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DDT is unsafe

I was very disturbed to see the recent column promoting the widespread use of DDT to control malaria in Africa ("A deadly legacy," Op-Ed, Thursday). Angela Logomasini's attack on the life work of "Silent Spring" author Rachel Carson must be somehow politically motivated, as it is certainly not based in fact.

The truth is, DDT's impacts on human health are well documented and new studies continue to show evidence of harm. Recent science shows lower sperm counts among men in South Africa where DDT is being used for malaria control, and China's DDT-based malaria control programs are now linked to higher miscarriage rates among women.

Mrs. Logomasini also badly misrepresents the World Health Organization's position on DDT. WHO recently affirmed its serious concern about the health affects of the pesticide, as well as its commitment to help countries reduce their reliance on DDT for malaria control as required under the international Stockholm Convention. This treaty, now supported by 142 countries and hundreds of environmental health groups around the world, allows for careful use of DDT in the short term in emergency situations while countries shift to safer -- and more effective -- malaria control solutions.

Yes, more effective. In the vast majority of cases, spraying with DDT is not the best way to control malaria. What we need in Africa are proven, community-based programs that include a range of tools such as bed nets, education, better health care, water drainage and improved sanitation.

It is time to move beyond the false and distracting debate over DDT. I invite Mrs. Logomasini and her DDT-promoting allies to join us in calling for effective and safe solutions to the crisis of malaria, here in Africa and around the world.

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