

NetMark

Building sustainable markets for insecticide-treated nets

TECHNICAL BRIEF



NetMark plans to provide ITNs to at least 800,000 vulnerable persons from 2003 to the end of 2005.



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Reaching Vulnerable Populations through Targeted Subsidies for ITNs

To reduce the burden of malaria in Africa, NetMark uses a comprehensive approach that builds sustainable commercial markets for ITNs while providing targeted subsidies to the very poor and biologically vulnerable. This approach creates an immediate public health impact and works toward the equitable ownership of ITNs.

NetMark works with ministries of health, NGOs, donors, and the commercial sector to offer discount vouchers for ITNs or impregnation kits to pregnant women and children under five years old. These voucher programs most often use existing health interventions (e.g., antenatal care, immunization programs) to get discount vouchers to the target groups. NetMark's commercial partners handle the logistics of ordering, stocking, and supplying the ITNs through retail outlets or special depots.

The benefits of using discount vouchers include:

- High-risk populations can be specifically targeted.
- Beneficiaries can select the ITN they like and can afford at a subsidized price in a nearby retail outlet.
- Product leakage and potential fraud is minimized on the commercial side through a proof-of-purchase sticker and retailer reimbursement process and on the public health side by the tracking of numbered vouchers.
- The public sector focuses on the delivery of quality health care and prevention services.

- The commercial sector bears the logistical burden of ITN procurement, storage, distribution and sales,
- The expansion of retail outlets stimulated by voucher redemption helps to build sustainable local supply of ITNs.

How NetMark's Approach Works

NetMark's targeted subsidy programs provide vouchers that usually offer a discount equal to half of an ITN's commercial price. In some cases, as with vouchers distributed through the measles campaign, the voucher covers the full price of the ITN. Those who receive vouchers redeem them at retail outlets to obtain a discounted or free ITN. All retailers also offer ITNs to the general population at the full commercial price.

NetMark Targeted Subsidies in Action

NetMark piloted this approach in Zambia in collaboration with the national Malaria Control Program in 2002 before expanding it to five countries in 2004. Overall, NetMark plans to reach at least 800,000 vulnerable persons from 2003 to end 2005. At this moment, most of the TS interventions implemented achieved a redemption rate higher than 70% (300,000 vouchers distributed in two countries).

In countries such as Mali where the net coverage is already over 70%, NetMark is piloting voucher distribution for impregnation treatment kits with the National Malaria Control Program, CARE and PSI.

ACTIVITY	FUNDING PARTNER	TARGET AUDIENCE	DATES
ZAMBIA ITN voucher interventions	NMCC/MOH Zambia Global Funds ExxonMobil IFRC/UNICEF USAID/NetMark	335,000 pregnant women and 15,000 children under five with Red Cross	2003–2005
GHANA ITN voucher interventions	Ghana Health Services ExxonMobil DFID USAID/NetMark	240,000 Pregnant women	2004–2005
NIGERIA ITN voucher intervention	ExxonMobil NMCP/MOH Nigeria USAID/NetMark	120,000 Pregnant women	2004–2005
MALI ITN voucher intervention	NMCP/MOH Mali CARE USAID/NetMark	30,000 Pregnant women	2004–2005
MALI Kit voucher intervention	NMCP/MOH Mali CARE USAID/NetMark	125,000 pregnant women and children under five	2004–2005
SENEGAL ITN voucher interventions	NMCP/MOH Senegal UNICEF USAID/NetMark	40,000 pregnant women and children under five	2003–2005
ETHIOPIA ITN voucher interventions	NMCP/MOH Ethiopia OFDA USAID/NetMark	In planning phase	2005–2007

The Effect of Non-Targeted Subsidies

Unfortunately, many programs are distributing subsidized ITNs without ensuring they reach the poorest people or those at high risk for malaria. Well-intentioned but untargeted subsidy programs can: (1) waste money and limit public health impact by providing subsidies to populations who do not need them, (2) drain scarce financial and human resources by having the public health sector purchase, distribute, stock, and sell ITNs, (3) discourage the commercial sector from investing in the development of a viable ITN market that can deliver products to a large proportion of the population without donor support.

The Future of Targeted Subsidies

Because there will always be a portion of the at-risk population who cannot afford ITNs, there will always be a need for targeted subsidy programs. NetMark's approach ensures that vulnerable populations can obtain ITNs

(including free products), maximizes public health resources, and supports the development of sustainable commercial markets. To target vulnerable populations who reside in areas not reached by the commercial sector, NetMark is developing strategies that are not reliant on retail outlets. With the development of long lasting treatment kits, targeting mechanisms will be developed to treat nets already in use, specifically in countries where the net coverage is already high or in areas where ITNs have been distributed but need to be retreated.

The key to obtaining widespread ITN coverage lies in coordinating the free/subsidized efforts with those of the commercial sector so that immediate public health impact and long-term sustainability of ITNs are achieved. ■

For more information on NetMark's targeted subsidy programs, please visit www.netmarkafrica.org.