

Press Release

Paris, April 2010

PlaNNet Finance: Combating Malaria through Microfinance.

April the 25th is World Malaria Day – an opportunity to review progress and to look at some of the measures that are being taken to tackle this scourge.



Women in Benin – beneficiaries of the PlaNNet Finance/sanofi-aventis anti-malaria programme

The World Health Organisation estimates that a child dies of malaria every thirty seconds. Its figures also indicate that the disease kills between 1 and 3 million people annually, with 250 million new cases being notified over the course of a year. Ways of tackling this disease already exist, such as anti-malaria drugs and insecticides for killing the mosquitoes which carry the parasite. However, over the last few years, parasites have become increasingly immune to these drugs. Similarly, mosquitoes have built up greater resistance to the insecticides used against them. As no effective vaccine is available, it is vital that those at risk of infection are made fully aware of the malaria prevention measures that can be taken.

PlaNNet Finance's involvement in the war on malaria stems from its role as an international NGO dedicated to combating poverty by using microfinance to tackle exclusion from mainstream financial services - one which enables those on or below the poverty line to take out loans for developing income-generating activities, to save and to obtain insurance cover. It thus works with people who are at risk on account of their limited access to health information and because they lack the resources for fighting against diseases.

Since 2001 PlaNNet Finance and the global pharmaceutical company, sanofi-aventis, have been working in tandem to develop “Microfinance & Health” programmes. Both recognised that the networks created by microfinance activities could be a powerful means of getting information across to target groups about ways of preventing and tackling malaria.

With sanofi-aventis' support PlaNNet Finance developed two anti-malaria programmes.

The first, carried out in Benin between 2004 and 2007, raised awareness among 121,000 microentrepreneurs of ways of fighting against malaria.

Madagascar was the setting for the second programme (called “Tazomoka”) which has been running now for two years. Working in conjunction with microfinance institutions and local NGOs, the programme's aim has been to carry out awareness-raising and education campaigns via anti-malaria information sessions. It has enabled the women on the programme - known as “Women Leaders” - to go into communities in their local areas and raise awareness about malaria. The programme's main aims are to:



Women Leaders

- Increase anti-malaria awareness levels among MFI clients and improve measures that can be taken to prevent the disease.
- Encourage microcredit beneficiaries to better protect themselves against the risks of malaria through daily hygiene routines and by using mosquito nets impregnated with long-lasting insecticides.
- Develop new “health loan”-type products tailored to the needs of the groups being targeted.
- Recommend models for health microinsurance provision - based on assessments of the health microinsurance needs of disadvantaged groups - and to make it easier for these groups to access health care.

Having participated in the programme, “Women Leaders” are now able to provide anti-malaria training and awareness-raising activities to fellow members of their savings and loans associations or to others within their communities.

Over the two years, **the Tazomoka Programme in Madagascar has already trained 715 Women Leaders** who have then gone on to raise **awareness among 14,150 people**.

Through these two programmes, PlaNet Finance has thus so far enabled 135,150 people to increase their awareness of malaria - 121,000 in Benin and 14,150 in Madagascar.

Follow the link to watch a video on the “Microfinance & Health” programme in Benin:
www.planetfinancegroup.org/FR/videos.php

About PlaNet Finance

PlaNet Finance is a Paris-based international NGO dedicated to tackling poverty through developing microfinance as a means of enabling financially-excluded and poverty-stricken groups to access financial services. PlaNet Finance and its international network are active in almost 80 countries.

www.planetfinancegroup.org

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