

PRESS RELEASE

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With picture



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Malaria campaign kicks-off

Lusaka – Health Minister Hon. Kapembwa Simbao and Zambian national football team captain Chris Katongo have put their weight behind a new high-profile campaign to fight malaria in Africa.

They joined the United Against Malaria team, an initiative that aims to harness football fever to raise awareness about Zambia's deadliest fever - malaria.

"United Against Malaria is a bold drive to support Zambia's goal of reaching the 2010 target of universal access to treated bednets and malaria medicine, a crucial first step to reaching the international target of reducing deaths to near zero by 2015," said Todd Jennings of the Malaria Control and Evaluation Partnership in Africa (MACEPA).

United Against Malaria will draw from football's approach by using teamwork as the key to its success. Already a number of big name companies are set to support the initiative, joining forces with footballers, government and non-governmental organisations to spread the message.

"We are very excited about this new United Against Malaria campaign," said Dr. Elizabeth Chizema-Kawesha, Deputy Director, Public Health and Research – Malaria. "It's an important addition to our approach of tapping the influence of community leaders to share lifesaving messages on this preventable disease: sleep under a bednet every night, allow your home to be sprayed, pregnant women take preventive medicine and go for immediate testing if you suspect malaria."

United Against Malaria is being launched in countries across Africa in the run-up to next year's World Cup in South Africa. Global partners include the Gates Foundation with support from the United Nations Foundation, Roll Back Malaria Partnership, the One Campaign, Malaria No More, PATH, PSI, John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Comic Relief.

"By leveraging football, the most popular sport in the world, we aim to raise global awareness and renew worldwide commitment to ending malaria, as well as increase the use of prevention tools and malaria treatment in Africa," said United Against Malaria's organisers.

Malaria is endemic in all nine provinces of Zambia, accounting for around a third of all hospital visits and having a major impact on families, the economy and the health system.

The government has made malaria prevention and control a national priority and has intensified its scale-up of interventions in recent years. Over six million insecticide-treated bednets (ITN), one of the best methods to prevent malaria, have been distributed nationwide. Indoor residual spraying (IRS) is now conducted in half of Zambia's 72 districts. Through these interventions, as well as nationwide access to testing and treatment, Zambia has recorded remarkable progress reducing the burden of malaria.

"Zambia is recognised regionally and globally as a country demonstrating how to prevent and control this disease," said Jennings. "The government's ambitious investment, commitment and leadership in malaria control and prevention has resulted in one of Africa's success stories. Together with the success of the Chipolopolo Boys—the national football team—the country is now poised to win on the pitch and in the fight against malaria."

Visit <http://www.unitedagainstmalaria.org> for more information

Ends

Please find attached two high resolution pictures of Minister of Health, Hon Kapembwa Simbao, and Zambia national football team captain Chris Katongo launching United Against Malaria.

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