

## Getting Back on Track to End Malaria

Since 2000, global efforts to fight malaria have greatly reduced the incidence of malaria by more than 500 million cases. The majority of the cases prevented can be attributed to vector control tools, with long lasting insecticide nets (LLINs) responsible for 68 percent of all malaria cases averted in Africa.

Set against the back drop of early success, however, the WHO World Malaria Report 2018 announced that after an unprecedented period of success in global malaria control, progress has stalled. Data from 2015–2017 highlight that no significant progress in reducing global malaria cases was made in this period. There were an estimated 219 million cases and 435,000 related deaths in 2017.

The increase in malaria cases occurring is particularly worrying, given the significant increase in the distribution of LLINs. Between 2015 and 2017, a total of 624 million insecticide-treated mosquito nets (ITNs), mainly long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs), were reported by manufacturers as having been delivered globally. This represents a substantial increase of nearly 200 million more nets over the previous period 2012–2014, when 465 million ITNs were delivered globally.

Although 56% percent of people at risk of malaria now have access to LLINs throughout the world, Africa carries the highest burden with 200 million cases reported in 2017. This may be further complicated by of the threat of insecticide resistance, which has been reported throughout Africa and threatens the efficacy of current tools.

As the malaria community explores what is required to get back on track, questions are emerging around the quality of LLINs, and the associated concerns around accountability and equitable access to the most effective tools.

Previous success supports optimism, but we must speak out on changes needed to get back on track. Let us work together to assure the right actions are taken.

### On quality

There is a growing consensus for the need for consistent standards around the quality of LLINs with a greater adherence to WHO prequalification



An alarm bell is ringing around the world today: for the second straight year, there is a flatlining of what had been a steady decline in the global malaria epidemic.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,  
Director-General, World Health Organization  
2017 World Malaria Report



specification. Numerous reports of physical and chemical quality issues have been raised during the last two years. The issues appear systemic and in some instances involve large quantities of nets. Among the issues around physical dimensions: incorrect mesh size, knitting defects, imperfect seams and poor trimming have been reported. Among the issues around chemical content: LLINs with reduced pyrethroid content and poor wash resistance have been reported. With substandard chemical content, some WHO bioefficacy tests on new LLINs reported nearly 0% mortality after 20 standard WHO washes – far below the WHO cut-off of 80% mortality.

To ensure the consistent quality of LLINs, we call for a rigorous and systematic system of post shipment inspections and routine monitoring in country that looks at both the physical and chemical attributes of LLINs. This is crucial to ensure high quality LLINs are distributed to the community, providing effective protection.



## On accountability

As a social good company, our mandate is to deliver innovative global health tools. We believe each LLIN manufacturer must be held accountable for the quality of each net. Accountability is about responsibility – holding each other responsible for the best way to achieve our common goal – eliminating malaria.

We welcome the establishment of a transparent WHO PQ complaints procedure so that instances of non-adherence to the product specifications are reported by National Malaria Control Programmes (NMCP) and donor agencies. While countries have reported on the poor quality of LLINs received, the information is not always shared with procurement agencies, donors and other vector control organisations.

We ask for an investigation of the issues reported on non-adherence, and we call on WHO PQ to take timely action resulting in the suspension and the delisting of substandard quality vector control products. Today, the actions of procurement agencies towards suppliers of substandard nets are not standardized. A transparent and active WHO PQ system with feedback to relevant stakeholders will guide informed procurement decisions. It will provide NMCP with a formal mechanism to ensure populations at the risk of malaria receive high quality LLIN and other vector control tools.

## On equitable access to the right tools

In the drive for universal coverage, greater efforts should be directed to ensure NMCPs have equal access to data to inform decisions that best support their country's need. A country driven approach is more

Vestergaard is a global company known for its innovative solutions to create a healthier, more sustainable planet. We operate under a humanitarian entrepreneurship model, whereby doing good is good business. More than 795 million PermaNet® LLINs have been distributed, protecting more than 1.6 billion people in more than 200 countries. In Africa, 550 million nets have been distributed protecting 1.1 billion.

Vestergaard's pioneering product, PermaNet®3.0 provides increased efficacy in areas of pyrethroid resistance. To date, 12 countries in Africa are utilizing the net, protecting more than 20 million people today.

See: [www.permanet.com](http://www.permanet.com)

than simply the number of nets needed, but what product meets local needs. Countries must be confident that they have access to innovative tools to meet their elimination targets.

Pyrethroid resistance is threatening the efficacy of LLINs and jeopardizing the larger public health goal of eliminating malaria. While developing and testing the next generation of LLINs, in areas of pyrethroid resistant malaria mosquitoes, we call for shifting to the most efficacious LLINs available today as a key measure to put the fight against malaria back on track: PBO LLINs.

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