

## Questions and Answers - Bed Nets and Malaria



### Why sleep under a net?

Insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) are widely accepted as one of the most cost-effective malaria prevention measures. The mosquito that transmits malaria (female Anopheles) bites exclusively at night, primarily between 23h:00 and 5h:00.

### Is an untreated net effective?

The cheapest nets are untreated. Untreated nets do provide a barrier against mosquitoes and can be effective, however mosquitoes can enter an untreated net if it is torn or hung badly. Mosquitoes can bite any part of the body that is in contact with the net and mosquitoes still fly around the nets making noise which disturbs sleep.

### What is the advantage of insecticide treated nets (ITNs)?

Treated nets have a repellent effect on mosquitoes and kill those that land on the net. Unlike untreated nets, ITNs provide some protection to others in the room because of their repellent effect and vector killing capability. Most ITNs need to be re-treated every 6 months to maintain their effectiveness.

### How are the nets treated?

Nets are normally treated with permethrin. Studies have shown that permethrin has a non-toxic effect on human beings and other mammals but is highly toxic to mosquitoes and other insects such as lice, ticks and bedbugs. An initial treatment is usually applied at the factory before the nets are sold. Re-treatment requires a dipping that can be done at home. However, since 2001, there is a new and more effective "long-lasting net" on the market.

### What is this better net?

The newly developed, long lasting treated net (LLIN) retains its insecticidal properties for 4 to 5 years - which is the life span of the net.

### What is the cost of a long-lasting insecticide treated net?

A long lasting insecticide treated net costs approximately \$5. – an unaffordable price for people living in extreme poverty.

### How can people living in extreme poverty obtain LLINs?

Recently NGOs and government donors have embarked on mass distribution efforts to ensure that the poorest people also have access to this life-saving intervention. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has been leading with free mass distribution. Since 2001, the Federation has shown that free and rapid (one week) distributions can reach millions of households in a cost effective way. In December 2005, the Federation will distribute more than 2 million LLINs to as many households in Niger during a one week polio vaccination campaign.

### Why nets instead of household sprayings?

Household sprays are costly, almost equivalent to a net and have limited effectiveness. Mindful that the poorest populations in Africa earn less than 1 US dollar per day, sprays are not an option.