



EMBARGOED UNTIL 23 September 2004

Call for increased production of long lasting insecticidal nets for malaria control

*Intensified efforts from manufacturers needed to bridge gap between supply
and demand*

JOHANNESBURG, 23 Sept 2004 – In an effort to narrow the gap between supply and demand of long lasting insecticidal nets, agencies working in malaria control are today meeting with the private sector in Johannesburg, South Africa to discuss accelerated production and distribution.

The two day meeting, which has been organised by members of the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership including WHO, UNICEF, NetMark and the Rockefeller Foundation, comes at a time when increased demand for long lasting nets is outstripping production and supply. UNICEF, the global leader in net purchase and distribution, estimates that 30 to 40 million long lasting insecticidal nets are required annually for the next five years in order to saturate the market. Only 13 million are currently being produced every year.

"The deficit is of major concern to us because of its far reaching consequences for malaria control programmes in Africa", says UNICEF's Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, Per Engebak. "This meeting will bring us into discussion with the private sector on how to increase production. Our goal is to save lives - every 30 seconds, a child dies of malaria, a life that could be saved with a mosquito net. A quantum leap in production will help us save millions and also enable the private sector to do good business."

The increased demand for long lasting nets has been fuelled in part by money from the Global Fund, which is enabling countries to scale up their plans for national distribution of long lasting nets. A large increase in production is therefore required.

"The private sector's participation in this meeting is highly promising," says Dr Awa Marie Coll-Seck, Executive Secretary of the RBM Partnership. "We expect the meeting to emerge with a strong roll out plan for increasing production, and the private sector to drive this forward."

The meeting will be attended by over 100 representatives of oil companies, pesticide and textile firms, mosquito net manufacturers, trading companies, national malaria control programme managers from malaria endemic countries, donors, the World Bank, the European Union, the Global Fund, USAID, and JICA, among others.

* * * * *

Background

The long lasting insecticide net is seen as offering African countries the best chance in malaria prevention. Not only is it cheaper in the longer term, but it comes factory pre-treated and retains its repellent efficacy throughout the normal lifespan of the netting material itself, which can be anywhere between two to five years.

A disadvantage of conventional insecticidal treated nets is that they require regular re-treatment with insecticide to maintain their effectiveness. High levels of re-treatment have proved difficult to achieve in Africa due to several factors, including the cost of insecticide, accessibility to insecticide and low knowledge about the importance of the need to re-treat nets. Long lasting nets however do not require re-treatment.

Several long lasting nets are currently under development but two products have been approved by WHO and are already being sold on the market: the Olyset, which is manufactured at plants in China by Sumitomo Chemical Company of Japan and, under a technology transfer agreement with Sumitomo, by A to Z Textile Mills in Tanzania. The other approved net is PermaNet 2.0, which is manufactured by Vestergaard Frandsen in Thailand and Vietnam.

As the leading buyer and distributor of insecticide treated mosquito nets in the world, UNICEF, through its policy of 'sustained equity provision' ensures that nets reach the most vulnerable women and children at minimal cost or for free.

The Roll Back Malaria Partnership

The Roll Back Malaria Global Partnership (RBM) was launched in 1998 by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank. The Partnership's goal is to halve the global burden of malaria by 2010, with a particular focus on Africa.

RBM now includes governments of countries affected by malaria, bilateral and multilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and research groups, and has succeeded in raising global awareness of malaria, generating increased resources and achieving consensus on the tools and priority interventions required to control the disease.

For more information, please contact:

Pru Smith, Roll Back Malaria Partnership Secretariat, Geneva, Tel: + 41 (0) 22 791 45 86; + 41 (0) 79 477 17 44 (cell); smithp@who.int

Victor Chinyama, UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa, Nairobi; Tel: (+254 722) 701 505; vchinyama@unicef.org; Sandton Sun and Towers, Tel: +27 11 780 5000

Mohammad Jalloh, UNICEF Media, New York; Tel: 1 (212) 326 7516; mjalloh@unicef.org

Sandie Blanchet, UNICEF Supply Division, Copenhagen; Tel: +45 35 27 32 07; Mobile: + 45 21 22 95 66; sblanchet@unicef.org