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“All the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are deeply intertwined and interconnected. Progress on all SDGs is impacted by what we achieve in regard to the single SDG. If we fail on addressing climate change, other SDGs will be unachievable”.

Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

As we mark World Environment Day earlier this month, the twin challenges of tackling climate change and protecting health come into renewed focus.

Health and Climate Change: A Dual Challenge

As a member of the UN Global Compact since 2006 and a certified B-Corp,* Vestergaard continues to make a sustained contribution to SDG 3, “to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” by fighting malaria. Last year, the company marked the production of a billion PermaNet® long-lasting insecticidal nets in 100+ malaria-endemic countries.

But the twin challenges of climate and health are accelerating and converging. The World Health Organization forecasts an additional 60,000 malaria deaths annually from 2030 to 2050 because of climate change, a 15% leap. African malaria-mosquito vectors are estimated to have moved an average of 4.7 kilometres south per year between 1898 and 2016^[1]. This movement corresponds remarkably closely to the pace of climate change over the same period. Under a business-as-usual scenario, with little reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, 700 million more people could be at risk of contracting the disease.



***About B-Corp**

At the beginning of 2021, Vestergaard achieved Certified B Corporation® status, a prestigious certification that evaluates a company's social and environmental performance. To attain this status, Vestergaard had to demonstrate how its operations and business model positively affects its governance, workers, community, customers, and the environment.

Becoming a Certified B Corporation® signifies our commitment to considering the long-term impact of our business on stakeholders and integrating this commitment into our legal framework. To maintain its certification, Vestergaard must uphold transparency and accountability with its external parties dedicated to using business as a force for good. We realise we can only achieve our mission and goals by recognising our interdependence with others.

To learn more about our B Corp status, visit [Vestergaard - Certified B Corporation - B Lab Global](#).

Innovations for Sustainable Production

Vestergaard is, therefore, equally committed to innovating in product development and across its operations to reduce its environmental footprint. Thus, it contributes to SDG 12,

“ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns,” and SDG 13, “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.”

Vestergaard’s most significant carbon footprint derives from the raw materials it sources to manufacture bed nets. To protect millions of families each night from the threat of vector-borne disease, Vestergaard produces 60 million bed nets per year – equating to 30,000 tonnes of polyester.

Vestergaard actively seeks to switch from fossil-derived feedstock to bio alternatives, dramatically reducing its carbon footprint.

Vestergaard is also actively pursuing opportunities to use recovered and recycled content.

“We first explored the technical feasibility of creating nets from PET waste in 2021. After two years of rigorous testing, we demonstrated the technology’s capability to produce new bed nets from upcycled polyester without compromising quality,” explains Amar Ali, Vestergaard CEO.



Vestergaard's team is exploring eco-friendly alternatives for bed net production to enhance sustainability and reduce environmental impact.

In 2023, the company submitted to WHO-PQ a product change to enable the recycling of Polyethylene waste into the manufacturing of the product roof of PermaNet 3.0.

Navigating Material Trade-offs and Costs

Amar said, "The biggest part of our footprint is virgin yarn. If we can switch to bio-based, renewable sources, that would make a huge difference."

"However, selecting an alternative material involves navigating various trade-offs. We cannot choose an alternative material if it compromises performance or quality because sustainable materials may not always meet the same standards of durability or protection

that we expect from our products. Additionally, we are mindful that alternate materials can carry higher costs, potentially impacting our customers' purchasing power. But we believe the solutions are there. We are exploring various alternatives, and the signs are promising.

Sourcing considerations also include choosing biomass from sources where the land use does not compete with food production.

"This is an important factor for us," said Amar. "We are acutely aware of the competition for land use to grow crops for food and uses such as biofuels and biomaterials. It is clear; we want to avoid any solution, such as maize, that would create further stress on food production or water scarcity."

End-of-Life Management for Bed Nets

Tackling the impact of end-of-use bed nets is also a priority. Vestergaard has launched a project to research and understand what happens to the millions of nets distributed in sub-Saharan Africa when they reach their end of life, working with local organisations.

In its first phase, the project will inform on the best options available to contribute to the end-of-life management of long-lasting insecticide-treated nets. In the second phase, the project will define a model to address end-of-life management and increase practices that are better or neutral for the environment.

"As we pursue sustainability, practical challenges surrounding the collection of used bed nets and the availability of recycling facilities can influence the feasibility of our initiatives. These trade-offs necessitate meticulously assessing our sustainability objectives, material selections, and overall impact on our supply chain and customers. We aim to strike a balance between environmental responsibility, economic viability, and meeting customer expectations," explained Amar

"It requires a system approach to identify workable solutions. We are focused on developing a bio-based net that could be composted responsibly and eliminate plastic waste at the end of a net's life."

Vestergaard continuously improves its environmental performance at the manufacturing level, assessing its impact on water, energy, packaging and material use.

The company examines every aspect of the process and identifies steps for improvement. In the last three years, Vestergaard has engaged in a Clean Production Assessment of its manufacturing sites. Resulting actions include installing solar panels, reducing waste, reusing water to reduce water consumption, and switching away from fossil fuels to biofuels.

In the project's initial phase (2020-2023), the company reduced its electricity consumption by 3.75%, firewood/coal consumption by 1.1%, water consumption by 20%, and CO₂ emissions by 4.2%.

Collaboration and Partnerships for Eco-Friendly Solutions

"Bringing eco-friendly solutions to market will require partnerships, collaboration with recipient countries' environmental authorities and malaria control programs, and with donor organisations financing mosquito nets. Establishing supply chains and a process for collecting old nets is also crucial.

"Climate and health are inextricably linked, and we have no time to waste. We look forward to working with our partners throughout our value chain and with the wider malaria community to deliver solutions that benefit people and the planet for the long term," concludes Amar Ali. Vestergaard's unwavering commitment to fighting malaria and promoting well-being reflects its dedication to contributing to many of the Sustainable Development Goals. Finding solutions to the pressing challenges of climate change and health need urgent action. Vestergaard is actively innovating in product development and its operations to reduce its environmental footprint, aligning with SDG 12 and SDG 13. The company's journey towards sustainable consumption and production involves seeking alternatives to fossil-derived raw materials and addressing the impact of end-of-use bed nets. Through these efforts, Vestergaard aims to balance environmental responsibility, economic viability, and meeting customer expectations while driving towards a more sustainable future.

[1] Colin J. Carlson†, Ellen Bannont†, Emily Mendenhall, Timothy Newfield and Shweta Bansal Published:15 February 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsbl.2022.0365>