



Press Release

Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid of Belgium applauds Tanzania's progress in rolling back malaria

Dar es Salaam, 4 October 2007. Her Royal Highness (HRH) Princess Astrid of Belgium applauded Tanzania for the considerable gains made in the fight against malaria. Speaking at a meeting of Roll Back Malaria (RBM) partners on the last day of her visit to Tanzania as RBM Special Representative, HRH Princess Astrid said she was struck by the extraordinary commitment shown by healthworkers and partners working in malaria control.

"When visiting Temeke District Hospital – serving a population of 1 million people – I was struck by the commitment of the Director and his staff to their patients, notwithstanding the understaffing and the overcrowding in the hospital."

Every year, malaria kills between 1 and 3 million people and infects 300-500 million. Malaria is the leading cause of death among sub-Saharan African children under the age of five. In addition to its human toll, malaria costs Africa US \$12 billion per year and up to 40% of government health spending. Current deaths caused by malaria in Tanzania are estimated at 80,000 and the goal of Tanzania's current National Malaria Control Strategy is to reduce the burden of malaria by 80% by the end of 2012 from current levels.

Standing side by side with Professor Awa Marie Coll-Seck, Executive Director of the RBM Partnership, HRH also congratulated RBM for providing heightened global advocacy and the necessary targeted coordination to achieve impact and save valuable lives. Professor Coll-Seck thanked the Princess for joining partners around the world to fight malaria – a preventable and treatable disease.

"It is vital that all stakeholders continue to work together and focus on achieving results - Partnership is invaluable and the only way to confront and defeat this scourge," stated Professor Coll-Seck.

Hosted by the Government of Tanzania, members of the National Malaria Control Programme, WHO and other key RBM partners accompanied RBM Special Representative HRH Princess Astrid and Professor Awa Marie Coll-Seck on an intensive four day programme where she witnessed firsthand the treatment of malaria patients, insecticide treated net distribution, the culture of artemesia annua - a key ingredient in malaria medicines, and the production of long lasting insecticidal nets at a new A to Z / Sumitomo factory in Arusha.

"I have to say that I thought the [Artemesia annua] farm is an example of the pioneering role of Tanzania in the fight against malaria. On the tour of the A to Z / Sumitomo, I saw what I think is a convincing business which produces a high quality product in accordance with WHO norms – the number of jobs this factory has created is admirable," stated HRH Princess Astrid.

In a number of areas of mainland Tanzania, where insecticide treated net use increased from ten percent to 60 percent and indoor residual spraying and effective malaria treatment have been introduced, child mortality has declined by 50 percent. In Zanzibar, where the interventions have been fully rolled out in collaboration with the President's Malaria Initiative (U.S.), there are signs of an 86 percent decline in malaria cases in the last three years.

"Tanzania's advances have provided me with considerable personal insight and made very real the entire continent's battle against this killer disease. Great strides are being made, but these need to be sustained and extended for greater impact," concluded HRH Princess Astrid.

Contacts

Hervé Verhoosel, verhooselh@who.int, + 41 79 701 9480 (Swiss Mobile), + 255 773 990 477 (Tanzania)

Katie Gates, + 41 22 791 2891 (Swiss mobile), + 255 763 476 329 (Tanzania)