

UNIT 4:

Lesson 1: Malaria — What Is It? How Can It Be Prevented?

Suggested Class Time: 45 Minutes

Objectives:

- Learn the basic facts about malaria and the preventive role of bed nets in halting its spread;
- Learn about UNICEF and its partners' role in malaria prevention;
- Explore ways in which communities make decisions affecting children's health, specifically decisions about the distribution of malaria-preventing bed nets;
- Develop strategies for teaching the proper use of bed nets.

Session Plan:

- Learning by Viewing: "The Gift of Growing Up" (Malaria No More): 15 minutes
- Malaria Facts: 10 Minutes
- Case Studies: Combating Malaria in Malawi and Congo: 20 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Computer with Internet access, connected to projector if possible
- Handout 4: Malaria Fact Sheet
- Handout 5: Malaria Prevention For Sale: Malawi
- Handout 6: Free Malaria Prevention: Congo
- *Child Survival: A Global Challenge* Chapter 2, page 13

Tip: To save time, distribute Handouts 5 and 6 to be read and summarized for a homework assignment prior to class discussion in the Case Studies segment of this unit.

Vocabulary:

community health worker, community partnership, health system, insecticide-treated bed nets (ITNs), malaria

Tip: Definitions for these Vocabulary items are in the Glossary on page 38 of the *Youth Report*.

Learning by Viewing

Directions

1. Start by showing “The Gift of Growing Up,” a 10-minute video about malaria and its prevention, available online at Malaria No More:
<http://www.malarianomore.org/film/index.php>.
2. Ask students to discuss their immediate reactions to the film.
 - What did you find most interesting?
 - What surprised you the most?
 - What further questions do you have about malaria’s cause and prevention?

Malaria Facts

Directions

1. Distribute Handout 4 and review more facts about malaria and its prevention.
2. Ask students to read page 13 in the *Youth Report* to further familiarize themselves with the use of anti-malaria bed nets.

Case Studies: Combating Malaria in Malawi and Congo

1. Divide the class into two groups.
2. Distribute Handout 5 to one group and Handout 6 to the other group.
3. Invite one student from each group to locate Malawi and Congo on a world map or globe.
4. Ask students in each group to read the case study or, if it was assigned as homework, to review it. Facilitate group discussions by posing the following questions to each group:

Malawi Group

- Why is there always a charge for bed nets in Malawi? (*It is believed that people will value the nets more if they have to pay for them.*)
- How do the poorest people in Malawi afford bed nets? (*Donations of nets from organizations like UNICEF make low prices possible; low-cost bed nets are also subsidized by sales at full price.*)

Congo Group

- How did Congo obtain the bed nets that are distributed free of charge? (*In part from UNICEF, the United Nations Foundation, and the Government of Japan.*)
 - How did Congo's national "Mother and Child Week" promote bed-net use? (*As part of a nationwide distribution of free vaccines and bed nets as well as treatment for pregnant women.*)
6. After each group responds, ask: In your opinion, which is the better distribution strategy: selling bed nets (for a token amount) or distributing them free of charge? Why? (*Many students may think distributing free bed nets is the better strategy because it protects more people; others may argue that people value what they have to pay for, so selling bed nets ensures people will value them.*)
7. Explain that students will be using Handouts 5 and 6 as resources in the role-play activity that follows.

Malaria Fact Sheet

What is Malaria?

Malaria is a serious disease spread through the bite of a malaria-infected mosquito. Each year, there are 300 million to 500 million cases of malaria throughout the world and about 1 million child deaths. In areas where malaria is common, it can be the leading cause of death and poor growth among young children. Malaria is also particularly dangerous for pregnant women.

Where in the World is Malaria a Problem?

- Sub-Saharan Africa is the region hardest hit by malaria. Approximately 90 percent of all malaria-related deaths occur there.
- Malaria is also a threat to people in other tropical and subtropical regions of the world. More than 40 percent of the world's population is at risk.
- Malaria has been eliminated from many developed countries with temperate climates.

How Does Malaria Affect Children?

- Every 30 seconds a child dies of malaria; 3,000 children die daily from the disease. Malaria ranks as the leading cause of death in children under five in Africa.
- Even children who survive are at risk. Malaria can slow a child's growth and brain development and is likely to cause anemia, a blood disease.
- Early treatment with anti-malaria medicine can protect infected children.

How Can Malaria be Prevented?

Sleeping under a mosquito net treated with insecticide is the best prevention against the mosquitoes whose bites transmit malaria. Protection is especially important at night, when mosquitoes are most active. Insecticide-treated bed nets (ITNs) kill the mosquitoes that land on them.

