



# Uganda targets child killer on Africa Malaria Day

**New home based management initiative could save thousands of children's lives each year**

*GENEVA, APRIL 25, 2002:* Getting the right drugs quickly to sick children would save many of the one million lives lost each year to malaria. But for most African children—who are the main victims of this shocking and avoidable death toll—the drugs are either not available or not effective.

That's why the World Health Organization, UNICEF and other partners in Roll Back Malaria are supporting a new government-led initiative in Uganda to provide rapid, appropriate, effective and free malaria treatment to the people who need it most—mainly mothers caring for their sick children.

Home Based Management of malaria is a simple concept that could revolutionize the delivery of malaria treatment and help to cut the enormous human and economic cost of malaria in Africa. Uganda is leading the way with a programme that has been tested in three districts and will be rolled out as official national treatment policy for malaria on Africa Malaria Day (April 25th). There are plans to introduce Home Based Management in other malaria-endemic countries in Africa, starting in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria and Zambia.

Instead of walking miles to reach a health centre and then waiting for hours, mothers will soon be able to knock on a neighbour's door to get the help they need. With Home Based Management, every village or community will have at least one volunteer drug distributor trained to recognize the symptoms of malaria and provide the appropriate drugs to treat it. The volunteers are mainly elected from within their communities and are committed to making a difference.

Stephen Semambo is a volunteer drug distributor in the village of Sekiwungga. "People come to my house in the middle of the night," he says. "I don't mind. There have been no deaths from malaria in this village since HBM began."

The scale of the project is ambitious. If the scheme is to work across the whole country, 80,000 volunteers must be recruited and trained as drug distributors (two for every village in the country) and some 20 million specially produced packs of anti-malarial drugs must be distributed to them

Across Africa, malaria is a problem of staggering proportions and appalling statistics. It is estimated that 300 –500 million people are infected with malaria each year. At least one million of them will die from the disease every year, most of them children.

Somewhere in Africa, a child dies every 30 seconds, as a result of this preventable, controllable and curable disease.

In the three districts of Uganda where the Home Based Management scheme has been evaluated, the reaction from volunteers and villagers is overwhelmingly positive.

Eunice Tushabeomuwe, a volunteer drug distributor in Rwankyenzi village, says: "I want to help people in my community. When people get better, they thank me. As long as I live I will continue with this work."

One of the key objectives of the Roll Back Malaria partnership is to provide prompt access to effective treatment. At the Abuja Summit on Roll Back Malaria of 2000, African governments committed themselves to providing effective treatment within 24 hours to 60 per cent of children with a fever by the year 2005.

The successful introduction of Home Based Management will be a major step towards achieving this target. As it is introduced more widely across Africa, Home Based Management will become a key weapon in the fight to Roll Back Malaria.

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**For details of Africa Malaria Day visit:**

[http://mosquito.who.int/amd/abuja2002\\_first.htm](http://mosquito.who.int/amd/abuja2002_first.htm)

# PRESS RELEASE



Roll Back Malaria is a global partnership initiated by WHO, UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank in 1998. It seeks to work with governments, other development agencies, NGOs, and private sector companies to reduce the human and socio-economic costs of malaria.



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