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First Lady Laura Bush Addresses Compassion in Action Roundtable

On February 15th, the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives convened its second Compassion in Action Roundtable, “Controlling Malaria in Africa–The Unique Role of Faith-Based and Community NGOs.”

First Lady Laura Bush addressed the Roundtable’s participants, emphasizing the Administration’s commitment to combating malaria and recognizing the important role faith-based and community groups play in fighting the disease. She highlighted the President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI), a five-year \$1.2 billion program to combat malaria in 15 African countries. Six million Africans have already benefited from PMI and an additional 30 million will receive lifesaving medicines, insect sprays, and nets as the program expands. Mrs. Bush also



Mrs. Laura Bush talks about controlling malaria in Africa during a roundtable on Feb. 15, 2007. White House photo by Shealah Craighead.

discussed the recently announced Malaria Communities Program, a four-year \$30 million initiative to provide grants to African and American NGOs to support malaria control efforts. She said, “[The Malaria Communities Program] complements the efforts of African governments by creating independent, sustainable malaria control programs.”

Director Jay Hein, White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives; Ambassador Randall Tobias, Director of United States Foreign Assistance; Admiral Timothy Ziemer, United States Malaria Coordinator; John Bridgeland, CEO of Malaria No More; Dr. John J. DeGioia, President of Georgetown University; and over 100 attendees joined Mrs. Bush to discuss strengthening partnerships between charitable organizations and the public and private sectors to most effectively combat malaria.

To read Mrs. Bush’s full remarks, visit: www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/02/20070215-2.html.

Gallup Poll Demonstrates Confidence in Religious Institutions

Dr. Robert Tortora, the Gallup Organization’s Principal Scientist and Chief Methodologist, presented recent findings from the Gallup World Poll at the February 15th White House event. In 2006, the Gallup World Poll asked sub-Saharan Africans in 19 countries about their confidence in eight social and political institutions, including religious, military, financial, health systems and the

national government. Overall, it was found that Africans have the highest



confidence in religious organizations in their countries (76%), followed by the military (61%),

and financial institutions (55%). Additionally, the Gallup World Poll asked sub-Saharan Africans what diseases they considered to be most prevalent in their country. 52% of the respondents perceived malaria to be the most prevalent illness, significantly more than 36% of the respondents who considered HIV/AIDS to be the most

widespread epidemic. In his remarks at the February 15th event, Dr. Tortora urged attendees to leverage the confidence Africans have in religious organizations to combat malaria more effectively.

To read more about the Gallup World Poll and these findings, visit: www.gallupworldpoll.com/.

Faith-Based and Community Malaria Control Programs

The first panel of the February 15th White House event highlighted essential efforts by faith-based and community groups to combat malaria and prevent deaths in Africa. Admiral Timothy Ziemer, United States Malaria Coordinator, moderated the panel and discussed the importance of NGOs collaborating together to fight malaria. He also drew attention to the work of the Inter-Religious Campaign against Malaria in Mozambique to wage a national, interfaith campaign against the disease. Susan Lassen, Coordinator for Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD), spoke of ERD's NetsforLife program, a partnership for malaria prevention in sub-Saharan Africa with unique access to under-served, hard to reach, communities and credited FBCOs for being "the last mile" of anti-malaria service delivery. NetsforLife will distribute one million long lasting insecticide treated nets in 16 African countries by the end of 2008. Allon Lefever, Vice Chairman of the Board for Mennonite Economic Development

"As part of the overall goals for U.S. Foreign Assistance, it is important to expand our partnerships with NGO's to better meet the needs of those who we are trying to serve... Faith-based organizations have built trust and provided hope to generations of individuals in places where hope is scarce."

Ambassador Randall Tobias
Director for U.S. Foreign Assistance
February 15, 2007

Associates (MEDA), talked about MEDA's innovative voucher program for malaria prevention among pregnant women and infants. The pregnant women voucher program has supplied over 1.5 million nets to date and the President's Malaria Initiative will fund the expansion of the infant voucher program.

To learn more about organizations providing relief and humanitarian assistance to those suffering from malaria, visit:

www.fightingmalaria.gov/donors.html.

