

Targeting Malaria: A Classroom Simulation for Comparing Charity and Social Marketing-Based Approaches

Case Scenario

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is the principal U.S. agency which provides assistance to countries recovering from disaster, trying to escape poverty, and engaging in democratic reforms. Its work covers the areas of economic growth, agriculture, trade, global health, democracy, conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance.

USAID has just announced that it will provide an additional US\$5 billion for malaria prevention and treatment in Africa. The government of Tanzania has been promised a portion of the support from the U.S. Government, but only if it is able to produce a convincing strategic proposal for eradicating malaria.

Malaria is the number one killer among children in Tanzania, and mothers who are infected during pregnancy run the risk of having low birth weight babies, maternal anemia, impaired fetal growth, spontaneous abortions, stillbirths, and premature babies.¹ The mosquito-carried disease accounts for approximately 30% of the national burden of disease and loss of productivity in Tanzania.² In 2003, 10,712,526 cases of malaria were reported in the country, of which 4,800,768 were children under five years of age. That same year, 14,156 malaria-related deaths were recorded.³

USAID expects the strategy to include a detailed plan for prevention, with a large part of the solution relying on the ubiquitous usage of Insecticide-Treated Nets (ITNs). When used properly in endemic regions, the nets have demonstrated the reduction of severe illness and mortality caused by malaria. According to the Center for Disease Control, in community-wide trials in several African settings, ITNs have been shown to reduce all-cause mortality by about 20%.⁴ In addition to the benefits provided by sleeping under the covering of the net, the nets kill mosquitoes that come into direct contact with the insecticide-treated material and repel those that come within a close distance. According to the WHO, when at least 80% of all adults and children in a community sleep under nets, this can reduce the rate of infection for even those who do not have nets.⁵ Otherwise, the repellent will detract the mosquitoes in only a limited number of households, but will not help address the problem at the community level.

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© 2010 William Davidson Institute. Professor Ted London of the University of Michigan and Research Associates Grace Augustine and Moses Lee prepared this simulation. The development of this case was catalyzed by the BusinessWeek article "Charity vs. Capitalism in Africa," published January 2, 2008. While based on a hypothetical situation, the simulation is a compilation of numerous articles and reports. The facts are derived from established sources and accurate to the best of the authors' knowledge.
