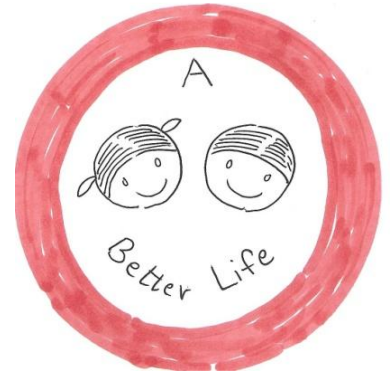


“Nets for a better life”

My Campaign Against Malaria by Siya Kulkarni



Malaria is a severe problem in India, causing more deaths than HIV. According to the World Health Organisation, there were 25 million cases of malaria in 30,000 deaths alone in the year 2009, which is a tenth of the cases worldwide. This is mainly due to urbanisation, where cities grow rapidly, pollution increases and unsanitary conditions- caused by a lack of proper drainage and waste management- persist. All this increases the risk of vector-borne diseases. Floods due to overflowing drains, stagnant water on the roads and pavements after rain and the tropical climate make ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes. It isn't always possible to eliminate these factors entirely to prevent the disease. Instead, the best solution for all of us is to prevent getting bitten by a mosquito. This is tackled in many ways- using a repellent, spraying, using a coil- but using a mosquito net is by far the best solution. (In 2004, Ethiopia began to give out nets for free, and in the next four years, the number of cases of malaria in Ethiopia more than halved.¹)

What do we want to achieve?

We have to create awareness about mosquito nets to encourage them to use and promote the use of nets. The more nets used, the greater the chance of reducing the number of malaria cases.

For this we have to trigger a change in the behaviour pattern towards nets, making nets a part of everyday lifestyle. People should refrain from using alternative prevention methods such as sprays, repellents, coils or DDT, which is damaging to both the environment and our health, and is ineffective after a period of time.

Who can change?

Children in the age group 4 years to 15 years.

More than 80,000 children dying below the age of fifteen were attributed to malaria in 2005². This spells a colossal loss for the country's future. Besides, weakness and anaemia creep in and hamper growth and development. A healthy childhood will ensure a better future for these children. They can be moulded into responsible, careful citizens today, and can influence both the previous generations as well as the next generations.

Campaign period

This campaign will last for a year, starting in June, the beginning of monsoon season and schools semester, to April next year, when the schools close for Summer to be prepared for next monsoon, the wet season increases the risk for malaria, and people usually start bracing themselves for the season by purchasing mosquito-resistant materials and the local health authorities start spraying harmful chemicals such as DDT.

1. *Me Any My Net- Factfile*

2. <http://download.thelancet.com/flatcontentassets/pdfs/PIIS0140673610608318.pdf>

Kids For Nets

The KFN Juniors (4 yrs- 10 years)



Nets can be fun!

Holidays and after school timings are great to get together and learn through games and fun programs.

Paint-your-own-net programme: The kids can let their imagination roam free in decorating their own, plain, white mosquito nets, which might inspire them to use the nets they have decorated.

Net Rhymes: The children can learn about the dangers of malaria and the use of nets through rhymes, cartoons and comic strips. A sample "Net Rhyme" that I've composed tells the story of Jack and Fred with pictures on the side is on the next page.

Net Rhyme

« The Net »

Once upon a rainy night
There were two boys – Jack and Fred
Both, in their rooms turned off the light
As they tucked themselves in bed



Pitter-patter went the rain
The night was very **cold and damp**
A buzzing noise, a stinging pain
Jack awoke with a start turning on the lamp



His fingers reached out for his nose
Which had now begun to itch
When he saw a swarm of **mosquitoes**
His eyes and face began to twitch



He didn't sleep a wink that night
He tossed and turned in his bed
He scratched the mosquito bites
Which were quickly turning **red**



But Fred had a good night's sleep
And you may as well ask why
For as he dreamt of stars and sheep
He was a very clever guy



Just before he went to bed,
And his mum kissed him good night
He had a plan in his head
So the **mosquitoes** wouldn't bite

Over his bed he hung **a net**
And shut the windows of his room
This definitely wouldn't let
The insects spread their doom and gloom



Once upon a sunny day
After a very rainy night
Jack with a **fever** in bed lay
While Fred awoke fresh and bright



The KFN Seniors (11 yrs- 15 yrs)

Two factors influence adolescents to take part in such a campaign:

1. These kids are at an age where a lot of importance is given to teamwork, working with peers to achieve some goals and actively taking part in community work.
2. Secondly, young adults have great dreams and ambitions for their future, which can only be achieved when their environment is healthy and safe from disease. This is an incentive for them to take action to promote the use of nets.

The young adults will be involved in campaign activities such as:

1. **Fundraisers** for the supply of nets to areas like slums, where the risk of infection is high but people cannot afford to buy nets, let alone be treated for the disease.
2. **Competitions** in schools, such as writing and enacting street plays that bring about the urgent need to begin using nets.
3. **Net- Marches** across cities as a way to create awareness
4. Activities that go beyond the use of nets- Clean-up marches to promote the importance of sanitation and cleanliness, a side community called Kids Against Chemicals, where awareness about the dangers of chemicals and sprays will be created through competitions, marches etc.

I believe in working as a team to make a community a better place to live in. I also believe that educating children about the use of nets and inspiring them to bring about a change in society will improve the lives of the future generations. I do hope that such a campaign will be put into action, so that we all could join hands and make a difference in this world.
