

When I took the reins as CEO of Vestergaard from Mikkel Vestergaard Frandsen at the beginning of the year, the company was entering an exciting new phase: LifeStraw became an independent, stand-alone business and I was given the opportunity to help lead the fight against malaria with some of the most innovative and effective LLIN tools available.

Soon after the coronavirus pandemic took hold, the enormous challenges COVID-19 would pose became clear. This included keeping our own employees safe at our various offices while doing our part to jointly fight endemic malaria and pandemic COVID. Because of COVID, I haven't had the opportunity to formally meet many of you within the malaria community. I'm eager to start listening and engaging with you to find out how we can maximize Vestergaard's contribution. Like everyone, we've had to adapt to a new normal. I am proud of the teams' ability to stay the course on our overarching mission: to use technology, science, and innovation to confront the world's most intractable health challenges especially during these challenging times.



Michael Joos celebrates Chinese New Year in Vietnam.

## **Protecting our Supply Chain - Continuing to reliably deliver the highest quality**

We simply cannot allow COVID-19 to roll back the progress we've made over the past two decades. One of our ongoing primary tasks is to ensure that we continue to reliably deliver the highest quality product on time. This is critical to assist our customer's efforts to ensure that their distribution campaigns stay on track. The challenge to protect our supply chain is a priority as we face potential new restrictions on the movement of people and goods this autumn and winter. Vietnam, the location of our manufacturing facilities, has done an excellent job of managing the COVID crisis. In conjunction with country-wide health recommendations, our company introduced employee safety protocols that have helped to ensure continuous manufacturing without any disruptions. Meticulous supplier and raw material purchase planning have and will continue enabling us to deliver on time.

## **Disease eradication is in our DNA**

For more than two decades, Vestergaard has focused on using science, technology and

innovation to manufacture high-quality tools that can eradicate disease. [LifeStraw®](#), incubated within Vestergaard, has helped to all but virtually eliminate [Guinea Worm disease](#). ZeroFly® Tiny Targets were developed as a cost-effective method of eliminating sleeping sickness. And since its inception, our [PermaNet®](#) bednet has remained a leading tool in the fight against malaria.

We remain alert to the development of insecticide resistance as it can compromise the efficacy of our tools and hinder our disease eradication efforts. We tripled our production of [PermaNet® 3.0](#) over the past year, which is the only PBO LLIN that has demonstrated PBO retention for 3 years. Further, we are working diligently on next-generation LLINs to stay one step ahead of insecticide resistance.

This is just a snapshot of the progress already made with our technologies, but there is more to come.

## **Innovations you can expect from us**

Our [SmartNet Initiative](#), which has already gone through multiple pilot projects, is tackling the not often discussed challenge of bednet “usage”. Based on reviews of the available data, we estimate that 20 – 50% of bednets are not used on any one given day. If LLINs are a highly effective tool against malaria but are not being used regularly, then at-risk populations are simply not as protected as they could be. The problem is multi-factorial, highly complicated, and is most likely context-specific thus there is no one-size-fits-all solution. We believe that modern technology can help us increase the use of bednets and therefore improve community protection. We will share more about this initiative in the future.

As an industry, we distribute over 100’000 tons of plastic polymer-based LLINs to the world each year. The disposal of these nets at the end of their life cycle represents an environmental challenge. In addition, polymer raw material costs constantly oscillate placing high-cost pressure on the budgets of donor organizations. We believe recycling can reduce the environmental impact, be done cost-effectively and keep raw material costs stable. Vestergaard’s R&D organization is feverishly exploring innovative solutions ranging from the use of biodegradable plastics as well as the re- and/or up-cycling of polyester materials.

Through the [ZeroFly®](#) brand, smallholder farmers will be able to access affordable crop storage protection tools allowing them to grow themselves out of poverty. Our ZeroFly® storage bags allow for the long-term storage of agricultural harvest products without the need for expensive grain silos, thus paving the way to disrupt the smallholder farmer supply chain. Leveraging this ZeroFly® technology, we are excited to pilot the Chombo microwarehousing and trading platform. ZeroFly® Chombo could potentially help millions of farmers grow out of poverty by achieving higher harvest yields and provide them access to offtake agreements and lower-cost financing.



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## **Doing Good Is Good Business**

As challenging as this moment is, I believe we can continue to make tremendous gains in the malaria fight. Our renewed focus on achieving progress in the most high-burden countries will allow us to protect millions of people in the most at-risk communities. From our technological skills in polymer science, our high-quality manufacturing platform to our boots on the ground, we strive to be a major contributor in the fight against malaria as well as other global health challenges.

It has been my honour to be a part of this journey over the past 10 months. Working hand-in-hand with so many dedicated people and organizations on such worthy causes is inspiring. I look forward to engaging with all of you and finding new ways to partner and collaborate.