

NetMark successfully implements commercial discount voucher scheme for ITNs in Ghana.

Insecticide treated nets (ITNs) still remain the most cost effective way to prevent malaria in hyper endemic countries like Ghana (WHO). Research trials in several countries of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have shown that use of ITNs can reduce the number of child deaths by about one-fifth, saving around 6 lives for every 1,000 under-five children protected per year¹. However, achieving sustainable high coverage levels still remains a challenge. DHS 2003 in Ghana reveals ITN coverage of 3.3%.

To help increase ITN coverage amongst pregnant women and children under the age of years i.e. the

vulnerable group,

NetMark piloted a

commercial

discount voucher

scheme for ITNs in

Ghana.



Objectives

- Improve access, both economic and physical, to ITNs for pregnant women and mothers with children under the age of five years.
- Develop a sustainable scheme for delivering targeted subsidies for ITN nationwide.

¹ Lengler C. (1998) Insecticide treated bednets and curtains for malaria control (Cochrane Review). In: The Cochrane Library, Issue 3, 1998. Oxford: Update Software.

- Strengthen private sector provision of ITNs at reasonable cost through market priming.
- Enhance health staff capacity in promotion of ITNs for preventing malaria.
- Encourage use of ITNs by beneficiaries and the general population.



How it Works:

Pregnant women attending Antenatal Clinics are counselled on the dangers of malaria and the benefits of using an ITN after which, they are given a uniquely numbered discount voucher which entitles them to a discount of \$4.5 on their choice (colour, shape, size, brand, etc) of an ITN. These vouchers are redeemed at multiple retail outlets carrying the participating brands of ITNs.

Advantages of this approach:

- ❖ the subsidy can be carefully targeted at a very specific, high risk group (e.g., pregnant women, newborns, children under five);
- ❖ the logistical burden of ordering, storing, packaging, distributing, and selling ITNs is in the hands of the commercial sector leaving the public sector to focus on public health services and voucher distribution to the target group;
- ❖ the greater logistical efficiency of the commercial sector ensures that maximum funding goes for the subsidy rather than the logistics;
- ❖ retail outlets are more likely to stock ITNs if they know there will be a good number of expected sales in their areas:

- ❖ purchasers are educated about the real cost of an ITN because they see the regular store price and not just a subsidized price;
- ❖ women have a choice of which size, color, shape, and price ITN to buy;
- ❖ fraud is limited by not having thousands of ITNs sitting in a government warehouse and by requiring a proof-of-purchase sticker at the retail level to make the voucher valid: and
- ❖ unlike other subsidized ITN programs, this voucher approach supports the commercial sector instead of undermining it as happens when subsidies are not carefully targeted, ITNs “leak” into the market, and consumers come to believe that the subsidized price is the actual price.

Results to Date:

Region	Source of Funding	Period	Number of Vouchers redeemed	Redemption Rate
Volta	DFID/USAID	4/04-4/05	17,888	69%
Gt. Accra & Ashanti	ExxonMobil/USAID	6/04-11/04	65,323	87%
Eastern Region	DFID/Global Fund	2/05-5/06	52,417	74.6%
Volta Region	Global Fund	5/05-3/06	21,133	76.1%
Brong Ahafo	ExxonMobil/USAID	5/05-10/05	34,992	91.6%
Ashanti	Global Fund	10/05-03/06	38,575	78.9
Total			230,528	

- In addition to nets sold at discount prices, during this scheme about 30% of the total nets redeemed were bought at the full commercial prices by non target population through the same retail outlets.
- There has been a rapid expansion of retail outlets in these regions as a direct result of these voucher schemes. Example in the Volta region retail outlets increased from 10 at the start of the program in 2004 to 69 at the end of 2005.



Testimonials:

- *“This is a dream come true. I have always wanted to sleep in a bed net in response to the numerous adverts on radio, television and also advice by antenatal staff but the price has been prohibitive, thanks to Mobil I can now afford it.”- Pregnant woman.*
- *“Previously, these nets were very slow moving products, but now they move very fast to the extent that I experience stock outs periodically”- Retailer*
- *“I am very happy because they just don’t come and buy nets, they also buy other items.” – Shop attendant, Mobil Mart*
- *“I was unemployed but this program has given me the opportunity to sell nets and make some decent commissions for myself. I will continue to sell nets after this program because it has become popular and more people other than pregnant women are buying at the full commercial price.” - Transcol, commissioned salesperson*
- *“Before this program I always thought nets were old fashioned. I have come to appreciate its important role in the prevention of Malaria. In fact about two-thirds of the people who buy them pay the full retail price.”
Darkuman Mobil Mart, Manager*

- *“Now when I talk about prevention of Malaria in pregnancy, I know I am not talking in vain since the nets have become very affordable and pregnant women can buy.”- Midwife Korle-bu teaching hospital.*
- *“It has improved our antenatal coverage, thanks to the adverts on air and also the pregnant women spreading the good news. Prior to this program we used to record an average of 15 women per antenatal session but now it’s increased to 25.”- Abokobi Health center*
- *“This program is indeed a market primer; it has assisted me to expand my distribution network within a very short time, open new retail outlets, expand my sales team and above all turned round my products faster. It is FANTASTIC”*
- *Jenkins Baker, Chairman, Netco Rockville*

The commercial discount voucher scheme for ITNs model has been adopted by the National Malaria Control Program/Ghana Health Service and is currently being scaled- up under the Global fund round 4 activities.