



USAID
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TANZANIA

SUCCESS STORY

Insecticide Nets Keep Malaria at Bay

Mothers in Zanzibar fend off malaria with effective bednets



Photo: USAID/Kim Wylie

Mkasi's baby Fatma, just 25 days old, wakes up in Zanzibar each morning under a Long-Lasting Insecticide Treated net.

“How can I possibly care for my five children if I’m always sick with malaria?” asked Mkasi Ali, a 33-year-old mother.

Mkasi Ali is a 33-year-old Zanzibari woman with five children. Her youngest, Fatma, is just four weeks old. When her other children were that age, Mkasi was terrified of what might happen if they were infected with malaria. But today, Mkasi is confident she can fend off malaria — she and Fatma sleep under a Long-Lasting Insecticide Treated bednet.

Distributing these bednets is one of many ways in which USAID is contributing to efforts to curb malaria in Tanzania. Mkasi rocked tiny Fatma as she explained the importance of bednets for women on the island of Zanzibar. “Malaria is horrible,” she said. “Even if sleeping under a bednet can be warm, we must use them to protect ourselves and our children, especially the newborns, from this deadly disease.”

In Zanzibar, 20 percent of the population is under age five. Under USAID’s program, 130,000 children under five and pregnant mothers in Zanzibar received free bednets in early 2006. A USAID partner, the Global Fund, supplied an additional 100,000 nets. The nets are infused with highly effective pesticide that lasts for five years. In contrast to other nets, these long-lasting nets do not need to be retreated every six months to stay effective.

USAID and its partners are working to ensure that all mothers understand the importance of the nets and of preventing mosquitoes from breeding around their homes. Mothers are also learning to seek immediate medical treatment at the earliest sign of illness. About 80,000 children die each year in Tanzania from this entirely preventable illness, and sleeping under insecticide treated nets has proven to be the most effective prevention tool. USAID is also supporting an initiative to spray homes with insecticide to help stem malaria even further in Zanzibar.

The slogan developed in Zanzibar for malaria prevention is *Kataa Malaria*, Kiswahili for Resist Malaria. This is a message welcomed by the women of Zanzibar. Sitting under her bednet, Mkasi looked down at her baby, whose small forehead bore an ash symbol representing beauty. She raised her head and smiled as her eyes rested on the blue gauze net protecting her baby from malaria.

Telling Our Story
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