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World Bank steps up to plate in war on malaria with \$200 million for bed nets



A mother and her newborn child lay under a mosquito bed net. Most malaria-carrying mosquitoes bite at night

22 April 2010 – Backing a call for greater action from the United Nations Special Envoy for Malaria, the World Bank today committed \$200 million to provide people in sub-Saharan Africa with treated bed nets to protect them from a disease that kills nearly 1 million people every year.

In a separate move the UN stepped up its use of new media portals such as Twitter and Facebook in the fight against malaria by expanding its group of Social Media Envoys to include such leading humanitarian figures and business philanthropists as Queen Rania of Jordan and Microsoft chairman Bill Gates.

“As one of the three largest sources of money in the struggle to overcome malaria, the World Bank is determined to help close this gap,” [World Bank](#) President Robert Zoellick said, noting that the money will fund production and distribution of a further 25 million nets, half the quantity still needed to supply all those at risk by the end of the year.

Yesterday, in a [message](#) ahead of World Malaria Day on Sunday, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Special Envoy for Malaria Ray Chambers called for enhanced efforts to tackle the disease, which mainly affects poor countries and is severest in Africa, where one in every five children dies of malaria.

In 2008, Mr. Ban set the dual goals of providing all those at risk of malaria with control interventions by 31 December, with the ultimate goal of ending malaria deaths by 2015.

To date 200 million mosquito nets have been delivered across sub-Saharan Africa, affording protection to half of the world's population at risk of malaria, and 100 million more are being produced and delivered. The new funding will provide half the remaining 50 million nets needed to ensure the 2010 goal is met.

The money will support malaria prevention efforts in countries hardest hit by the deadly parasite, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Zambia.

"Bed nets are vital to protect people from this terrible disease. We know they work. All that is needed is more money," Mr. Zoellick said, "We are making this commitment today to make sure those in danger are protected, and because the lives of every man, every woman and every child count."

Mr. Chambers said the new Social Media Envoys will take one social action, such as a tweet on Twitter or wall post on Facebook, each month for 12 consecutive months, starting with World Malaria Day. Individuals interacting within these social media spaces will be asked to donate funds to the UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) to end malaria deaths.

"With the participation of additional new media luminaries, the user-driven syndication of our online message platform has doubled in reach," he added. "Moving into World Malaria Day on 25 April, we are thrilled to have social media's most prominent voices leading this consciousness-raising and movement building effort to end malaria."

Speaking last night at UN Headquarters at the opening of a multimedia exhibition on the disease, Mr. Ban stressed the heavy toll that malaria took on the world's poorest nations.

"Let us be clear: malaria is a disease of the poor," he said. "Wealthier countries eradicated malaria a long time ago. Here in the United States, that public health triumph was achieved 150 years ago. Time and again, countries have shown that defeating malaria is simply a question of resources. It is relatively easy to prevent. It is easy to detect and cure. There is no need for a quarter of a billion people to become sick each year. There is no reason for 900,000 to die."

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