

# Building a Net Culture in Kenya

*PSI Uses "Targeted Subsidy" To Maximize Malaria Health Impact*

An intensive five-year effort by PSI to prevent malaria among vulnerable groups in Kenya by creating a mosquito "net culture" is proving successful.

The program, launched in 2002 with funding from the British Department for International Development (DFID), has dramatically increased malaria awareness and net usage among pregnant women and children under five years.

PSI's malaria control program started in the Central African Republic in 1994 and today consists of the social marketing of ITNs in 19 African countries and Afghanistan and prepackaged malaria therapy (PPT) in three countries. In 2004, PSI sold four million ITNs and 2.5 million PPTs, which will prevent millions of malaria episodes and an estimated 56,000 child deaths.

Malaria prevention has been found to be highly cost effective by the Copenhagen Consensus ([copenhagenconsensus.com](http://copenhagenconsensus.com)) a group of eight eminent economists, including three Nobel Prize winners. In May 2004, the group determined malaria prevention to be one of four "very good" uses of public funds, with benefits exceeding costs by a factor of ten or more, and recommended ITNs as one of the necessary interventions.

## PSI's Malaria Strategy

PSI's "Coverage Plus" model aims to

increase ITN coverage in line with the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) target of 60% ITN coverage of pregnant women and children under five by 2005, agreed on by African leaders in Abuja, Nigeria in 2000. The "Plus" refers to the model's active collaboration with the commercial sector to move towards a sustainable commercial market as consumer ability to pay increases and consumer willingness to pay increases as a result of directly experiencing the health and economic benefits of ITNs. PSI has devised the following strategies to overcome barriers to achieving the RBM coverage target and establishing sustainable ITN supply:

- **Targeted subsidy:** PSI sells several products at different prices through diverse outlets to multiple target groups, increasing access to ITNs while maximizing distribution efficiency. To ensure coverage of the most vulnerable, highly subsidized ITNs are delivered to pregnant women and children under five through public sector and NGO channels.
- **Partnerships:** PSI collaborates with ministries of health, national malaria control programs, NGOs and commercial companies, to ensure effective coordination and maximize distribution opportunities.
- **Creating demand and promoting health:** PSI's branded advertising campaigns are complemented by generic



A Kenyan mother buys PSI's SUPANET brand of insecticide-treated mosquito net in a rural area. PSI targets pregnant women and children under five who are particularly vulnerable to malaria.



# PROFILE

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communication aimed at increasing awareness of malaria risks. These messages are delivered through mass media and trained interpersonal communicators who often work in remote rural areas.

### **Applying the Strategy in Kenya**

By building on an existing platform that has strong relationships with government, the commercial trade, local NGOs and marketing agencies, PSI was able to scale up its program and the commercial ITN trade rapidly through the introduction of a heavily promoted, subsidized brand into a fragmented, under-developed market.

The project pursues a four-pronged strategy: 1) aggressive distribution to widen the availability of nets in urban and rural shops and supermarkets; 2) increased affordability of nets through a two-tier subsidy, with a higher subsidy in rural areas; 3) targeting heavily subsidized ITNs to malaria risk groups through public health facilities and 4) increased demand for nets through an intensive national communication campaign.

In slightly more than two years, the Kenya project has sold 1.8 million ITNs and 1.4 million retreatment kits through commercial channels, significantly exceeding expectations. This has prevented an estimated 2.5 million malaria episodes and saved the lives of over 16,000 children.

A 2003 national survey of knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) indicates that household ownership of nets had increased from 22% in 2000 to 31% in 2003, and that 25% of pregnant women and 24% of children under five years old were sleeping under nets in 2003.

### **Scaling up Rural Net Ownership**

During the second half of the project (2004-2007), PSI will increase its focus on the rural population. To that end, PSI/Kenya, continuing to support the Ministry of Health, will target pregnant women and children under five with a highly subsidized ITN (consumer price USD \$0.60) through public and private health facilities in malaria endemic areas and a slightly less subsidized net (USD \$1.25) through rural retail outlets. Training of staff from 1700 health facilities was completed in November 2004, and PSI/Kenya is now delivering 150,000-200,000 ITNs per month

In addition, PSI has introduced the long-lasting ITNs recently approved by the World Health Organization and targets these at rural pregnant women and children under five. This will significantly improve health impact by ensuring that all nets targeted at the most vulnerable are effectively treated for their lifespan.

### **Malaria Campaign Educates and Changes Behavior**

PSI/Kenya implements innovative and entertaining communications programs to educate people about malaria transmission and prevention. The KAP study showed significant increases during the PSI intervention period in the percentage of adults who have correct knowledge of malaria transmission and the effectiveness of ITNs. Awareness of ITNs as an effective malaria prevention strategy increased from 3% in 2001 to 44% in 2003, and almost two-thirds were aware of nets in general as a malaria prevention method.

Informational programs are held in antenatal clinics, community women's group meetings and marketplaces to reach rural women. PSI trains health educators as well as contracting out nurses, health educators and direct marketing groups. In rural communities, PSI holds events such as the *Supanet* Festival, where people have a day-long opportunity to learn about malaria and the need for ITNs through a combination of drama, discussion and games.

### **PSI Works with the Commercial Sector**

PSI works closely with the six main manufacturers of mosquito nets in Kenya to promote their brands through mass media advertising, thus helping to boost the ITN market and further the development of a "net culture." The bed net market has experienced growth in overall volumes over the last three years from an estimated 150,000-200,000 nets annually in 2001 to an estimated 320,000 in 2004. Due to the increased demand for nets, a surge in nets imported from Asia has been seen on the local market and, with the rise in competition, market prices for commercial nets have decreased.

PSI's brand-leasing strategy allows local manufacturers to manufacture, package and supply distributors with PSI's Supanet branded net. This initiative should help to expand the market share of local suppliers. In order to ensure that all nets on the market are ITNs, PSI will be supplying the *Power Tab* treatment kits free of charge to all local suppliers of nets in exchange for an agreement that all nets they sell are packaged with a treatment kit.

### **PSI's Vision for Fighting Malaria**

In the 26 African countries most affected by malaria, 350 million people live at high risk of malaria. PSI's vision is to market ITNs and PPT to maximize access to effective prevention and treatment, consistent with the RBM targets. PSI will work with governments, the private sector and other NGOs to achieve the RBM goal of halving the burden of malaria by 2010.

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#### **PSI's Core Values:**

Bottom Line Health Impact • Private Sector Speed and Efficiency •  
Decentralization, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship • Long-term Commitment to the People We Serve