



Press Release

MALARIA KILLS OVER ONE MILLION PEOPLE PER YEAR – Without gender focus, progress to combat the disease will be cut short

Stockholm, 28 April 2006 – The international donor community needs to direct more attention and money towards fighting malaria with a gender approach in order to save lives and promote development, says the recently formed Global Gender and Malaria Network. Representatives of the Network met with officials from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Foreign Ambassadors in Stockholm today to highlight the devastating toll of malaria and the need for interventions specifically targeted towards women.

- *"Women have the greatest responsibility for caring for those who fall ill from malaria, yet in most endemic countries these same women have the least access to information, decision-making power and financial resources that would allow for effective disease prevention and treatment at the community level,"* said Dr Awa Marie Coll-Seck, Executive Secretary of the Roll Back Malaria Partnership.

Malaria is a debilitating and deadly disease that affects 40% of the world's population, is the cause of between 1 to 3 million deaths every year and results in untold suffering and human misery around the world – predominantly in Africa. In more than 50 countries across the continent, malaria takes its daily toll - 3000 young children under the age of five die from a disease which is preventable, controllable and treatable.

Malaria can affect all segments of the population, but young children, pregnant women, people living in emergency situations and people living with HIV/AIDS are particularly vulnerable to this devastating disease. Malaria during pregnancy can result in maternal mortality and severe anemia and can lead to adverse birth outcomes such as spontaneous abortion, stillbirth, low-birth-weight infants and poor infant survival and development. Malaria exacerbates poverty in the households, the communities and the nations where it holds sway.

Women's voices must be listened to

While efforts to combat malaria have ramped up in recent years, the global response to the disease has inadequately addressed the social and biological situation of women. The Global Gender and Malaria Network is calling on leaders to look at malaria from a gender perspective in order to optimize the funds being directed towards malaria prevention and control.

- *"Women's voices have not been heard as regards malaria. It is a non-issue as it is the disease of the poor, a women's disease. It is time the international community and the decision-makers in malaria endemic countries take on a gender perspective and listen to the women"* stressed Anita Gradin, former Commissioner for European Commission, Board Member of Kvinnoforum and one of the founders of the Global Gender and Malaria Network.

Today's briefing at Sida was one in a series of advocacy events to advance a *Plan of Action for Gender and Malaria* developed by the Global Gender and Malaria Network. Sida hosted the event to commemorate Africa Malaria Day (25th of April each year) and to link this issue with Sida's ongoing engagement to reduce world poverty through initiatives that promote gender equality.

The Global Gender and Malaria Network

The Global Gender and Malaria Network was created through the project "*Raising Women's Voices on Malaria*" funded by Sida and implemented by Kvinnoforum, the Roll Back Malaria Partnership Secretariat, Femmes Africa Solidarité and the Multilateral Initiative on Malaria. The Global Malaria and Gender Network acknowledges that a gender perspective on malaria research and all areas of malaria control implementation has been neglected in the current global response to the disease. It concludes that gender issues and particularly gender inequality is a barrier to good health for both men and women, but specifically a barrier to women accessing malaria interventions.

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For more information contact:

Kvinnoforum

Carolina Wennerholm

+46 8 56 22 88 27

+ 46 733 84 24 61

carolina.wennerholm@kvinnoforum.se

Roll Back Malaria Partnership Secretariat

Pru Smith

+41 22 791 4586

smithp@who.int

Stiftelsen Kvinnoforum/ Foundation of Women's Forum is an independent civil society organisation (CSO), that work with strategies for structural change and to enhance women's empowerment in their personal life, working life and at a societal level around the globe.

The Roll Back Malaria Partnership

To provide coordinated international approach to fighting malaria, the Roll Back Malaria Partnership (RBM) (www.rollbackmalaria.org) was launched in 1998 by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. The Partnership now brings together governments of countries affected by malaria, their bilateral and multilateral development partners, the private sector, non-governmental and community-based organizations, foundations, and research and academic institutions around the common goal of halving the global burden of malaria by 2010.

Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS)

FAS is an international women's organisation with the ECOSOC Consultative Status working to empower African women to assume a leadership role in peace building and conflict resolution. FAS programmes operate mainly in war-torn countries such as the Mano River and the Great Lakes regions. As well, FAS works closely with African sub-regional and regional organs such as ECOWAS and the African Union to ensure greater involvement of women in decision-making processes for peace and development.

www.fasngo.org

Multilateral Initiative on Malaria (MIM)

MIM is an alliance of organizations and individuals concerned with malaria. It aims to maximize the impact of scientific research against malaria in Africa, through promoting capacity building and facilitating global collaboration and coordination. The alliance was launched in 1997 at the First MIM Pan-African Malaria Conference in Dakar, Senegal. The Secretariat is hosted, through 2010, at the African Malaria Network Trust in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.