

MASSIVE EFFORT CAMPAIGN

Mobilizing Society Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

Women & Children Protest the Taxation Of Malaria Prevention Efforts

PRETORIA -- A gathering of children and mothers-to-be today delivered a message to African Presidents urging them to protect Africa's future from malaria. As part of an international campaign to Drop the Malaria Tax, giant postcards were delivered to the South African Ministry of Health and the embassies for each of the other 25 African countries that have not removed import taxes on insecticide treated mosquito nets (ITNs), a vital preventive measure against malaria.

"One of the most unbearable pains is that of losing a child," said Xenai Chumbi, one of the expecting mothers who addressed the crowd. "I want to remind you of the fact that though we have a name for a child who loses a mother – called an orphan, there is no word for a mother who loses child."

Three years ago, heads of state and government leaders from 43 African countries met in Abuja, Nigeria and signed a declaration to implement steps to eradicate malaria. Among the promises made were the removal of all taxes and tariffs on ITNs. Yet on the third anniversary of the Abuja Declaration, only 17 countries have removed the tax; South Africa is among the 26 that have not.

"The night attacks and air raids have ended in Iraq, but they continue here in Africa as mosquitoes feast on children who are not protected with nets," said Louis Da Gama, Director of Malaria Foundation International and spokesperson for the Drop the Malaria Tax Campaign. "The world must know that 26 African leaders stand in material breach of their own resolution to stop charging taxes on the purchase of treated mosquito nets."

The group of women and children visited each of the 25 embassies and the South African Ministry of Health to deliver cards that bore messages sent by individuals from over 80 countries. These messages were among many sent from around the world to the campaign's web site at www.MassiveEffort.org. It was fitting that women and children were chosen to carry the plea for affordable ITNs to the Presidents, as pregnant women and children under five are the hardest hit by malaria due to reduced immune systems.

"Despite repeated promises from African leaders, UN agencies and bilateral donors, Africa's children have no sanctuary from malaria because treated mosquito nets are simply too expensive," said Junaid Seedat, Managing Director of Massive Effort South Africa. "African leaders must show the world that they are committed to protecting their children and Africa's future by fighting this disease. It is simply unacceptable that millions of children continue to die from a disease that is preventable, treatable and curable. Now is the time to stop the rhetoric and drop these taxes."

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The Massive Effort Campaign is a global non-profit organization that is catalyzing the emergence of a social movement against AIDS, TB and malaria, and other diseases that keep people in poverty. For more information, visit www.MassiveEffort.org

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