

# UNICEF Ghana Fact Sheet

## MALARIA

July 2007

For every child  
Health, Education, Equality, Protection  
ADVANCE HUMANITY



### Situation of Malaria in Ghana

- 3.5 million people contract malaria every year.
- Approx. 20,000 children die from Malaria every year (25 per cent of the deaths of children under the age of five).
- Even if a child survives, the consequences from severe malaria such as convulsions or brain dysfunction can hamper long-term development and schooling.
- The annual economic burden of malaria is estimated 1-2 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product in Ghana.

### Actions taken

#### • Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Initiative

RBM started in 2003 to strengthen health services and make effective prevention and treatment strategies more widely available.

Ghana health Service (GHS) in cooperation with local government authorities and UNICEF distributed **Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs)** to over 20 per cent of children below 5 and pregnant women through community bed nets sales agents, antenatal clinics and child immunization clinics in the Upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions.

The distribution of more than two million 'long-lasting' nets for children under 2 was integrated into the national measles campaign in 2006.

### Interim results

The uses of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) increased from 3.5 per cent of under-five children in 2003 to 21.8 per cent in 2006 (see Graph 1).

One out of five children under five now uses ITN according to 2006 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).

### Malaria in Africa: Largest killer of children

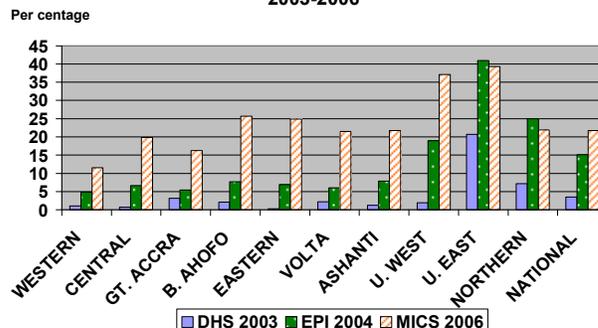
- Malaria kills one child every 30 seconds, about 3,000 children every day.
- Over a quarter of all young child deaths in Africa occur due to malaria.
- Over one million people die from malaria each year, mostly children under five, with nine out of ten malaria cases occurring in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Pregnant women and their unborn children are particularly vulnerable to malaria, as a result of low birth weight and maternal anaemia.
- Infants born to mothers with malaria are likely to have low birth weight – the single greatest risk factor for death during the first months of life.

### Insecticide Treated Nets (ITN)

ITN can reduce child mortality by 20 per cent. The new technology of 'long lasting insecticidal nets' eliminates the need for re-treatment and keeps nets effective for up to 5 years.



Graph 1: ITN coverage in children under five years 2003-2006



## Actions Taken (cont.)

- **Intermittent Preventive Treatment (IPT)** during the pregnancy, which significantly reduces the proportion of low-birth weight infants and reduces maternal morbidity, was promoted in the upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions.
- In the above 3 regions, Ghana Red Cross Society and their network of Mother-Mother-to-Mother supported clubs to scale up prevention and **home management** of fevers.

## Actions in 2007 and onwards

- In order to reach 60 per cent of pregnant women and children under five with **Insecticide Treated Nets (ITN)**, the unmet target set under Roll Back Malaria Initiative, the Government of Ghana in cooperation with a variety of development partners and the private sector, in implementing various ITN distribution schemes.
- In 2007, UNICEF started to support a pilot implementation of a new and promising malaria prevention strategy called “**Intermittent Preventive Treatment in Infants (IPTi)**”. This strategy involves the provision of curative doses of an anti-malarial (sulphadoxine-pyrimethamine) to infants as they attend for routine childhood immunization. It is believed to be highly effective in reducing malaria infection and anaemia.
- In the North, the Ghana Health Services started distribution of “**artemisinin-based combination treatment (ACT)**” through community based volunteers as a key “home management of malaria” strategy. Prompt access to ACT can drastically reduce Malaria mortality.

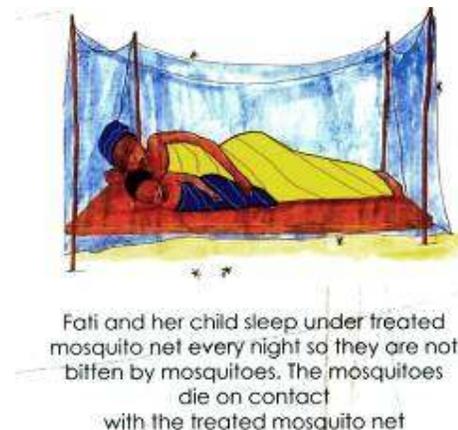
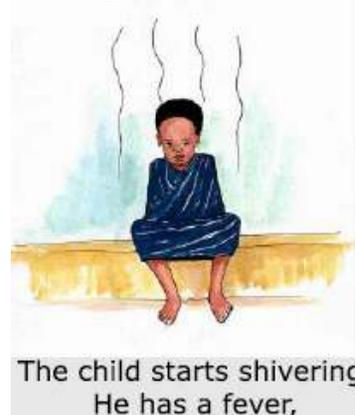
## Way forward/challenges

- Reduction of taxes and tariffs for mosquito nets and other commodities such as insecticides and antimalarial drugs will contribute significantly to malaria control strategies.
- Continuous high-level political commitment and mobilization of resources are required to apply the effective tools, medicines and control strategies already available.

## The Hidden Costs of Malaria

- A malaria-stricken family spends an average of over one quarter of its income on malaria treatment, as well as paying prevention costs and suffering loss of income.
- Malaria-afflicted families on average can only harvest 40 per cent of the crops harvested by healthy families.
- In endemic areas, as much as 60 per cent of children's schooling may be impaired as a result of repeated bouts of malaria.
- Malaria-endemic countries are among the worlds most impoverished. The cost of malaria control and treatment slows economic growth by about 1.3 per cent a year in Africa.

## Training material for women's leaders



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