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UN begins campaign to distribute mosquito nets in Central African Republic



Mosquito nets, if properly used and maintained, can provide a physical barrier to hungry mosquitoes

28 May 2010 – In an effort to protect children and pregnant women in the Central African Republic (CAR) from malaria, the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) today said it was working with the Government to provide each household across the country with at least one mosquito net treated with long-lasting insecticides.

The campaign is intended to reach 896,000 households in the coming months, the agency said.

“Malaria is one of the main causes of child deaths in the Central African Republic and the nets are part of our strategy to reduce its impact on young children and pregnant women,” said UNICEF’s representative in CAR, Tanya Chapuisat, at the launch of the campaign.

With some 173 out of 1,000 children dying before their fifth birthday, CAR has one of the highest child mortality rates in the world. Malaria accounts for an estimated 19 per cent of those deaths, according to UNICEF.

The agency said it needs an additional 1.5 million insecticide-treated mosquito nets and \$1 million to meet logistical costs to reach all people at risk of malaria in the CAR, Ms. Chapuisat said.

Regular use of nets can reduce malaria mortality by about 20 per cent and incidence of the disease 50 per cent in children under the age of five, who, like pregnant women, are most at risk.

Malaria is caused by a parasite called plasmodium, which is transmitted via the bites of infected mosquitoes. Symptoms include fever, headache, and vomiting, and usually appear between 10 and 15 days after the mosquito bite. If not treated, the illness can quickly become life-threatening by disrupting the blood supply to vital organs.

UNICEF and partners will be distributing the nets directly to the communities in three phases, working to ensure that people have the nets before the approaching rainy season. Mosquitoes breed faster during the wet season when there are pools of stagnant water, their ideal breeding places.

“We don’t want to just distribute the nets, we want people to use them,” said Ms. Chapuisat. “If necessary, we will go door to door to demonstrate how to hang up a net and to persuade every family that it could save their children’s lives,” she added.

The nets were provided by [UNITAID](#), an international financing facility established as a mechanism to accelerate access to treatment and care of those infected with HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

Continuous instability in the northern region of the CAR is making it difficult to reach large parts of the population there, including more than 300,000 internally displaced persons, returnees and refugees from neighbouring countries, according to UNICEF.

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