

Stealing Dreams Part 2:

Lack of resources inhibits the fight against malaria

By DAMASO REYES

USA RIVER VILLAGE, Tanzania - "Everyone in the family had malaria last year," Mwajuma Swalehe, a 55-year-old grandmother, said in the stiflingly hot bedroom where she and her six grandchildren sleep. She had malaria two times last year herself, making it difficult to earn the roughly one dollar a day that she does bring in selling small pancakes made of local grain. While she and her family sleep under mosquito nets, they are not treated with insecticide, which she says she cannot afford because of the costs, three or four dollars at most.

Welcome to the front lines of fighting malaria in Africa, where for the lack of two or three dollars per person, an estimated 100,000 Tanzanians, mostly children under five, will die this year.

Unlike HIV/AIDS, malaria is not a guaranteed killer. Not only do we know how to prevent the disease, sleeping under insecticide treated bed nets radically reduces the risk of being bitten



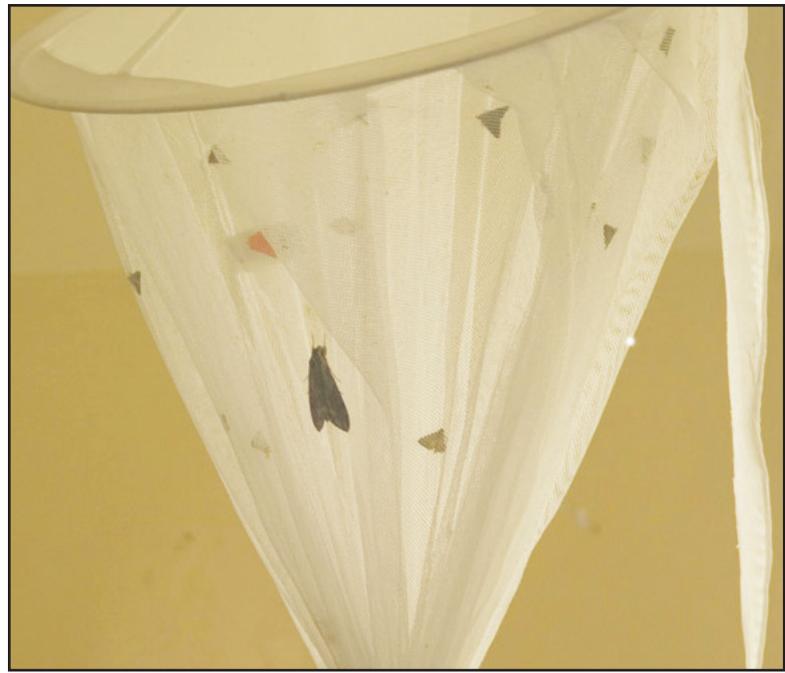
Dr. Elineem Katojo consults with the mother of a patient in Arumeru's children's wing.

For years the mantra of sustainability and self reliance has been drummed into government officials here, and now that harvest is being reaped in the form of dead young children and mil-

government policy," said Dr. Andrew Kitua, director general of the National Institute for Medical Research, one of the leading organizations in Tanzania fighting to find a solution to the malaria epidemic. Through the international donor community, the government has instituted a program which subsidizes the costs of treated bed nets for pregnant women and those who have children under five, but even with 75% of the costs already paid for, statistics show that only about 85% of the women who receive the vouchers redeem them, leaving 15% of this vulnerable population exposed to malaria primarily because they can't afford the roughly 50 cents they need to buy a subsidized net.

Since the program has been implemented, there has been an ongoing debate between the government, health providers and NGOs on the issue of free distribution of treated bed nets. The government, in meeting after meeting, claims that people will not value something that they get for free, and that when bed nets have been given away they have, in some cases, been used for wide ranging purposes including wedding gowns

(Continued on Page 40)



Moths and other insects cling to the outside of a protective bed net used in Arumeru Hospital in Arusha. (Damaso Reyes photos)

by the mosquitos that carry malaria; the global health community also knows how to effectively cure the disease, with a course of recently developed Artemisinin-based drugs that can completely treat someone suffering from malaria for less than \$2.50.

But in a country that has a national health budget of roughly ten dollars a person per year, bed nets and new drugs are out of reach for many. This is the deadly intersection of policy, politics and public health: without a long term commitment from the international donor community, the Tanzanian government is reluctant to adopt health policies, like free distribution of insecticide treated bed nets that are unsustainable in the long term without outside funding.

lions of healthy adults becoming bedridden for weeks at a time whenever they contract malaria.