- Insecticide-treated bed nets (ITNs) provide a protective barrier against mosquitoes for up to five years.
- Widespread use of insecticide-treated nets could prevent almost 500,000 deaths a year in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Source: UNICEF Facts for Life <http://www.unicef.org/ffl/10/> and Malaria No More, www.malarianomore.org; UNICEF in Action: Malaria http://www.unicef.org/health/index_malaria.html

Malaria Prevention For Sale: Malawi

In a small district hospital of Kasungu, central Malawi, Kate is wrapping her three-day-old son in a yellow blanket. She smiles at her baby, not noticing the green mosquito net that hangs above her bed, a colorful detail in the white room. This detail could save her son's life.

Malaria kills an African child every 30 seconds....

"I have had malaria and everybody I know has had malaria," says Kate. "During my pregnancy I came several times to the hospital for...checkups and the staff told me about mosquito nets. I will buy a net from the hospital when I go home. I want to protect my baby." Kate is one of the 2,500 women who delivered their infants at the Kasungu hospital in 2002 and bought a mosquito net for 50 kwacha (less than 20 US cents). (The price of the mosquito net, which is sold with an insecticide treatment kit, is heavily subsidized by UNICEF.) Kate lives in Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the world. During the rainy season, when the risk of malaria is the highest, the Kasungu Hospital sells up to 450 nets a day.

UNICEF supports anti-malaria programs.

UNICEF and its partners focus on children under the age of five and pregnant women in all Sub-Saharan countries. In 2002 alone, UNICEF provided over 4.4 million mosquito nets to 25 African countries, for a total value of \$9.5 million, making it the largest mosquito net buyer in the world. This represents a 175 per cent increase since 2001. In addition, UNICEF purchased \$3 million worth of insecticide used to treat the mosquito nets.

In Malawi, nets are not given away for free.

Even the poorest families have to pay to ensure that they consider the net a valuable item. Communities themselves were consulted on the cost of the mosquito nets and agreed on the price of 50 kwacha. However small, this money contributes to the recovery of cost.

Village health committees sell mosquito nets and receive 20 percent of the price to use for health-related activities in the village.

In a village near Kasungu, the community sold enough nets to be able to afford electricity for the local health facility. "We bought 120 mosquito nets.... We sold all of them, and tomorrow I'll buy another 70 nets," says the chairman of the Kanin'ga village health committee in Kasungu district. "People have already paid for them. Some of our committee members were trained on the use and treatment of nets with insecticide, so that they can inform families who buy them."

Source: UNICEF: Malawi, Real Lives http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/malawi_2430.html

Free Malaria Prevention: Congo

Free treatment to save lives

In the Republic of Congo, 21,000 children die from malaria every year. It is the main cause of death among children under five. To improve this situation, the Government of the Republic of Congo is now funding a new policy authorizing free malaria treatment for children under the age of 15 and women who are pregnant.

In 2007, 545,000 children here received free mosquito nets produced by UNICEF and financed by the Government of Japan and the United Nations Foundation. Pregnant women also received free intermittent preventive treatment of malaria.

“Mother and Child Week”

To promote awareness of the new policy, a “Mother and Child Week” was held across the country, providing children with free vaccines and mosquito nets. Malaria treatment for pregnant women was available as well. “[This new policy] has the potential to save the lives of 14,000 Congolese children under five every year,” said Dr. Koenraad Vanormelingen, the UNICEF Representative in Congo-Brazzaville.

UNICEF and Malaria Prevention

How Does UNICEF Help Prevent Malaria?

UNICEF is a founding partner, with the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the World Bank of the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) initiative, whose goal is to halve the world’s malaria burden by 2010. UNICEF has recently entered into partnership with Malaria No More, an umbrella organization with the goal of providing an insecticide-treated bed net (ITN) to every family that needs one in Sub-Saharan Africa. Together with its partners, UNICEF distributes ITNs, working with Ministries of Health and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as community and village health workers.

How many bed nets has UNICEF distributed?

UNICEF is the single largest purchaser of insecticide-treated bed nets in the world, having bought more than 25 million in 2006 alone.

Does UNICEF charge for bed nets?

No, UNICEF does not charge for the bed nets it supplies to governments or partner organizations. UNICEF is a prominent and consistent advocate for free bed nets for all children under the age of five and pregnant women.

Sources:

UNICEF: Malawi, Real Lives http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/malawi_2430.html; Spread the Net: Frequently Asked Questions cms.spreadthenet.org/cmsdocs/FinalFAQ.doc; UNICEF At a Glance: Congo http://www.unicef.org/doublepublish/congo_44876.html