade by \$US80.7 billion between

2023 and 2030. Donor countries exporting to malaria-endemic regions are also predicted to benefit from expanded market access, increased consumer purchasing power, and enhanced business prospects in these regions.<sup>4</sup>



**\$80.7 billion**

boost to global trade by 2030 with a 90% reduction in incidence and mortality rates (US\$)

4 [The malaria 'dividend': Why investing in malaria elimination creates returns for all](#). Malaria No More UK. 2024.





# Investment in global health keeps Australia safe

Investment in global malaria control has not only saved millions of lives but has also helped keep Australia free from the disease.

A mother and baby visit health services at a halfway house in Palawan, the Philippines.  
*The Global Fund / Vincent Becker*

As the world learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, diseases do not stop at borders. Strong health systems act as a first line of defence, preventing the spread of infectious diseases before

they reach Australian shores. With climate change and funding cuts increasing the risk of malaria resurgence, sustained investment is essential to protect both global and domestic health.