"If the donor community would commit itself to a course of funding, it would change

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

U.S.-BACKED WARLORDS ENGAGED IN DEADLY COMBAT IN SOMALIA

May 29 (GIN) - Thousands of residents of Mogadishu fled the capital city after an outbreak of fighting between Islamic militia and a U.S.-backed warlord alliance which left over 60 dead since tensions came to a head last Wednesday. Heavily armed gunmen continue to patrol the streets and residents said fresh hostilities could erupt at any time.

Somalia has had no effective government since warlords overthrew long-time dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991. They then turned on each other, carving this nation of an estimated 8 million people into rival fiefdoms. The fighting pits Somali Islamists against the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism, set up in February with U.S. backing to curb the growing influence of Islamic sharia courts and track down al Qaeda members.

Somalia's largely powerless transitional government, based in Baidoa, about 250 km northwest of Mogadishu, has blamed both the alliance and the United States for the fighting. The United States denies responsibility for the clashes.

WORLD PRESS SCORNE OVER AFRICA MIS-REPORTING

May 29 (GIN) - Newspaper editors attending an international press forum got a slap on the wrist from South Africa's Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, who berated them for negative reporting while overlooking the continent's success stories.

Issues of "real concern," such as Western poaching of Africa's best and brightest talent, were being ignored as the world's media focused on wars and poverty, Mlambo-Ngcuka told the annual world congress of the International Press Institute (IPI) in Edinburgh

on Monday.

She said, "Over-generalization has had the specific result of dishing out collective punishment to all in the continent and discouraging investment, thus holding back progress. Out of 54 countries in Africa, only five are in conflict in 2006. Yet the 49 countries are easily compromised by failure to acknowledge peace in most countries and note success of individual nations."

She added, "Africa, notwithstanding its challenges, has a good story that needs to be told, and told much better."

HOTEL RWANDA MANAGER CALLS FOR DARFUR ACTION

May 29 (GIN) - Paul Rusesabagina, the real-life hotel manager played by Don Cheadle in "Hotel Rwanda," warned against the current situation in Darfur, saying, "It is time to join action to words."

Rusesabagina said that violence in Sudan's Darfur region is particularly frightening in its similarities to the ethnic violence in Rwanda in the early 1990's.

"The refugee camps in Chad are just like those in which exiled Rwandans were living in 1993, without food, shelter or education," he said.

"Last year I went to Darfur and what I saw was exactly what I saw in Rwanda in the years 1990 to 1994," Rusesabagina explained.

"There were government-funded helicopters destroying villages. Militia armed by the government killing villagers. Two million people displaced and their homes completely erased."

Rusesabagina was a hotel manager in Kigali during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. He kept as many as 1,200 people alive in the Hotel des Mille Collines, and his story was later popularized through his autobiography, "An Ordinary Man: The Story Behind Hotel Rwanda," and by the 2004 film "Hotel Rwanda."

— By Braden Ruddy

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INDEX

NEW YORK Amsterdam News

Arts & Entertainment Page 19	Editorial/OpinionPage 12
Astro/NumerologyPage 27	EducationPage 33
Career/BusinessPage 35	Health CarePage 30
CaribbeanPage 14	Recipes/ReviewsPage 24
Church.....Page 34	Resorts/TravelPage 26
ClassifiedPage 39	Sports.....Page 44
CommunityPage 8	Trends.....Page 16

Malaria

(Continued from Page 2)

and fishing nets, something health activists say is apocryphal. The real reason government here isn't distributing free nets to every household is that it can't, the funding simply does not exist. "If all the people who campaign for the life of an unborn, would campaign for the lives of all the children who are born," and suffer from malaria, the problem would be solved, Louis de Gama, Malaria Advocacy director at Global Health Advocates, a Geneva based NGO, said.

IN THE TRENCHES, FIGHTING AN ELUSIVE ENEMY

Gift Sivael did not make it to his second birthday before his young mother Miriam suspected he had contracted malaria. She walked with him for five hours to reach the Arumeru District Hospital in order for him to receive treatment. Gift turned out to be one of the lucky ones, though his nearly constant screaming would indicate otherwise. By his second day in the hospital, his fever had gone down and he was on the road to recovery, thanks to the free course of treatment he was provided by this government hospital. But many other mothers

live too far away from a health-care provider to receive treatment in this district where the doctor to patient ratio is about 1 to 16,000.

Elizabeth Clement left her three other children at home with their father to take her 4-month-old to Arumeru to seek treatment for malaria. While she says that she now has one insecticide treated bed net, the 40-year-old mother of four said of her husband, "It was difficult to convince him to part with the money," the roughly \$2.50 she needed to buy a net. She cradled her ill infant in the small children's ward of the hospital whose ceiling was covered in

insects and moths, but where every bed had an insecticide treated net.

