Global network calls for safe malaria solutions

For immediate release

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Malaria controls that work

Global network points to successful, safe solutions on World Malaria Day

Every day, children are still dying of malaria - a devastating disease that is both preventable and curable. To mark World Malaria Day this April 25th, Pesticide Action Network (PAN) International is calling on public health experts, national malaria control officials and health aid funders to adopt all available effective, safe and sustainable malaria control measures.

“Malaria is devastating too many communities in Africa,” said Dr. Abou Thiam of PAN Africa, based in Dakar, Senegal. “To control this horrible disease African health officials must invest in safe solutions that are best for each community. Possibilities include environmental management, biological controls, correct use of bednets, preventative medication, effective treatment, community participation – and especially carefully chosen combinations of these methods and approaches. There is no magic bullet.”

Many holistic malaria control efforts have shown good results in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The network highlighted a new report by PAN Germany documenting successful community-based malaria control programs worldwide.

“We have many successful malaria control projects in urban and rural areas in Kenya,” said Dr. Charles Mbogo of the Kenya Medical Research Institute in Kenya. “We have reduced rates of infection by up to 50% by raising awareness about malaria and involving the community in managing the environment to control mosquito populations. We also promote the use of bednets and in some cases apply environmentally safe larvicides.”

Mexico has seen great successes with its national malaria control program that was designed to eliminate the country’s reliance on indoor spraying of the pesticide DDT, which has been slated for international phase-out under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. Mexico phased out all use of DDT with an aggressive program involving environmental management, improved sanitation, house modifications and effective malaria treatment. .

“We applaud the Mexican health officials for this success,” said Fernando Bejarano from PAN Latin America (RAPAL). “Other countries and funders should adopt this approach and share the Mexican experience of a safe and effective malaria control program that saves lives.”

In May of last year, the World Health Organization reaffirmed its commitment to helping countries that still rely on DDT for malaria control to phase out use of the persistent chemical and adopt safer alternatives. Earlier in the year, public health professionals and scientists released the “Pine River Statement,” a review of the latest science on the human health consequences of DDT use that called for the development of “safe and effective alternatives to DDT” for malaria control.

“Communities suffering from the deadly burden of malaria don’t need the added burden of indoor spraying with DDT ,” said Sarojeni Rengam of PAN Asia Pacific. “Not only are such approaches flawed due to their human health costs, they are also not as effective in the long run.”

Examples of sustainable malaria control approaches are available also beyond Latin America and

Africa. Vietnam, parts of Sri Lanka and some regions in India have shown very good results with holistic malaria control approaches based on extensive communication campaigns, public education about malaria, and promoting simple but highly effective preventative strategies like bed nets and environmental controls of mosquito breeding sites.

Medha Chandra from PAN North America and Carina Weber from PAN Germany are convinced that it is high time that USAID and institutions in Europe support and encourage safe and sustainable malaria control approaches. Medha Chandra said “Communities around the world deserve no less“

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Resources:
PAN Germany (2010): Environmental strategies to replace DDT and control Malaria (A4, 30 pages);
PAN Germany (2010): Control malaria without DDT! (A4 flyer, 6 pages);
The Pine River Statement: Human Health Consequences of DDT Use

Dar es Salaam Declaration on Alternatives to DDT

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