



Arusha, 17 November 2004

A to Z and the Olyset® Technology Transfer

A to Z Textile Mills Ltd was established by the Shah family in 1966 mainly manufacturing Garments and in 1978 we started manufacturing bed nets. Knowing that malaria is the number one killer disease in Africa, we as a company decided to specialize more into bed nets production. This is the first product line contributing 80% of our total production with a current capacity being in the region of over 6 million nets per year, thus rendering A To Z the biggest manufacturer of mosquito nets in Africa. Exports constitute 70% while 30% is for local market and we export to over 25 countries in Africa, with a manpower of 1600 people.

With over 550 million people at risk of contracting malaria in Africa, insecticide treated bed nets (ITNs) have been shown to be one of the most effective methods of prevention. ITNs not only protect the people but also hold the promise of breaking the transmission vector if deployed in sufficient quantities. It has been shown by WHO and other organizations that usage of nets can help to decrease malaria morbidity by as much as 50 to 60%. However, there are many obstacles that limited the effectiveness of these treated nets, the most crucial of which is that they need to be retreated every six months. Sadly, few people perform this process in Africa. In fact, re-treatment rates of nets have been so far as low as 5 to 10%.

Olyset® net is the first Long Lasting Insecticidal Net (LLIN) to be fully approved for the public use by World Health Organization Pesticide Evaluation Scheme (WHOPES) ref. WHO/IS/Ni/331/2002. This information is also available on the following website. www.who.int/ctd/whopes (7th WHOPES Meeting.pdf).

Olyset® net has been a great advance over Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNS), and this technology is indeed the future of malaria control in Tanzania and the rest of the World.

Olyset® net will be called "Magic Power" (Nguvu za Ajabu in Swahili) when it is launched onto the Tanzanian market at the end of this month. This was the name chosen by consumers during market testing by Population Services International because people who had used it said that it not only got rid of mosquitoes but also all other insects and that it acted like a MAGIC POWER in their homes.

A to Z Textile Mills Ltd is geared to scale up the production of Olyset® net Magic Power nets from the current 300,000 p.a. to 1.2 million p.a. by end of January 2005. Any further increase will depend on the market demand.

A to Z has made some new innovations on the Olyset® net such manufacturing lighter Olyset® nets without interfering with the biological strength of the net. This new product has been tested also by independent laboratories and both have confirmed that the nets made of the lighter material conform to the standards.

Other innovations are window mesh, door and eave curtains which are currently being tested at Usa River village in Arusha and have proved to be very effective in mosquito control.

The success of this first technology transfer from Japan to Africa owes greatly to the tireless efforts by WHO, in particular Dr. Pierre Guilet and Acumen Fund who have been in the fore front in making sure that the collaboration between Sumitomo Chemical and A to Z becomes a reality.

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