Dr. Elineem Katojo, the resident doctor in the ward, has seen many cases of malaria in his 18 years, but says that the government commitment to fighting the disease is much higher than it was in the past. "About 50% of people who come here now sleep under bed net," but clearly that figure was not high enough, he said.

"The usage would definitely increase," if treated bed nets were freely distributed, said Dr. N. Ole King'ori, the regional medical officer in Arusha. But that is something that is

just not possible as of now, even though much of Africa's supply of treated bed nets is produced in Tanzania. "Women have to walk as far as 22 kilometers to get to a local clinic," he added, lamenting the lack of healthcare infrastructure that adds to the difficulty in fighting malaria. "We know that it's our problem to treat the population, but we do need assistance," Zachery Berege, Tanzania's director of Hospital Services said.

In the war against malaria, children are dying not because there aren't enough soldiers willing to fight, but because they don't have enough bullets.

Yards

(Continued from Page 3)

the community.

"Its unprecedented, ensuring and including Black contractors and unions, and Black business. It's opening the door to let our people in," said Daughtry.

For the first time in New York history, the development plan by Forest City Ratner will contain a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA). Under the CBA, the Atlantic Yards project will provide jobs and lower cost housing for largely poor and minority areas nearby. Under the CBA, 35% minority and 10% women construction workers are supposed to

be employed. First priority will be given to public housing residents, and half of the 4,500 rental apartments are for families earning less than \$100,480 a year. And out of 6,800 condos, potentially 1,000 of those will be affordable.

The May 2006 plans show that the 22-acre project will include an arena to fit 20,000, a 180-room hotel, and 7 acres of open space for gardens and ponds.

Although Council Member Letitia James supports affordable housing, she does not support the Atlantic Yards Project.

"It's too big, it's out of scale, and it involves the abuse of eminent domain. We could use the funding for more houses and more schools. It is a waste of tax payers' money,"

said James.

The council member believes the negatives outweigh the benefits and foresees lawsuits, and more lawsuits. Community organizations like Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn oppose the project because of the congested intersections the arena will bring, and argue that the plan is repeating urban renewal mistakes of the past. Some say that the Atlantic Yards Project will destroy Brooklyn's traditional brownstones, and cut into the private property rights of citizens.

DDDB is currently filing lawsuits against Atlantic Yards.

The project has been scaled down since the original plans, and even includes Leadership for Envi-

ronment and Development (LEAD) standards. Jim Stuckey, executive vice president of Commercial Development for Forest City Ratner Companies, says that the project is not in brownstone Brooklyn and most of the area being demolished consists of vacant lots, gas stations, and some residential buildings. Atlantic Yards promises to relocate any tenant within the project area and move them back in the project with the same rent that they have now.

"The opposition fails to give a complete picture. Our project will give more affordable housing than any single project in the state of New York. After you take out the costs, the city and state will earn \$1.5 billion. You have to invest

money to make money," said Stuckey.

The Atlantic Yards Project isn't a done deal yet. Public review has to approve of the project, which might come about in four to six weeks. If approved, then the Atlantic Yards Project will begin building this October or November. FCR currently owns 90% of the residential area. So far the Underberg Building has been taken down, but according to the FCC, the building was unsafe and an engineering report showed that the building would collapse. The Atlantic Yards is a 10-year project, but their goal is first get the arena up.

"Our goal is to have the Nets in Brooklyn for the 09-10 season," said Stuckey.

Duke

(Continued from Page 4)

— and the facts be damned. If such attitudes prevail, we will indeed become a banana republic. Or worse."

Kirk Osborn, an attorney representing defendant Reade Seligmann, told a judge two weeks ago that he had "boxes of letters from senators and congressmen" attesting to the "fine character" of his client.

However, supporters of the alleged victim — a 27-year-old divorced mother of two, second-year honor student at historically-Black North Carolina Central University, and US Navy veteran — say despite her troubled life of pain and struggle that may have contributed to her alleged sexual behavior (she reportedly was also raped when she was 14), the prosecutor has secured three indictments from a grand jury backing up the alleged victim's claims that a serious crime was committed, and has lined up a partial witness list of police investigators and

forensic experts to explain the ambiguous DNA evidence, as well as medical personnel who examined her the morning after she says she was sodomized.

According to a March 27 search warrant by Durham Police, "Medical records and interviews that were obtained by a subpoena revealed the victim had signs, symptoms and injuries consistent with being raped and sexually assaulted vaginally and anally. Furthermore, the [Forensic Sexual Assault Nurse] stated the injuries and her behavior were consistent with a traumatic experience."

