

SWEDISH WORKPLACE HIV/AIDS PROGRAMME

CASE STUDY: MALARIA – BED NET DISTRIBUTION

MALARIA – AN ENEMY TO BUSINESS

Malaria is one of the world's most important public health concerns, causing over 620,000 deaths and approximately 207 million clinical cases every year. 90% of deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa and 3.4 billion people worldwide are at risk. It is estimated that malaria can reduce gross domestic product (GDP) by as much as 1.3% in countries with high disease rates. The disease is said to cost Africa approximately USD 12 billion a year in lost GDP due to its debilitating effects. Furthermore, malaria has proven to worsen the effects of HIV and AIDS, and vice versa, as both diseases feed on each other. Therefore, malaria is taking an even higher toll in regions hard hit by HIV and AIDS, than elsewhere.

Malaria is also bad for business. The disease is responsible for decreased productivity, employee absenteeism, increased health-care costs, and can negatively impact a company's reputation. A 2006 report found that nearly three-quarters of companies on the African continent reported that malaria was negatively affecting their business. Furthermore, malaria infection among company employees can have a wider impact on the local and national economy because the overall labour force is weakened by sickness and absenteeism, commerce is slowed, investments and tax revenues are reduced and public health budgets are diminished.

EXPERIENCE FROM THE SWEDISH WORKPLACE HIV AND AIDS PROGRAMME (SWHAP)

The burden of malaria can be reduced significantly by using existing preventive strategies. One of the most effective and less expensive interventions is the use of insecticide-treated bed nets. For example, in 2006 one of the SWHAP supported companies included malaria prevention in their workplace programme as a strategy to mitigate the impact of malaria. The actions taken to prevent malaria included distribution of treated bed nets to the employees and information given by the company peer educators. This was proven a great success and the effects of this cost and resource effective intervention were quite remarkable.



Prior to the distribution of the treated bed nets, malaria caused approximately four employees to stay home from work every week. The company had about 10 percent of its employees off work during the wet season and lost a total of 1,664 working hours per year due to malaria. Following the distribution of bed nets, absenteeism due to malaria dropped from an average of 16 to 1 employee per month. However, later on the company ended its malaria interventions leading to an increased absenteeism from malaria hence illustrating clearly the need to address the issue in a long-term perspective.

Three other companies that deal with malaria prevention in Zambia are Atlas Copco, SKF and Sandvik, which are all situated in the Copperbelt region. The companies report significant reduction in absenteeism as a result of both the HIV and malaria programmes. Atlas Copco, SKF and Sandvik have distributed three bed-nets per family for all employees since 2006. Sandvik and Atlas Copco also extend their prevention efforts to the community level. Sandvik is one of the major funders for the Copperbelt Malaria Intervention Programme, whilst Atlas Copco supports national committees to carry out activities such as residual indoor spraying. Malaria control has recently also been included in workplace programmes in Tanzania, where companies such as Scania and Raffia Bags started distributing bed nets in 2010. This intervention has also been adopted at Sandvik Zimbabwe, Raffia Bags Kenya and Amazon Motors Kenya who have also started distributing treated bed nets to employees. New SWHAP partners in the



DRC ABB, Ericsson and SODEICO are also planning to factor the same in their applications to SWHAP for 2013-2014. Intervention in the DRC is vital as together with Nigeria, the DRC accounts for over 40% of the estimated total of malaria deaths globally.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

The SWHAP supported companies are not alone in addressing malaria. For example, malaria-related spending at three company clinics in Zambia decreased by more than 75%, and a very conservative estimate showed that the companies gained an annualized rate of return of 28%. These companies had a drop in malaria cases of 94%, from 27,925 per year to 1631 and the number of malaria-related lost work days also dropped 94%, from 19,392 per year to 1133.

In short, “malaria control is a cost-effective, business investment that offers a rapid rate of return. Both small and large businesses have proven to be critical contributors in the fight against malaria, irrespective of whether they work independently or partner with national governments or NGOs. Supporting malaria control is a contribution that the private sector can and should make; strengthening their businesses while saving lives.” More information can also be found at <http://www.rollbackmalaria.org>



The Swedish Workplace HIV and AIDS Programme (SWHAP) is a joint initiative by the International Council of Swedish Industry (NIR) and the Swedish Industrial and Metalworkers' Union (IF Metall). It is a long-term strategy to contribute to the establishment and/or support of HIV and AIDS programmes at Swedish-related workplaces in sub-Saharan Africa. SWHAP is an example of how management, employees and trade unions can contribute to a successful intervention that saves lives and secures future markets. Since 2000, this programme has been helping companies invest in workplace programmes that reverse the negative impact of HIV and AIDS. SWHAP provides support for HIV workplace programmes in over 230 workplaces in Botswana, DRC, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The programme is cofunded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Norad
www.swhap.org



The International Council of Swedish Industry (Näringslivets Internationella Råd, NIR) is an independent non-profit organisation representing Swedish industry. Its mandate is to support favourable conditions for Swedish business. By working to improve structural conditions for a more conducive business climate, NIR's activities contribute to sustainable economic development of the respective country and improve market conditions for domestic as well as international companies.

www.nir.se



IF Metall is a merger between the Swedish Industrial Workers' Union and the Swedish Metal Workers' Union with more than 370,000 members at nearly 12,000 workplaces, affiliated to 37 local branches. IF Metall works in the interests of its members and in support of a democratic and equal society where everyone must have the right to a decent and secure job.

www.ifmetall.se