

Christian Children's Fund

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Every 30 Seconds an African Child Dies from Malaria; Education Key to Prevention

Richmond, Va. – April 16, 2009 – An African child dies every 30 seconds from this same disease; nearly a half billion people become ill because of it. About 1 million children under the age of 5 die each year from malaria – a disease that is entirely preventable.

As World Malaria Day approaches April 25, Christian Children's Fund Senior Program Health Specialist David Shanklin stresses the importance of education about the disease.

"Education is the foundation for prevention, but many vulnerable families do not know how malaria is transmitted or how to prevent or treat it," Shanklin said.

Malaria is a parasitic disease transmitted to people through infected mosquitoes. About 40 percent of the world's population is at risk of malaria, Shanklin said, with the most serious area of impact being sub-Saharan Africa. About 90 percent of deaths due to malaria occur in Africa, mostly among young children.

"Less than 25 percent of people who need prevention and treatment services actually receive them," Shanklin said.

In countries where CCF works and there is a problem with malaria, staff works with public health services to mobilize families to use insecticide-treated mosquito nets to sleep under, seek prompt treatment of suspicious cases, encourage pregnant women to take anti-malarial medicines and encourage indoor spraying for mosquitoes.

One of those women who received help from CCF is Justine from Uganda, who nearly lost a baby in 2008 because of malaria.

"It would make me vomit a lot, with a very high temperature," she said of having malaria. "I was hospitalized at a maternity clinic where I spent 13 days and was put on intravenous fluids."

A CCF-trained malaria community volunteer came to Justine's home and taught her about malaria control and prevention.



Christian Children's Fund (CCF) is a global force for children, helping the world's deprived, excluded and vulnerable survive and thrive in order to reach their full potential. Serving children since 1938, CCF works in 31 countries and assists approximately 15.2 million children and family members worldwide, regardless of race, creed or origin. CCF is a member of the ChildFund Alliance.

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"I learned how malaria is transmitted, symptoms and how to prevent it with an insecticide treated bed net," Justine said. "What touched me was to know that malaria can cause abortion and the death of infants. CCF then gave me an insecticide treated bed net."

With the treatment, Justine regained the weight she lost while she had malaria and had a healthy pregnancy.

"I am grateful to CCF for saving my pregnancy and for the trained community volunteers," she said. "Now I encourage mothers and pregnant women to always use insecticide treated nets to save themselves and their children."

Progress of fighting malaria also can be seen in Zambia. From 2002 to 2007, two-thirds of all households in that country have benefitted from indoor spraying, about 70 percent of children under the age of 5 sleep under bed nets and more than 66 percent of pregnant women receive one or more doses to prevent the disease.

In Senegal, CCF was awarded a \$7.8 million USAID grant in 2007 to lead a five-member consortium for the Community Action Against Malaria campaign in support of the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI). Senegal is one of 15 African countries targeted by the PMI to reduce mortality rates from malaria by 50 percent.

Almost 880,000 children under 5 years of age and 75,000 pregnant women will be the direct beneficiaries of the malaria initiative.

Mosquito bed nets can be purchased on CCF's Web site through the Gifts of Love & Hope catalog at www.christianchildrensfund.org/gifts. One mosquito bed net can protect a family for up to four years. Currently, bed nets range in price from \$11 to \$14 for countries in Africa.

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