North Carolina civil rights attorney Al McSurely, writing to the victim on her supporter-sponsored website www.ourheartsworld.com, said the "fine character" the Duke players' defense attorneys speak of is countered by the fact that she and Kim Roberts, the second Black female dancer, were lied to by the lacrosse players who hired them the night of the alleged attack.

"Some of them engaged in the tort of fraudulent inducement,"

attorney McSurely wrote. "They intentionally lied at least three times to you and Ms. Roberts to induce you to come to entertain them. They lied about their names. They lied about the nature of the group — saying it was a small bachelor party so you would not bring bodyguards. They lied a second time about the nature of the group, saying it was the Duke track team, which implied it would be more 'diverse' so you would have had some brothers there to protect you. There is also other evidence that 'race' was a part of forming the employment contract, which of course is illegal and unconstitutional."

McSurely continued, "Based on the Duke students' intentional fraudulent statements, Ms. Roberts and you formed an employment contract to dance for a small diverse group for two hours. As a result of their fraudulent inducements, you and Ms. Roberts were both greatly damaged."

McSurely, who also heads up the N.C. NAACP's Legal Redress Committee, announced last week

that he will file a motion for what is effectively known as a gag order to stop the defense attorneys from trying to either poison the potential jury pool, get the trial moved out of Durham County, or so scare the alleged victim that she backs out of testifying.

Legal observers say, however, that McSurely and the NAACP will have to demonstrate legal standing in the case to the court in order for the motion to have any chance.

Though D.A. Nifong has stayed mum while defense attorneys have had a field day trashing the victim and his evidence, he has indicated that he plans to try all three suspects.

Min. Ava Muhammad told members of the Durham Black community Sunday that when that day comes, they must be ready to give solid support to the alleged victim. But before that can happen, African-Americans must first deal with those "in the family," like Sowell, and other "Negroes" who dare attack the victim and the community for supporting her right to her day in

court.

"We've got to shut the fat mouth of every Negro that has anything slanderous to say about this sister," said Muhammad. "Shut up; don't say another word."

The minister was one of many speakers during the packed town hall meeting to note the significance of the Duke case in relation to the history of white supremacy, the struggling condition of the African-American community, and the need for the community to repudiate the self-destructive impact of promiscuous behavior on the Black family.

"This is so critical, this juncture in history. I believe this is our last chance for God's mercy," she said.

The NOI spokesperson added that the Duke rape case, along with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and other noteworthy recent events, makes it clear that racism against African-Americans is alive and well.

"We know that there is contempt for us," Muhammad said. "This is rooted in the very existence of this nation."

Hospital

(Continued from Page 6)

reflect the racial, ethnic, gender and geographical diversity of New York State. They also want the commission to expand the factors considered before closing a facility. They want those factors to include, "an assessment of health care needs of the affected region, existence of health care services, all applicable federal and state laws and regulations regarding equal opportuni-

ty, equal treatment, and removal of barriers and equal access."

"Many of the hospital closings of the last two decades have been in poor rural and inner-city communities that were already underserved," says Senator Paterson (D-Manhattan). "By increasing the participation of local communities and the transparency of the process, we can avoid making those same mistakes again."

Assemblyman Espaillat adds, "This measure will help us to ensure that proper deliberation

takes place before any hospitals are downsized or closed. It will also prevent low-income and underserved communities from being unfairly impacted by the closings."

Access to essential health care services is "already a major crisis," says Luis Guida of the Committee of Interns and Residents. Carol Pittman of the NYS Nurses Association agrees: "Comprehensive affordable community-based health care should be accessible to every New Yorker." Ngosi Moses, exec-

utive director of the Brooklyn Perinatal Network that works to reduce the high infant mortality rates in communities being targeted by the commission, said the bills proposed by Paterson and Espaillat "ensure that communities have timely, substantive input" into what happens with their health care systems.

On Monday, June 5th, advocates want everyone to express their support of S. 6591 and A. 10186 by going to the www.saveoursafetynet.org web site, clicking on the link to the

SOS-C Get Active Online campaign, and sending a fax and e-mail to Governor Pataki, Senator Bruno, and Assemblyman Silver, the Senate and Assembly Health Committees and their own local senator and assemblyperson.

On Tuesday, June 6th, the group is organizing a Lobby Day in Albany to support the legislation. Unions DC 37, CIR, and NYSNA are among those sending busses to the state capital in this latest fight to save public health care facilities.