POLICY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INSECTICIDES TREATED MOSQUITO NETS (ITNs) IN NIGERIA

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Federal Republic of Nigeria demonstrated the commitment for the implementation of Roll Back Malaria Initiative by hosting the African Summit on Roll Back Malaria (RBM) on April 25, 2000 in Abuja. The Presidents, Heads of State and Governments of nearly all African States, led by the President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, endorsed the RBM Initiative for Africa. They also declared that 60% of children under five years and pregnant women in Africa should sleep under insecticide treated mosquito nets (ITNs) by the year 2005. As a follow-up to this declaration, this policy has been developed to give effective Federal Government directions to States, Local Government Areas (LGAs), private and public sectors and other stakeholders on how to move forward with the implementation.

Policy Background

In order to create a convergence for developing an effective policy for the implementation of ITNs in Nigeria, several stakeholders’ meetings were held between November 1999 and October 2000. These meetings involved Federal Ministry of Health, mosquito net manufacturers and suppliers, insecticides dealers, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration & Control (NAFDAC), Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON), WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank, DFID, USAID, BASICS, NetMark and the Malaria Society of Nigeria. Others include representatives of Federal Ministries of Information, Education, Agriculture, Finance, Environment, Industry, Women Affairs and Works & Housing. Oil companies represented include Nigerian Agip Oil Company, Mobil Unlimited and Shell Producing and Development Company.

Deliberations in these meetings were built on the concept of RBM implementation, relevant to ITNs. The results of the evaluation of the ITNs pilot sites in Nigeria, the preliminary results of both the qualitative and quantitative surveys carried out by Research International on behalf of Net Mark/BASICS in Nigeria and the market analysis of mosquito nets and insecticides in Nigeria by external consultants sponsored by Net Mark, UNICEF and DFID were utilized. Furthermore, these meetings benefited from the experiences of Tanzania, Kenya and Zambia including the technical support of Partners, the Malaria Consortium and London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

The major recommendations from these meetings were that:

- The public sector should provide an enabling environment for local production and wide distribution as well as lowering of prices by removal of taxes and tariffs on insecticides and nets.
- The private sector should take the lead in the production, procurement, promotion, distribution and sales of mosquito nets and insecticides in Nigeria.
- The public sector should carry out demand creation for use of ITNs through appropriate campaigns, active generic advertising and awareness creation. The manufacturers and insecticide dealers should do “brand advertising” for the promotion of their products.
- Mechanisms for the distribution of subsidised nets and insecticides should be developed and targeted at the vulnerable groups and those unable to pay the full price of these products.
2. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this policy is to provide clear directions of the Federal Government of Nigeria on the various aspects of ITNs towards reduction of malaria morbidity and mortality in the country.

The objectives of this policy are to:

• create an enabling environment for the smooth implementation and scaling up use of ITNs in Nigeria in accordance with the provision of Abuja Declaration, and the Nigeria RBM Strategic Plan.
• support demand creation for use of ITNs
• encourage private sector participation in implementation of ITNs
• develop mechanisms for targeting vulnerable groups in the use of ITNs
• develop appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of ITNs’ implementation

3. POLICIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Specifications & Quality control

Mosquito nets:
International technical norms for net products have been developed by the WHO and are therefore recommended as minimum standards for production. The national standards have been reviewed by the SON to be in line with the international standards. These include:

• 75-100 denier strength
• Warp knitted polyester (multi-filament)
• Mesh size at least 156
• Less than 5% shrinkage
• Breaking strength: at least 220 Kpa for 75 denier netting and 405 Kpa for 100 denier.
• Fire safety according to CFR 1610-CS 191-53
• Standard labelling with type of netting, size, washing instructions (do not wash above 30 °C), water absorbency and manufacturer’s name and contact address. Labelling could be a small tag attached to the net or the information might appear on the plastic wrapper.

