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AFRICA/NIGER - Malaria: Each year more than a million people die, mostly in Africa

Niamey (Agenzia Fides) - Today April 25, the World Day Against Malaria is celebrated, a disease that annually kills over one million people, 75% are African children. Every 30 seconds one of them dies. Mothers are also at risk: in endemic areas it is directly or indirectly responsible for 30% of maternal mortality, although it is a disease that can be prevented, diagnosed and treated easily. According to information sent to Fides Agency, in 2013 the NGO Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) launched seasonal malaria chemioprevention in Niger against malaria, an effective prevention strategy which treated 206 000 children under 5 years of age in more than 1,045 villages in the health districts of Magaria, Madaoua, Bouza, Madarounfa and Guidam-Roumji, in the regions of Zinder, Tahoua and Maradi. The organization employed more than 2000 health promoters to sensitize the community and to encourage parents to bring their children to the 179 points of distribution of monthly doses of medicines, in addition to being distributed by 99 teams that went from door to door.
The treatment recommended by the World Health Organization in the Sub-Saharan Africa areas where there is a high incidence of the disease, is part of a campaign for seasonal malaria chemioprevention (SMC) which showed a decrease of 83% of cases in the Countries concerned. Although the disease is endemic in Niger, the Country has to face a strong resurgence of cases every year during the rainy season, which goes from July to October and, not surprisingly, corresponds to the period of high transmissibility of the disease. The SMC is now an integral part of the national program against malaria and is particularly effective in situations of widespread malnutrition and anemia because it allows to reduce the number of complex cases in Countries where the access to care is limited, such as Niger. However it does not prevent all cases of malaria.
The NGO team in Niger, and other organizations in other areas, are preparing a second mass campaign addressed to more than 400 000 children as from July, in the same regions as in 2013. Every year Nigerians are confronted not only with malaria, but also with food crisis, because the rainy season coincides with the period after sowing, when the harvest is not yet ready and food prices are the highest on the market. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 25/04/2014)

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