Leveraging Public-Private Partnerships to Control Malaria

The second panel of the February 15th White House event demonstrated the power of innovative partnerships to fight malaria. John Bridgeland, CEO of Malaria No More, moderated the panel and highlighted the benefits of



collaborating with grassroots NGOs. Dr. Robert Tortora, Principal Scientist and Chief Methodologist for the Gallup Organization, shared the Gallup World Poll findings during this panel. Mark Forshaw, Health Sector Manager for Geneva Global, discussed his organization's support for comprehensive malaria intervention efforts. He emphasized the importance of working with local groups to effectively meet the needs of

communities. Dr. Steven Phillips, Global Issues and Projects Medical Director for ExxonMobil, addressed the core competencies and comparative advantages of faith-based and community organizations and businesses and stressed the need for viable and dynamic partnerships to combat malaria.

For more information about building a comprehensive approach to fight malaria, visit:

www.malarianomore.org.

"Partnership, collaboration, and cooperation must form the foundation of any comprehensive global health strategy that aims both to prevent and treat disease, and combat the inequality and poverty that enables these diseases to persist."

John J. DeGioia, President of Georgetown University
February 15, 2007

The Last Mile of Service

By Jay Hein

At least one million children will die in Africa this year from a disease that has a cure. Malaria has become a ruthless intruder in villages across the continent and yet all that is needed to stand in its way is smarter foreign assistance and the will to act. Given that 300 million infections will occur this year without intervention, there are few humanitarian issues that call us to action with more urgency.

Why is the problem so bad in Africa? Malaria is spread by a certain type of mosquito and it thrives in warm climate, a deadly combination prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa which accounts for 9 out of 10 malaria deaths in the world. In a continent already plagued with AIDS, new research shows people with HIV are more likely to transmit the disease to others when also infected with malaria.

Making the challenges even greater is that over 90 percent of Africa's population lives in rural areas with inadequate public health systems and extreme poverty making even the purchase of a bed nets for a handful of US dollars nearly out of reach.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of world stage leaders and celebrities such as Bono, much of the world is growing its awareness of the AIDS pandemic in the African continent. However, Western citizens remain largely unaware of the plague of malaria which is so regrettable since ordinary individuals can actually make an extraordinary difference in helping to prevent the disease half a world away.

But while Americans at-large remain unaware of these problems, Africans are painfully aware of their plight. New research by the Gallup Organization cites that Africans perceive malaria to be the most prevalent illness in their country. This research also notes that hope resides in the presence of caring, faith-based institutions that can be found at the last mile of service delivery in villages across sub-Saharan Africa.

When asked which social or political organization Africans trusted most, the overwhelming response was religious institutions. The rationale is two-fold: first, there remains high mistrust of corruption in government and other formal institutions; and second, religious institutions are the only organization that can be found in nearly every village across the continent and they are widely seen as a problem-solving institution.

These realities form the basis for the Bush Administration's unprecedented efforts to combat diseases in Africa. President Bush previously launched a \$15 billion plan to prevent, treat and care for AIDS in Africa. In last month's State of the Union, the President called on congress to provide an additional \$1.2 billion to cut malaria-related deaths in 15 focus countries across Africa.

The President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) aims to achieve this goal by reaching the 85 percent most vulnerable population—children under 5 and pregnant women—through a comprehensive approach of indoor spraying of homes with insecticides, distributing mosquito nets, lifesaving anti-malaria drugs and preventative treatment for pregnant women.

Unique to PMI is the Malaria Communities Program, which dedicates \$30 million to develop new partnerships with indigenous faith-based charities whom Africans would most welcome for distribution of foreign aid. It is only through the establishment of such local capacity building that we can help the Africans help themselves.

This week, First Lady Laura Bush convened a White House roundtable on the Malaria Communities Program. At this event, Gallup officials released the research described earlier, program innovators explained how they are working in African villages to solve the problem and policymakers considered new strategies to grow effective solutions.

Beyond government, the event highlighted the emerging private initiatives underway in Africa. The Bush administration has called on the private sector to match its \$1.2 billion investment in malaria control and the Gates Foundation responded with a \$700 million commitment. Further, all Americans are being asked to become involved through the purchase of a \$10 bed net. Groups such as Malaria No More (www.malarianomore.com) are forming to facilitate individual action.

President Bush has stated that "American foreign policy is more than a matter of war and diplomacy." Human rights and humanitarian assistance will be our lasting legacy. Most importantly, millions of lives will be saved thanks to American compassion in action.