Insecticides:
Only insecticides approved by WHO Pesticide Evaluation Scheme (WHOPES) and registered by NAFDAC should be used for ITNs in Nigeria. The currently approved insecticides are contained in the table below. This covers all formulations i.e. liquid, tablets and the pre-packaged kits. The private sector is given a free hand to provide an unlimited quantity of approved and registered insecticides.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic name</th>
<th>Trade name</th>
<th>Manufacturer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alphacypermethrin SC</td>
<td>Alcypernet, Fendona</td>
<td>Cyanamid / BASF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deltamethrin SC and Tablet</td>
<td>K-Othrine, KO Tab</td>
<td>Bayer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To prevent/delay vector resistance to insecticides, the use of pyrethroids should be restricted to the treatment of nets and other materials that may be recommended by results of operational research.

Insecticides in any formulation and packaging must have clear instructions for use, storage and disposal in English, as well as clear pictorial instructions as approved by NAFDAC. In addition, they must adhere to the safety and retailing standards applied to insecticides.

The Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON) shall be responsible for developing and publishing the standards as well as enforcement of quality control of locally manufactured and imported nets. NAFDAC shall be responsible for registration and confirmation of quality of locally manufactured and imported insecticides.

3.2 Taxes, Tariffs and Prices

Mosquito nets:
The Federal Government of Nigeria, in accordance with the Abuja Declaration, has continued to adjust the taxes and tariffs on mosquito nets to encourage local production. Presently, the taxes and tariffs are at 40%, HS Code 63904.9100-9900 of year 2001. This adjustment will scale-up local production which will result in decrease in the price of nets.

Insecticides:
The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) has declared zero rating on the taxes and tariffs on insecticides for use in treating mosquito nets in Nigeria. This directive relates to HS code 3808.1000 of year 2001.

With the effective concessional duty rating for both nets and the insecticides, it is expected that the prices will drop to affordable level. There will therefore be no need for price control as the market will easily find its level.

3.3 Establishment of Partnership

The Federal Government upholds the concept of RBM partnership as involving all stakeholders and partners. National and Zonal consensus building meetings were held involving Development Partners, the private sector and other stakeholders. A workplan was thereby developed for the implementation of RBM in Nigeria including promotion of ITNs. The partnership development will be a continuous process to ensure the effective involvement of all stakeholders. Furthermore, the FGN will continue to encourage networking and information sharing between stakeholders to improve competition and access to ITNs.

In addition to its advisory role, the National Malaria Control Committee (NMCC) has the responsibility to create and support broad partnership; play a pivotal role in
advocacy; social mobilisation and monitoring of malaria control activities in Nigeria. The NMCC has four sub-committees which are Publicity and Community Mobilisation; Case Management and Anti-Malaria Drug Policy; Monitoring & Evaluation and ITNs/Environmental Management. Representatives of associations of net manufacturers/suppliers and insecticide dealers are members of the ITNs sub-committee. This arrangement should be replicated at the State and LGA levels.

3.4 Supply of ITNs and insecticides

The private sector will be responsible for production, promotion, and distribution and sales of ITNs through their normal market channels/systems. Firms or companies that wish to be involved with large scale handling of nets and insecticides must comply with the specifications under 3.1 above.

The Insecticide Treated Nets Massive Promotion and Awareness Campaign (IMPAC) for encouraging patronage of public health facilities using ITNs as incentives/rewards for best practices i.e. Ante-natal clinic attendance for first pregnancies, first deliveries at health facilities and completion of immunisation schedule for a child should be established and sustained.

Other demand creation activities to be encouraged are:

3.5 Distribution of ITNs/LLINs

The method/modalities of distribution of ITNs/LLINs will depend upon the objective of the project. Some of these are outlined below:

3.5.1 Targeted distribution of subsidised ITNs

It is the policy of the Government not to subsidise the price of ITNs on the open market. However, the Federal, State and Local Governments as well as Development Partners shall make special arrangements for the most vulnerable groups (pregnant women and children under five years of age) who may be unable to afford them.

