



USAID Shuns Use of Lifesaving DDT to Control Malaria

Siding with radical environmentalists and the United Nations, President Bush signed on to the UN Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (known as the POP Treaty) in 2001. This has been a global death warrant for millions of people at risk from malaria and other tropical diseases, since it, in effect, outlaws DDT and other pesticides that have proven to be safe and effective in eradicating or controlling the vectors that transmit these diseases. In Africa alone, over one million people die each year from malaria, while millions more suffer significant debilitation from the disease. This tragic toll could be dramatically reduced with proper application of DDT.

In a November 2005 study entitled “DDT Saves Lives in the Fight Against Malaria,” Drs. Roger Bate and Richard Tren of the Competitive Enterprise Institute expose the deadly effects of current U.S. policy on the global malaria plague. “It is the current fashion in international public health to attempt malaria control with insecticide-treated bednets,” they report. Bate and Tren continued:

However, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which has been put in charge of the project, buys very few nets. In the recent past, while USAID has spent over \$400 million on malaria control, analysis of the 2004 budget shows less than 10 percent of this was spent on actual commodities that save lives. USAID considers that its area of expertise is to provide technical assistance and this is consistent with why 81 percent of its 2004 budget never left the United States. While USAID advises people to sleep under bednets and doctors to buy drugs, it regards the provision of these essentials to be somebody else’s job. USAID is reticent about publishing data on its projects, but in the few cases that have been detailed it was shown that, while this advice had been dispensed, neither bednets nor drugs were available.

But the bednet strategy is flawed for many reasons, Bate and Tren point out. These include:

- Only one bednet per household is distributed, which leaves many family members unprotected.
- Even when available, studies show that only 56 percent of those with bednets actually use them.
- The synthetic insecticides used on the bednets wear off after several months and must be retreated, but there is no program to do so.
- Many malarial mosquitoes enter houses at sunset and feed most aggressively in the early hours of darkness, so unless a person is actually in bed under the net at nightfall, he or she is at risk.



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