



About long-lasting insecticidal nets

The long-lasting insecticidal net is seen as offering African countries a unique opportunity in malaria prevention. Not only is it cheaper in the longer term than conventional nets, but it comes factory pre-treated and retains its repellent efficacy throughout the normal lifespan of the netting material itself, which can be anywhere between two to five years. A disadvantage of conventional insecticide-treated nets is that they require regular re-treatment with insecticide to maintain their effectiveness. High levels of re-treatment have proved difficult to achieve in Africa due to several factors, including the cost of insecticide, the accessibility of insecticide and low perception among users of the need to re-treat nets. Long-lasting insecticidal nets, however, do not require re-treatment.

Two long-lasting insecticidal nets have been approved by WHO and are already being sold on the market. One is the Olyset net, which is manufactured at plants in China by Sumitomo Chemical Company of Japan and by A to Z Textile Mills in Tanzania. The other approved net is PermaNet 2.0, which is manufactured by Vestergaard Frandsen A/S in Thailand and Vietnam.

Olyset will be marketed in Tanzania under the brand "Olyset: Magic Power"—Ngunvu za Ajabu—which was the name chosen by brand research carried out by Population Services International (PSI). The Tanzanian Ministry of Health, in collaboration with PSI, have started the MALARIA HAIKUBALIKI ("Malaria is not Acceptable") campaign in order to change Tanzanians' attitude to malaria and so prioritise the purchase of treated nets such as Olyset: Magic Power.

Several long-lasting insecticidal nets based on different technologies are currently being developed by industry. With increased demand, competition among manufacturers and economies of scale, it is expected that the performance of long-lasting insecticidal nets will further improve and prices will be reduced.

About the A to Z technology transfer to Tanzania

Following the approval of Olyset, the first long-lasting insecticidal net to be developed, African net manufacturers expressed their interest in producing these nets. The RBM Partnership approached Sumitomo Japan and the Acumen Fund suggesting a transfer of Olyset technology to Africa. A to Z Textiles, Tanzania, was chosen through a selection process managed by Acumen Fund. ExxonMobil and PSI joined the initiative, the first one as a producer of the polymer used in manufacturing Olyset and the second one based on their experience of social marketing of insecticide-treated nets in Africa.

An informal coalition of these private and public partners was formed. Sumitomo provided the technology, with necessary adjustments to meet conditions for production in Africa using the ExxonMobil polymer, monitoring safety and quality at every step. Acumen Fund provided a no-interest loan to A to Z to buy the machinery and manage the project. WHO played a catalytic role in this initiative and provided independent technical advice. UNICEF has been focusing on demand and purchase of the locally produced long-lasting insecticidal nets. ExxonMobil has provided the base resin, assured the optimization of the industrial processes, and donated finished nets to communities. Sales of polymer to A to Z have been reinvested into Olyset nets which have been distributed free or highly subsidized to vulnerable populations by UNICEF. PSI has been involved in branding and marketing Olyset, focusing on the African retail market, and has also been selling subsidized Olyset nets through health facilities for ExxonMobil in Tanzania.

This initiative has been managed with a special emphasis on commercial viability and sustainability. Each partner played a key role in its success but nothing would have been achieved without the full commitment of A to Z. Interestingly, the company did not only benefit from the technology transfer but, based on their long experience as the leading African net manufacturer, suggested changes in the manufacturing process and the packaging which resulted in price reductions both in Tanzania and in Asia.

