

Football Fights Back: new F.C. launched to tackle deadly disease

Football legends Luís Figo and Khalilou Fadiga found the Zero Malaria F.C. with the RBM Partnership to increase awareness of malaria across the globe

25 April 2023: On World Malaria Day, football legends Luís Figo and Khalilou Fadiga have teamed up with the RBM Partnership to End Malaria to announce an exciting new initiative: the Zero Malaria F.C..

The new initiative will bring together a team of globally renowned footballers to increase malaria awareness, urge greater action against this deadly disease, and work with the RBM Partnership to advocate for the malaria response.

Despite being preventable and treatable, malaria remains a threat to half the world's population and claims a child's life every minute. The latest figures from the World Health Organization show that there were still 247 million malaria cases and 61900 deaths globally in 2021.

Inspired by their own experiences as parents and having seen the devastating impact of malaria across communities worldwide, Figo and Fadiga are calling on the international community to come together and support the RBM Partnership's vision of achieving a malaria-free future. They want world leaders to prioritise tackling malaria and increase funding for the fight against the disease, which is critical for research and innovation and the rollout of existing preventative tools and treatments.

The Zero Malaria F.C. will have a key focus on ending malaria in Africa, where there is a disproportionately high share of global malaria cases (95%). The initiative is being launched as part of the larger Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign, a pan-African campaign co-led by the African Union Commission and the RBM Partnership to End Malaria, empowering communities to take ownership over the fight to end malaria and step up commitments.

Over the coming months, Figo and Fadiga will be recruiting renowned men and women from the world of football to join this unique team and support the Zero Malaria F.C. in striving for a zero-malaria world. The full Zero Malaria F.C. squad will be announced later this year.

Co-captain **Khalilou Fadiga** comments:

"As a parent, it's unthinkable to imagine the pain of losing a child to a preventable disease. We need to be doing more to tackle this disease and ensure this doesn't continue. The Zero Malaria F.C. will bring together outstanding athletes, past and present, to support the fight against malaria. I'm excited to be partnering with Figo and the RBM Partnership to End Malaria to use the power of football for a worthy cause."

Co-captain **Luís Figo** comments:

"Football is an incredible sport, bringing people together from around the world as they support various teams. The most important team on the pitch now is Zero Malaria F.C.. It's time we end malaria for good and protect the lives of everyone it threatens. With rallied support, eradication is within reach, and Fadiga and I are determined to play a key role in making this a reality."

Experts agree that achieving a zero-malaria world is possible. Since 2000, over 20 countries worldwide have reached the target of zero malaria cases, with other countries close behind.

Dr. Corine Karema, Interim CEO of the RBM Partnership to End Malaria, comments:

"It is not acceptable that a child dies from malaria every minute. Country leaders and all partners must urgently step up efforts to get the fight against malaria back on track. It is encouraging to see that football legends like Figo and Fadiga pledge their support and are committed to working towards ending malaria. I very much welcome their determination to work together with the RBM Partnership to End Malaria and that we are not turning our back on a job that is unfinished."

The Zero Malaria F.C. has been founded on the belief that we cannot wait any longer and is calling on the international community to take swift and decisive action to deliver zero malaria.

With increased funding, widely-implemented prevention programmes, and innovation, malaria eradication is possible. Now is the time to deliver this.”

Hear directly from Figo and Fadiga as they announce the Zero Malaria F.C. [here](#) and [here](#).

They are asking individuals and organisations to show support and spread the word about the dire need for more significant action to tackle malaria on social media, using the hashtag #ZeroMalariaFC.

– ENDS –

About the RBM Partnership to End Malaria

The RBM Partnership to End Malaria is the largest global platform for coordinated action against malaria. Originally established as Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership in 1998, it mobilizes for action and resources and forges consensus among partners. The Partnership comprises more than 500 partners, including malaria endemic countries, their bilateral and multilateral development partners, the private sector, nongovernmental and community-based organizations, foundations, and research and academic institutions. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Geneva, Switzerland, hosts the RBM Partnership Secretariat. endmalaria.org

Facebook: [@RBMPartnership](https://www.facebook.com/RBMPartnership)

Twitter: [@endmalaria](https://twitter.com/endmalaria)

About the Zero Malaria Starts With Me campaign

The continent-wide *Zero Malaria Starts with Me* campaign was endorsed by African Union leaders at their 31st Summit in July 2018 in support of the AU goal to end malaria by 2030. The campaign, co-led by the African Union and RBM Partnership to End Malaria, was created to spark a grassroots movement by engaging political leaders at all levels, mobilizing resources and funding, and empowering communities to take ownership of malaria efforts and hold leaders accountable in the fight against malaria.

To find out more information about Zero Malaria Starts with Me, please visit <https://zeromalaria.africa/>