Video, Bed Nets: Nigeria Leads the Fight Against Malaria

NARRATOR: A child dies from malaria every 30 seconds. It is one of the world's biggest killers. Nowhere in Africa is the burden of malaria greater than in Nigeria.

SPEAKER: Nigeria probably has the most serious Malaria problem in Africa.

SPEAKER: One in every three of children that die prematurely in Nigeria die as a consequence of malaria.

SPEAKER: Around 50 percent of Nigerians will have one attack at least of malaria each year.

SPEAKER: (Indiscernible), a village in Kano state, one of the most affected areas in the country. Under the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, Nigeria's national malaria control program, the UK's Department for International Development (indiscernible) with its SuNMaP project and other partners including the World Bank, Unicef and US AID, the U.S. agency for international development, have come together to take a stand against the disease. Kano has become a key battleground in the fight against malaria.

SPEAKER: This is the first time that Nigeria is really making a concerted effort to try and address this problem.

SPEAKER: Mariam lives in (indiscernible) with her four children and six grandchildren. For Mariam and her family, malaria is a constant worry. They have no practical protection from the mosquitos that carry the disease. So every night they
risk being bitten and infected. Today that is all going to change.

SPEAKER: (Indiscernible) has a large malaria program called SuNMaP. It's a national malaria program. It's roll is to provide bed nets for the campaign.

SPEAKER: SuNMaP and partners is supplying long-lasting, insecticidal nets to be distributed to households across Nigeria. The campaign is commencing in key affected states including Kano and will eventually roll out across the whole country.

SPEAKER: Every household will receive two nets by the end of 2010, which means that they have 18 months to distribute 63 millions, which has been identified as the need for Nigeria.

SPEAKER: All around Kano state the nets have been stockpiled ready for distribution and a large event is held to mark the launch of the campaign. The response is an unprecedented communications push. House-to-house help mobilizers visit every village to ensure that everyone knows what they need to do.

SPEAKER: Now we are going from house to house with the nets. We are ensuring that more people will have access to these. By the end of 2010, we'll be sure that at least 80 percent of people in every colony, in every settlement, will have them.

SPEAKER: Each household is given a net card which they
will exchange for two free nets at the collection points. As part of their SuNMaP training, the mobilizers must make sure that each household knows when and where to collect their nets. Each house is marked to show that the mobilizers have paid a visit.

SPEAKER: We send messages along with the house-to-house mobilizers: To protect from malaria, use the net. It's very simple.

SPEAKER: Today Mariam is to collect the mosquito nets that will protect her family and the deadly malaria carrying mosquitos. Word has gotten around and there is already a large cue. Everyone is excited. These precious nets will make a huge difference to their lives.

As soon as she arrives home, Mariam hangs her nets outside for 24 hours, as she has been instructed. This is to prevent possible allergic reactions to the insecticide. Mariam is not alone. All across Kano state, women are hanging their nets in preparation for use.

Once the 24 hours are up, the nets can safely be used. Mariam decides to keep one and give the other to her eldest granddaughter as a wedding gift. It means the next generation of Mariam's family will have the best protection right from the start, and with it the best chance of living full and healthy lives.

SPEAKER: (Indiscernible) come down. And therefore, people
will not want to have too many children because they feel that half of them may die of malaria.

SPEAKER: The SuNMaP program will help to make Nigeria the first country in Africa to offer universal coverage of mosquito nets to its entire population. It is crucial to ensure that the program is sustainable.

SPEAKER: The challenge is not to get somebody to sleep under the net the day after the campaign. The challenge is that they still sleep under the nets two years after the campaign.

SPEAKER: We can start developing a system by which nets are constantly being released into the communities on a routine basis.

SPEAKER: No single organization can do this alone. The mosquito net program in Nigeria is the result of a vast range of different organization and...

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SPEAKER: ...and faith groups coming together as a cohesive partnership to support the Nigerian government in taking a stand against malaria.

SPEAKER: All of these programs and the implementers are working together.

SPEAKER: Everybody feels that we're doing this together. There's a good team spirit. We all need each other when we go to the field.

SPEAKER: It's not often that we come on such a scale
together.

SPEAKER: Ultimately tackling malaria in Nigeria is the only way to tackle it on a global scale and meet United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

SPEAKER: Goals 4, 5, and 6 are direct. But Goal 1 says elimination of poverty and hunger. Malaria is a disease of poverty. This is very, very encouraging.

SPEAKER: The aim now for Nigeria and SuNMaP is to roll out the sleeve beyond the border of Kano state so that the whole country will benefit. Millions of lives will be saved.

SPEAKER: It can be done. It can be done. Other countries have done it, and Nigeria is doing it. If it can be done in Nigeria, it can be done anywhere else.

(End of video.)