



Dear Dr Rufaro Chatora

I am writing in reference to the recent WHO AFRO press release "Malaria: Accelerating essential interventions" published on the 19th of May 2008. My organization, Africa Fighting Malaria, was pleased to see indoor residual spraying listed as one of the recommended malaria control interventions. However, we were concerned by the subsequent lack of emphasis on the role of IRS in malaria control and the factually inaccurate description of the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative.

The press release states that the progress made in the tri-lateral malaria control initiative between South Africa, Swaziland and Mozambique, better known as the Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative (LSDI), can be "attributed to enhanced access to health services and the distribution of LLINs of a duration of 3-6 years." This is incorrect and is misleading. As someone who worked on the LSDI for several years I can attest that LLINs were never used as a malaria control intervention; the focus has always been on indoor residual house spraying (IRS).

I would like to refer you to the publication published in 2006 in the American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene entitled "Seven years of regional collaboration for enhanced malaria control - Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland" available online at <http://www.ajtmh.org/cgi/content/abstract/76/1/42>. This paper, on which I was a co-author, was published in the hope that it would serve as a model for other African countries wanting to control malaria using a similar approach. This paper makes it clear that the success of the LSDI can be attributed to effective vector control using IRS and the introduction of an effective treatment. For further information on the LSDI, please see the following website <http://www.malaria.org.za/lodi/home.html>

Globally, IRS has been under-funded and over looked for several decades. The LSDI experience clearly shows that IRS is and has always been a highly effective malaria control intervention. IRS was preferred over LLINs in the LSDI because both Swaziland and South Africa achieved unprecedented success in sustaining malaria control using IRS for over 40 years. One clear advantage that IRS offers above all other malaria control interventions is that it does not focus only on high risk groups, namely children under 5 and pregnant woman, but rather it protects all members of a household from malaria infection. IRS also creates jobs and much needed malaria control capacity. Local men and women are recruited and trained as spray personnel and community-based spray programs improve spray coverage by instilling trust amongst communities and the malaria control programme. The very rapid drop in malaria rates as a result of house spraying further cements community trust in what is being done.

One outstanding feature of the LSDI is the continuous monitoring and evaluation, something that many LLIN projects lack. To assess parasite prevalence, surveys are conducted in all sprayed areas. In addition, annual entomological surveys are performed to determine mosquito density and specie composition. Bi-annual knowledge, attitude and practice surveys are conducted to assess basic knowledge of malaria, and continuous information,

education and communication strategies are in place to education people about malaria. Rigorous surveillance provides scientific information to monitor the possible buildup of drug and insecticide resistance. This structured approach to malaria control has ensured sustained success and sustained support for this remarkable program since 1999. Many people, with special reference to the late Dr Brian Sharp, have worked hard to make the LSDI a beacon of hope for malaria control in Africa. IRS is the undisputed backbone of this regional malaria control initiative and this should be reflected in WHO AFRO publications. Malarial countries in Africa and their development partners should be encouraged and supported to expand and develop IRS programs so that similar results can be achieved. Concurrently, the general public should be educated better about the successes achieved by IRS programs and the need to strengthen and expand these programs.

Yours sincerely



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