In order to take care of the above concern and still ensure a real and sustainable market for ITNs where everyone benefits, including the private sector, the following are possible mechanisms:

- ITNs Massive Promotion and Awareness Campaign (IMPAC)
- Vouchers/Coupons
- Donations

3.5.1.1 ITN Massive Promotion and Awareness Campaign (IMPAC).

ITNs can be used as an incentive/reward for complying with healthy behaviours such as full immunisation of children and Anti Natal Care attendance, especially for first pregnancies. Children who comply with the six mandatory vaccines and pregnant women who have taken 2 doses of Tetanus Toxoid should receive free ITNs. This strategy will increase coverage for ITNs distribution and also has a two pronged advantage. The scheme is linked to IMPAC described above and allows both actions (promotion of ITN use and patronage of public health facility use) to feed upon one another and benefit each other simultaneously.
3.5.1.2 Vouchers/Coupons.
Voucher system is a form of subsidy whereby ITNs are made available to beneficiaries at a reduced cost. This may be partial or complete subsidy depending on the objective of the program. Donors engaged in reducing morbidity and mortality due to malaria often target vulnerable/poor groups in this mechanism. The system issues out vouchers which are redeemed at commercial outlets thus preventing leakages of such nets into the private market. Currently, NetMark (with support from Exxon-Mobil) is piloting the voucher system in a few selected states for an eventual large-scale implementation in Nigeria.

3.5.1.3 Donations.
Notwithstanding the fact that there is dire need of these commodities in the country, donations should adhere to the specification and qualities of the mosquito nets and insecticides as reflected in 3.1 above.

There will of course be some overlap likely to occur that could lead to a certain amount of leakage, however, this will not be great enough to impact on the overall positive effect.

3.5.2 Mandatory use of ITNs by all public and private health facilities for in-patient wards.

This is a demand creation mechanism, which encourages the need for and use of insecticide treated mosquito nets. At the same time it will benefit all patients, particularly the vulnerable groups (pregnant women and children less than 5 years) who would be protected while in a hospital setting. A guideline to this effect would ensure that the use of ITNs is made mandatory in all health facilities (or at least paediatric and maternity wards). Governments should ensure a vote in the yearly budget for the procurement, treatment and re-treatment of these mosquito nets. The private health facilities should also comply with the provision of this policy.

3.5.3 Mandatory use of ITNs in boarding schools

The Federal Ministries of Health and Education should make the use of ITNs in all boarding schools mandatory. The cost could be borne by the school, parents/guardians or Parents/Teachers Association. The use of ITNs, both at home and in the school, will increase awareness of malaria prevention from an early age. This will translate into reduced school absenteeism and pressure on the school health clinics.

3.5.4 ITNs as a social benefit to company staff

Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity should initiate a policy instituting mandatory provision of ITNs to all members of staff in public and private sectors. The employer as part of their social responsibility should pay for these ITNs. At the same time, this will positively benefit companies through a reduction in workdays lost to malaria. States, LGAs and communities are expected to comply with this policy.

It is recommended that as many as possible of these strategies/approaches be used to ensure the widest possible sustained coverage.

3.5.5 ITN to promote Tourism
The Federal Ministry of Tourism should take the initiative in making provision of ITNs in all hotels compulsory. There should also be information on prevention of malaria through the use of ITNs at all the ports of entry into the country (sea, land and air).

3.5.6 Community-based distribution of ITNs/LLINs.
The Government shall encourage and support the involvement of community-based organisations (CBOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Co-operative societies and other small scale distributors to be franchised in sales, distribution and holistic promotion of the use of ITNs/LLINs and insecticides.

3.5.7 Private sector distribution of ITNs/LLINs
The Private sector shall be responsible for and be involved in establishing massive distribution outlets throughout the country. They will also participate in holistic promotion of proper use and handling of ITNs/LLINs and insecticides.

3.5.8 Partners’ involvement in ITNs/LLINs
Federal Government shall encourage Partners to support and collaborate with the public and private sectors in ensuring widespread distribution of ITNs/LLINs, advocacy, capacity building and operational research.

