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“Remarkable Figures” Demonstrate that Zambia is Winning its Fight Against Malaria

LUSAKA—Zambia is winning the fight against malaria according to new evidence released today by the Ministry of Health. Results from the 2008 Malaria Indicator Survey (MIS) indicate that the country’s commitment to malaria control and prevention is directly benefiting the health of its people. Zambia’s bold national effort—distributing millions of insecticide treated mosquito nets, conducting indoor spraying and providing preventive and lifesaving medicine—has positioned the country as a worldwide leader in the fight against malaria.

The survey documented amazing advances in preventing and controlling the disease, including:

- Compared with 2006, the last national malaria survey, malaria parasite prevalence in children has been reduced by 50 percent.
- Moderate to severe anaemia has been reduced by more than 60 percent.
- In 2002, according to the Demographic Health Survey (DHS), fourteen percent of Zambian households had at least one insecticide treated mosquito net. Today this figure has increased to sixty percent.
- The use of insecticide treated mosquito nets has increased significantly over the years in two of the most vulnerable populations: children under five years of age and pregnant mothers. Looking at survey data from both DHS and MIS, since 2002 the use of insecticide treated mosquito nets has risen steadily from 6.5 to 38 percent for children under five, and from eight to 40 percent for pregnant mothers.
- More than two-thirds of Zambian households are now covered with at least one treated net or a recent indoor spraying activity.
- Pregnant women are protected from malaria now more than ever: more than 80 percent of pregnant women received at least one dose of preventive medicine, and more than 65 percent received two or more doses

“These are remarkable figures,” said Minister of Health Dr. Brian Chituwo, “something all of us should be proud of. These achievements have been possible because of the strong partnership that the Ministry enjoys with partners. But at this moment we cannot pat ourselves on the back and say we’re done. No. We must

maintain what we have achieved and with this momentum, galvanize our efforts and press for even greater successes.”

The 2008 MIS results come on the heels of the recently released 2007 Demographic Health Survey which showed rapid progress in child survival never seen before in Africa: since 2002 child mortality rates in Zambia have decreased by nearly one-third—an estimated 75,000 child lives saved in the last five years.

The government’s investment in malaria control and prevention is paying off in lives saved and healthier children. Achievements seen in the MIS results are due to the country’s commitment to rapidly increase, nationwide, access to proven tools to prevent and control the disease. Specifically:

- Distribution of more than five million insecticide treated mosquito nets
- Indoor spraying to be conducted in half of Zambia’s districts
- Preventive medicine for pregnant women and lifesaving medicine for those suffering from malaria available nationwide
- Rapid malaria tests available nationwide

A healthy Zambia is a dynamic Zambia. “In malaria controlled areas, communities are happier and more productive,” said Minister Chituwo. “Most families in Zambia are rural; mothers with sick children spend a lot of their time walking to health centres several kilometres from their homes. When there is no malaria in the family, those mothers can spend more of their time caring for their families and working in the fields. Their children can begin to realize their full potential at school.”

While the results of the survey are remarkable, something to be intensely proud of, much work remains, continued the Minister. “Let us not relent in our efforts; everyone must do their part. Sleep under a treated bed net every night. Allow your home to be sprayed. Pregnant mothers take preventive medicine. If anyone suspects malaria go immediately to the nearest clinic or hospital for testing and treatment. These survey results are encouraging but we need to redouble our efforts so that our vision of a malaria-free nation is attained. By working together we can defeat malaria in Zambia.”

Survey details:

The 2008 Zambia National Malaria Indicator Survey—a scientific sampling conducted at nearly 4,500 households across the country—took place in April and May of this year. It was carried out by the Ministry of Health, Central Statistical Office, Malaria Control and Evaluation Partnership in Africa (MACEPA) at PATH, the United States’ President’s Malaria Initiative, Health Systems and Services Programme, the World Bank, UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the University of Zambia.

The 2006 Zambia MIS was the first assessment of its kind in Africa, a household level survey using handheld computers that collected data through questionnaires and testing for both anaemia and malaria parasite prevalence.

For more preliminary results from the survey please visit <http://nmcc.org.zm/>.

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