

## **Writing About The Role of Mass Net Distributions in the Fight Against Malaria**

### ***Millennium Development Goal Number 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases***

Africa sees the majority of the world's 300 million cases of malaria every year. Around one million people die from the disease on an annual basis with 90% of these deaths occurring in Africa and primarily among children. This makes malaria one of the top three childhood killers, accounting for approximately 20% of childhood deaths in Africa.

In recent years, attention from international donors has been focused on tackling this pervasive disease – not only because of the scourge it represents but because methods for preventing, diagnosing and treating malaria are already available. As a result there are a number of international targets, chief among them Millennium Development Goal 6, which includes to have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases; the Abuja Declaration targets of halving the number of deaths through malaria by 2010; and the Roll Back Malaria's Scale Up For Impact goals of 100% mosquito net coverage.

Key among the scale up interventions is mass distribution of mosquito nets, which offer one of the simplest and most immediately effective ways to reduce malaria infection rates. Over 175 million insecticide treated mosquito nets have been distributed in Africa in recent years. Massive, logistically complex distribution campaigns are currently underway in many countries and in Nigeria, for example, it is hoped that cases of malaria will fall by at least 50% after the nets have been distributed.

But what is the long-term impact of mass net distribution campaigns on malaria? How can we be sure that every family who receives a net is actually using it in the right way, at the right time, or that it is being used by those who are most vulnerable? The vast majority of those affected by malaria are also struggling with poverty which can force people to prioritise who will use the net or receive the malaria treatment should an infection occur. Gender, age and possibly economic value are key deciding factors for many families. Also, what happens when the net wears out (3-5 years max) or becomes torn? How will it be replaced by a family for whom the cost or a replacement net might be the equivalent of four months income? And if a member of the family gets malaria anyway can they get the medicines they need?

So what role does mass net distribution play in the fight against malaria and how much is it providing a top-line solution for those working to meet the various goals and targets, perhaps allowing them to sidestep some of the harder issues required to achieve long term, sustainable malaria control?

Using your own research, interviews and investigative methods, you are invited to look behind this issue and write about what is really happening. Use facts to support your article.

Useful sites to begin your research:

<http://www.malariaconsortium.org>

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Global-Issues/How-we-fight-Poverty/Health/Malaria-and-TB/>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/sarah-boseley-global-health/2010/feb/22/malaria-prevention-health>

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/aids.shtml>

[http://www.rollbackmalaria.org/docs/abuja\\_declaration\\_final.htm](http://www.rollbackmalaria.org/docs/abuja_declaration_final.htm)

[http://www.rollbackmalaria.org/toolbox/tool\\_GMAP.html](http://www.rollbackmalaria.org/toolbox/tool_GMAP.html)

[http://www.rollbackmalaria.org/docs/round9/SUFIintroduction\\_en.ppt](http://www.rollbackmalaria.org/docs/round9/SUFIintroduction_en.ppt)