



**Press Release Roll Back Malaria Partnership/27
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CELEBRITIES LEND THEIR VOICES TO CHILDREN'S FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA

Geneva - International celebrities Dikembe Mutombo and Youssou N'Dour have added their voices to those of tens of thousands of children across Africa who are calling for increased awareness, more protection and better treatment for malaria, which kills 3000 children every day.

In the run-up to Africa Malaria Day, commemorated on 25 April of each year, children throughout Africa are engaging in children's parliaments, TV and radio commentaries, plays, and other creative activities to send a clear message to those who have it in their power to make a difference: adults, decision-makers, governments and donors. Their intention? To realize a child's dream of "a malaria-free future", the theme of this year's Africa Malaria Day.

"We are suffering a lot from malaria," says 13-year-old Efua Boateng, member of a church youth group in Ghana, "but I don't think the rest of the world understands. We need to let them know. We have to speak up on behalf of our younger brothers and sisters."

Dikembe Mutombo, New York Knicks basketball player, who comes from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is supporting their efforts by urging children to sleep under insecticide-treated mosquito nets. "Beating malaria is like winning at basketball," says Mutombo in a public-service announcement being broadcast Africa-wide. "You need to get to the net."

UNICEF goodwill ambassador and internationally acclaimed musician Youssou N'Dour will be recording a video announcement on malaria and headlining a concert in the Senegalese region of Matam, whose three-day event is the focus for this year's Africa Malaria Day commemorations. Senegalese officials including the First Lady, Mme Viviane Wade, and the Minister of Health will be joined in Matam by regional, local, and international partners in the fight against malaria, including Regional Directors of the World Health Organization and UNICEF.

Malaria is by far the leading cause of death in Matam--hitting young children and pregnant women especially hard--but communities and health officials are working together to step up their fight against the disease. Matam is also the pilot region for an international schools-based project to promote healthy behaviours among children, including protection against malaria.

"Matam's challenges are Africa's challenges... and the world's," says Dr Awa Marie Coll-Seck, Executive Secretary to the Roll Back Malaria Partnership. "The changing face of malaria-- drug resistance, insecticide resistance, environmental shifts, epidemics--forces malaria programmes across Africa to continually adapt and reorient their efforts.

"Countries are introducing new tools, policies, and training to try to turn the tide of this devastating disease, but they need strong support from the international community," Coll-Seck added. "We must heed these children's voices and ensure that adequate resources are available to give them the future they deserve."

In response to the call by countries and their children the Roll Back Malaria Partnership is establishing a mechanism which will [provide](#) up-to-date information on manufacturers and prices of combination therapies among other essential products (diagnostic tests, insecticides, mosquito nets etc.) The “Malaria, Medicines and Supply Service “ will also promote and monitor their quality, develop detailed forecasts of requirements to ensure that manufacturers scale-up production to meet demand, and broker pooling of procurement of these products to reduce cost.

Background on Roll Back Malaria

To provide a coordinated international approach to fighting malaria, the Roll Back Malaria Global Partnership (RBM) was launched in 1998 by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank. The Partnership’s goal is to halve the global burden of malaria by 2010, with a particular focus on Africa.

The Partnership now includes governments of countries affected by malaria, bilateral and multilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and research groups, and has succeeded in raising global awareness of malaria, generating increased resources and achieving consensus on the tools and priority interventions required to control the disease.

Africa Malaria Day - 25 April 2005

On 25 April 2000, African leaders from 44 malaria-endemic countries met in Abuja, Nigeria for the first-ever African Summit on Malaria. At the Summit, they signed the historic Abuja Declaration, which commits governments to an intensive effort to halve the burden of malaria in Africa by 2010 and sets interim targets for the year 2005.

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For more on Roll Back Malaria, see website: <http://rbm.who.int>

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