



VIDEO: Joe Wicks on the fight against malaria

***The Body Coach* investigates malaria's devastating impact and finds out how communities in Sierra Leone are fighting back**

[WATCH FILM HERE](#)

Wednesday 28th February: In a new film released today for Sport Relief, Joe Wicks *The Body Coach*, shares his emotional journey to investigate how malaria, a disease that kills a child under five every two minutes, is impacting people's lives in Sierra Leone and sees first-hand some of the incredible work being done to tackle it.

Last month Joe, whose day job is helping people in the UK to get fit and healthy, visited Sierra Leone in West Africa to see how communities there are responding to an entirely different type of health challenge. In Sierra Leone, the entire population is at risk of malaria. But it's not only malaria that makes life so difficult there - only 13% of the population have access to adequate toilet facilities, one in two people live on less than \$1.25 a day and more than a third of the population don't have access to clean drinking water.

Spending time in rural Port Loko District and the bustling capital, Freetown, Joe visited some of the projects supported by the Comic Relief and GSK partnership, and met passionate people with a powerful sense of determination to rid their community of the devastation malaria brings. Doctors, young people, parents and local radio DJs shared their take on the fight against malaria, what more needs to be done and why they're never going to give up.

Joe said: "I feel really proud to be part of Sport Relief and help raise awareness of such an important issue. I've learnt so much about malaria – not just about how you need to get tested early doors and get the right treatment to survive, but how malaria actually stops people from living their life in so many ways, like going to work and school.

"At times I felt really emotional. The living conditions are so harsh and it makes malaria an even bigger problem. You can see mosquito breeding sites everywhere you look. I think what's shocked me the most is that people aren't fazed by it – malaria's not seen as a big deal because it's so common. It's like people have just accepted that it's part of life for them, but it shouldn't be that way.

"The people I met blew me away, especially Mohamed, who you meet in the film. He's overcome so much in his life and is now training to be a citizen journalist to help educate people about malaria, thanks to this project that Comic Relief and GSK partnership is supporting. A lot of what I saw is being driven by young people, which I love – young people have a lot to give. The energy and momentum in Sierra Leone is amazing and I truly believe that all the things I've seen will have a positive effect on those communities."

Joe added: "Malaria is a big killer, year on year. If we don't take it seriously, people will continue losing their lives, even though it can be treated and prevented. It's important that we talk about malaria all year round and we don't forget it. We know fewer people are dying around the world from malaria, but hundreds of thousands still do. That's far too many but with more support, we can fix this."

Money raised this Sport Relief, back from 17th-23rd March, will help Comic Relief continue working with projects and people who are fighting malaria on the frontline. For more information on how to get involved, visit sportrelief.com.

ENDS

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Jack Jones
020 7820 2731
Jack.jones@comicrelief.com
www.comicrelief.com/media-centre
Out of hours 07984 510 473

Sarah Fagan
020 7820 2526
s.fagan@comicrelief.com
www.comicrelief.com/media-centre
Out of hours 07984 510 473

NOTES TO EDITORS

Sport Relief

Sport Relief brings the nation together to get active, raise money and change lives. Since 2002, Sport Relief has raised over £335 million. The money raised by the public will be spent by Comic Relief to tackle the critical issues affecting people across the UK and the world. This year, Sport Relief culminates in a week of activity from Saturday 17th to Friday 23rd March, leading to an unmissable night of TV on the BBC.

Comic Relief

Comic Relief is a UK charity which aims to create a just world, free from poverty - where everyone is safe, healthy, educated and empowered. Since 1985, Comic Relief has raised over £1 billion. That money has helped, and is helping, people both at home in the UK and across the world. For information about Comic Relief and the work it carries out, please visit www.comicrelief.com
Comic Relief, registered charity 326568 (England/Wales); SC039730 (Scotland)

About the Comic Relief and GSK partnership

In 2015, Comic Relief and GSK announced a five-year partnership to fight malaria and strengthen health systems in some of the countries worst affected by the disease. The £22 million fund will provide targeted grants over five years to organisations on the frontline in four malaria-endemic countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the Greater Mekong Subregion.