3.6 Treatment and Re-treatment of mosquito nets
The major challenges to any of the distribution mechanisms are the issues of (i) treatment of nets in use that had never been treated and (ii) re-treatment of ITNs after every 6 months of use. All the alternatives stated above will rely on the private sector and the commercial market for supply of insecticides for the treatment and re-treatment of nets with the public sector providing an enabling environment and technical support. The private sector could sell the re-treatment kits either in bulk to institutions or through private sector channels i.e. retail outlets. Ensuring compliance will require a concerted effort to educate the public through generic and brand based advertising campaigns and social marketing network in the private sector.

Institutional and corporate organisational purchases may consider the possibility of community treatment and re-treatment as this may reduce costs. However, insecticide dealers, CBOs and NGOs should be encouraged to be responsible for this, as public health facilities may be unable to handle it effectively.

3.7 Long lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLINs)
Definition: Long Lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLINs) are a type of ITNs that have had insecticide incorporated into the fiber or bound around the fiber at factory stage. LLINs continue to kill or repel mosquitoes for up to 22 washes. A permanently treated net kills and repels mosquitoes for the duration of its life span. Similar conditions regarding taxes and tariffs as in 3.2 above apply.

Two such nets (that have passed WHO’s approval) are currently available on the market:
The Olyset Net (a permanently treated net made by Sumitomo Company) is made of polyethylene with permethrin insecticide incorporated into the fiber.
The PermaNet (an LLIN made by Vestergaard Frandsen) is made of polyester with Deltamethrin insecticide bound around the fiber.

The question of transfer of factory-treated net technology is being discussed by WHO with manufacturers to enable smaller companies in Africa to jointly produce such nets locally.

It is therefore recommended that those responsible for promoting ITN implementation strategies in Nigeria (and Nigeria’s commercial net manufacturers) should closely monitor further technical developments in the scientific assessment of LLINs and factory-treated nets. If and when it has been shown that factory pre-treatment can be effective throughout the life of the net, and are affordable, the requirement for re-treatment will be eliminated. For the moment, however, it is important to recognise that separate channels are needed for the distribution of nets and insecticide.

In Nigeria, LLIN is not an immediate replacement strategy but complementary to the availability of bundled ITNs. Considering the fact that large quantities of ITNs have been distributed in Nigeria before the advent of the LLINs, each programme should introduce an orientation/training to:

- differentiate between the two types
- ensure the effectiveness of each type

### 3.8 Implementation of Promotional Activities

Promotional activities for ITNs in Nigeria will be the responsibility of all partners and stakeholders including the private sector. Whereas Government and Development Partners will be responsible for the creation of demand through generic advertising campaigns for use of ITNs, the private sector will concentrate on the promotion of their brands for marketing.

Advertising campaigns for demand creation for ITNs in Nigeria will be done in phases. Consideration will be given for the availability of ITNs before the commencement of such campaigns. This is expected to result in many households demanding ITNs and therefore creating a market for the private sector for bigger investment. Co-operative societies, CBOs, women groups, Churches and Mosques should be encouraged to participate in demand creation through market priming mechanisms.

### 3.9 Operational Research

The Government shall encourage Operational research to be conducted by public and/or private institutions and organisations on the various components of ITNs/LLINs including mosquito resistance to the insecticides. Research findings will be used to update policies accordingly.

### 4.0 Capacity building
The Government, supported by Partners, shall build the capacity of the community to encourage treatment and re-treatment of different types of mosquito nets. This may include sensitization, training-of-trainers and other forms of capacity building.

4.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation of all components of ITNs/LLINs programme remains the responsibility of all stakeholders, agencies, private sector and relevant ministries and parastatals. This will be co-ordinated by the FMOH. NAFDAC and SON will co-ordinate the quality control of insecticides and nets respectively. Support supervision should be regularly conducted.

The stakeholders will include (Provide a list of the Stakeholders):

Collaboration with other programmes:
The Federal Government shall support collaboration between ITNs/LLINs with other programmes such as Integrated Vector Management (IVM) and other national programmes.